

Preoccupied Bride

**WEDDING
STARTER KIT**

WEDDING CHECKLIST

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12+ MONTHS BEFORE

- Plan an engagement party (if applicable)
- Determine overall budget
- Start a guest list
- Research/schedule venue tours
- Research officiants
- Research one-event-per-day vendors (photographers, videographers, caterers, DJs/bands)
- Research wedding managers (day of coordinators)

11 MONTHS BEFORE

- Reserve wedding date and venues
- Book your officiant
- Book your wedding manager
- Meet with one-event-per-day vendors (photographers, videographers, caterers, DJs/bands)
- Choose your wedding party
- Create your wedding website

9-10 MONTHS BEFORE

- Send out Save The Dates
- Go wedding dress/bridesmaid dress shopping
- Reserve a hotel block (if applicable)
- Book your photographer, videographer, DJ/band, caterer
- Research hair + makeup

8 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book hair + makeup
- Create a wedding registry
- Buy your wedding dress
- Schedule an engagement session
- Research honeymoon options

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7 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose bridesmaid dresses
- Research florists
- Research bakeries
- Research ceremony musicians

6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Schedule wedding dress fittings
- Book honeymoon (flights + accommodations)
- Research wedding invites and other paper items (programs, menu cards, seating chart, etc.)

5 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book florist
- Book bakery
- Book ceremony musicians
- Research rental professionals (lighting, photo booth, transportation etc.)
- Research rehearsal dinner venues

4 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book rehearsal dinner venue and finalize menu
- Book rentals (lighting, photo booth, transportation, etc.)
- Choose wedding music (ceremony, wedding party entrances, etc.)
- Plan day-after brunch (if applicable)
- List ceremony/reception extras to buy including wedding favors and welcome bags (if applicable)
- Order wedding invites

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3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Buy stamps for invitations
- Send out invitations (give 1 month to RSVP)
- Hair + makeup trial (possibly on the same day as engagement session)
- Engagement session
- Research wedding ring options
- Rent/buy menswear
- Buy ceremony/reception extras
- Finalize readings and anyone giving toasts
- Create rehearsal dinner guest list

2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Follow up with guests who haven't RSVP'd on time
- Order rehearsal invites
- Order wedding rings
- Order other paper items (programs, menu cards, place cards, etc.)
- Consider hiring a calligrapher
- List and buy your wedding day accessories
- Work on seating chart
- Decide who will give toasts at the rehearsal dinner

1 MONTH BEFORE

- Mail rehearsal dinner invites and day-after brunch invites (if applicable)
- Finish seating chart
- Buy gifts for wedding party and/or family & friends helping to give at rehearsal dinner
- Create and finalize a detailed wedding day timeline
- Make nail/spa appointments
- Get marriage license

WEDDING CHECKLIST

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1 WEEK BEFORE

- Give final headcount to caterer and venue (they may ask for it sooner)
- Pack for honeymoon
- Prepare toasts
- Confirm details with wedding party
- Confirm details/payments with vendors
- Put tip money aside for vendors
- Nail/spa appointments
- Rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
- Get married!

AFTER THE WEDDING

- Send thank you cards
- Get your wedding dress cleaned/preserved
- Review your vendors
- Exchange or return unwanted wedding gifts
- Order copies of your marriage license
- Legally change your name (if applicable)

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Before you plan even the smallest detail for your wedding, you need to figure out your wedding budget.

A solid wedding budget acts as an overview, guide and reference tool for when you're making your wedding selections. If you don't have a strong financial foundation of how much you can (or are willing to) spend on your wedding, the entire planning process from the get-go is going to be difficult and disorganized. The million-dollar question is, how do you do that? How do you figure out what's an appropriate amount to spend on your wedding?

Here are six factors to consider that will directly impact your wedding budget:

WHO'S PAYING

Are you and your partner funding the entire wedding? Or are parents and other loved ones contributing money as well?

In the past it was easy to determine who paid for what because there were specific rules and traditions to follow—the bride's family paid for the wedding and the groom's family paid for the rehearsal and honeymoon—but that's not the way things are now. Generally speaking, whoever is footing most of the bill will probably have an opinion, or even the final say, on what wedding selections are made. It's important to determine who will be paying for what and see if those contributing expect to have an opinion, final say and so forth. It can be a difficult conversation to have, but it's important to know this from the beginning to avoid bumps down the road while planning.

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GUEST LIST

Spend some time really thinking through your guest list: who is definitely invited, who is a maybe and who is no. If you're looking for ways to cut the guest list, start by thinking about the four main groups who impact numbers: kids, coworkers, distant relatives and friends you haven't spoken to in years. And keep this in mind: **The fastest way to cut your wedding budget is to eliminate your guest count.** Why? The number of guests will determine how much you will spend in food and beverage, the biggest expense of the wedding budget, but it also has an impact on rentals for tables, chairs, linens, flowers, etc. Having 30 tables with 30 linens, centerpieces and other table rentals will be significantly more expensive than having 20 tables with 20 linens, centerpieces and other table rentals. If your guest count goes down, you'll have more money to spend on other wedding details; if it goes up, you can easily go over your budget. Guest count directly affects the budget.

DAY & SEASON

The day and time of year you have your wedding will impact your wedding budget. In Chicago, wedding season is from May through October. A venue rental every Saturday in that 6-month timeframe will be significantly more expensive than if you did the wedding on a Saturday in November through April, the offseason. If you have your wedding on a Friday or Sunday, the rates will generally be cheaper than having them on a Saturday. If you have your wedding on a weekday, it will certainly be cheaper than having it on a weekend. A lot of venues and even vendors run specials during the offseason, so you can potentially save money if you're flexible with your wedding date.

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MISC COSTS

Most couples think about the big purchases when it comes to their wedding (venue rental, catering, photography, music, etc.), but there are a TON of smaller forgotten expenses that can quickly add up over time. Stamps for invitations, wedding party gifts, ceremony and reception items, wedding favors, spa appointments, tailoring of wedding attire, outfit accessories, vendor tips, day-of stationery, honeymoon attire, service charges and taxes (which is common with catering, hotels and venues) are just several of the forgotten expenses. So when you're calculating your budget and estimating approximately what amount or percent will be spent on each category, don't forget to include a misc expense section because a lot of items will end up falling in there.

GET EDUCATED

Even after you have a number in mind for your overall wedding budget, it's still important to **do your research**. The number you have in mind may not match what is realistic for the area you're getting married in, so it's important to do your research to get a realistic idea of what a wedding in the area will cost. For example, the average cost of a wedding in Dallas, Texas will significantly differ from the average cost of a wedding in Manhattan, New York. In fact, the average cost of a wedding in 2016 in the US rang in at \$35,329, but the average cost of a wedding in Chicago was almost double that at \$60,035. Chicago was the fourth highest average price on a wedding after Manhattan, Long Island and New Jersey. While you're researching, consider hiring a wedding planner. A wedding planner's main job is to educate and inform couples on anything related to weddings including costs, trends and etiquette.

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PRIORITIES

It may seem like every single detail is significant while wedding planning, but the reality is there are many elements that aren't important to every couple. One of the most vital questions to ask in the beginning stages of wedding planning is, what's important to us? Is food and music more important than flowers and favors? Do you want the ceremony and reception to be at the same location? Is your heart set on having a band? You and your fiancé should discuss both your priorities and non-negotiables.

Whatever those things are that are absolute must-haves at your wedding, spend money on them. Be flexible on the details that aren't as important to you and spend less of your budget on those elements (or maybe even eliminate them entirely from the budget). There is a lot of information out there about general guidelines on what percentage of a budget should be spent on venue rental, food, music, photos, etc. and that's a good starting point. But since every couple has different priorities, general guidelines can only go so far. It's more important to figure out what your biggest priorities are and allot more of your budget to those things.

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Registering for gifts is one of the most fun parts of wedding planning. (It's right up there with cake tasting!) Starting your journey as newlyweds with items from your loved ones that compliment your home and lifestyle is a beautiful thing.

Below are our top six tips for creating a personalized wedding registry.

REGISTER TOGETHER

Your wedding registry will be contributing to your home and journey as a married couple, so make sure to take the time to register together for gifts you'll both enjoy.

SIGN UP ASAP

As soon as you get engaged, it's acceptable and even recommended to create a wedding registry. It makes it easier for guests to come up with gift ideas if you have a registry in place they can reference for your wedding as well as any pre-wedding celebrations you may have, such as an engagement party or wedding shower.

TAKE INVENTORY

Make a list with your partner about what you currently have, what you need and what you want. Also, don't feel like you need to register traditional items only. If, for example, you like hiking more than cooking, you may want to consider registering for outdoor gear. If you already have a lot of the standard items between you and your partner (dishware, glassware, towels, etc.), consider unique wedding registry ideas like classes or spa treatments.

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HAVE MULTIPLE REGISTRIES

Give your guests a couple of choices for registries so they're not limited in options, but don't go too crazy either. One registry may not be enough, but four or more is likely too many. If you want to diversify your gift wishes and price points, consider having one registry at a large retail store, like Target or Amazon, and a different registry for art, adventures or cash.

OVER REGISTER

It's better to over register than under register. It may seem greedy, but it's not. Your guests will appreciate having different choices and price points with a surplus of gift options. Also, your guests may be buying you gifts not just for your wedding, but potentially for other wedding-related events.

TACTFULLY INFORM

Your guests will want to know your registry information, but it's inappropriate to directly ask for gifts by listing your registry information on the wedding invitations. The best way to get the word out is to create a wedding website and share your registry information there. If a loved one plans on throwing you an engagement party or wedding shower, the host can list your registry information or wedding website (or both) on the invites since they're not coming directly from you.

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[Preoccupied Bride Events, Inc.](#) is an established wedding + event planning company in Chicago with a 5-star reputation for planning expertise, quality service and attention to detail. Owner Maya Devassy Tarach started the company in 2017 after she planned her own wedding the year before and saw the striking similarities between wedding planning and her previous position as a project manager. As a result, Maya became a certified wedding & event planner and provides partial and full planning services to busy couples who are stressed, crunched for time and need guidance with wedding planning.