

Offbeat Bride's Wedding Checklist

Ok, don't lose your shit. We can do this together.

Obviously, no checklist can work for everyone, but this one is hopefully a bit more slanted toward nontraditional concerns. It assumes you're got about a seven month, so your mileage may vary. Xo, Ariel from offbeatbride.com

First things first:

- Sit down with your partner and figure out general vision for wedding. Indoors? Outdoors? Silly? Formal?
- Decide on a budget and figure who might be helping. Choose wisely, grasshopper, and remember that if family pays, family may want to control.
- If you're going for a potluck-style wedding, start talking to friends and family about who might want to help with different parts of the wedding.
- Pick wedding date and time, and finalize after okaying with important guests, location, or officiant.
- If you're hiring vendors, start doing your homework on what services you'll need, and who can provide it.
- Buy a copy of *Offbeat Bride: Creative Alternatives for Independent Brides* (Duh!)

As soon as you know what you're doing:

- Scout out venues and book one as soon as you can.
- Make preliminary guest list and decide on your wedding's approximate size. Get lists from both sets of parents, too.
- Start talking to caterers, if you're using one.
- Start a notebook/file folder to house all your wedding-planning paperwork in one place.
- If you're doing a wedding party, choose your peeps.
- If you're doing a caterer, pick one and determine price per head and menu.
- Start looking at dresses.
- Start investigating any ethnic customs or cultural traditions you might want to incorporate into your ceremony or reception.
- Decide on and meet with your officiant to discuss ceremony structure.
- If you plan to use frequent flyer miles to travel to your honeymoon destination, book your flight now.

Six months before wedding (or something similar)

- Finalize the guest list.
- Find an officiant who suits your style and spirit.
- Consider music at your reception. Even if you're not doing dancing, some background tunes are nice.
- Narrow down your gown choices and make a final decision.
- If you're doing a gift registry, start registering for gifts.
- Think about how you might want to wear your hair.
- Figure out who's making your cake, cupcakes, wedding pie, etc.
- Lock down photography — even if it's a friend, get a solid commitment.
- Figure out if you're doing bridesmaid dresses.
- Figure out flowers. If you're hiring someone, send a deposit to reserve their services.
- Make sure everyone helping with the wedding knows what you're expecting of them.
- Send STDs (ha!) to guests via postcard or email or even just calling.
- Research name change process and cost.

Several months before wedding

- Confirm your cake (or non-cake) plans.
- If you're doing a wedding party, figure out what everyone's wearing.
- Lock down your wedding dress and your partner's attire
- Book ceremony musicians and send deposit.
- Work on invitation wording and design.
- Finalize menu and service details with caterer.
- Launch your website, if you're doing one.

A couple months before your wedding

- If you're doing flowers with a florist, lock it down with them.
- If you're renting stuff (tables, chairs, tents, farm animals) confirm it with the vendors.
- Book rehearsal-dinner site, if you're doing one.
- Figure out where you're sleeping on your wedding night, and make reservations if necessary.
- Compile packages for out-of-town guests with hotel reservation and city information, and send 'em out via snail mail or email.
- Book your honeymoon flights (if not using frequent flyer miles) and make all your other travel reservations.
- If you haven't registered yet, be sure to do so before any upcoming prewedding parties.
- Consider specific ceremony and reception decoration needs like a Chuppah, aisle runner, etc.
- Purchase or make your invitations.
- Start addressing invitations — aim to send them out at the two-month mark.
- Talk to people you'd want to do special performances or readings as part of the ceremony.
- Get anything you need for an international honeymoon (passport, birth certificate, visas, vaccinations, etc.).
- Send out invitations.

Two months before your wedding:

- Work on vows, particularly if you're writing your own.
- Research local marriage license, civil union, or domestic partnerships requirements.
- Make the wedding party has purchased their outfits and accessories.
- Arrange wedding-day transportation for you, your wedding party, and guests (as needed).
- Snag wedding bands.
- If you're doing favors, buy them now or else get crafting!

Six weeks out

- As you receive presents, be sure to update and/or add items to your registry list and record the gifts you get.
- Confirm reservations for out-of-town guests.
- Arrange parking for the reception.
- Order liquor, wine and/or champagne if they're not included in the catering contract.
- Make sure you've got all your accessories like veil and shoes.
- Begin writing the ceremony program if you are having one.
- Tell your partner you love them at least once a day as things get increasingly crazy.
- Do you want a guest book? Now's the time to get one.
- Set aside some time to write thank-you notes for gifts received at the bridal shower.
- Finalize vows.
- Make sure your wedding outfits fit both of you.

One month out:

- Do trial runs of various vanity routines (hair, make-up, henna, wedding night genital piercing jewelry, whatever); schedule wedding-day appointments.
- Finish and print ceremony programs, if you're doing 'em.
- Get marriage license and make appointments for blood tests (if necessary). Check when the license expires.
- If you're doing an iPod reception, work on your playlist. If not, work on a list of "must-play" (and "must-not play") songs for your DJ or band. Back up your music and the rest of your hard drive while you're at it.
- Discuss music with ceremony musicians and agree on final choices.
- Confirm wedding-night and honeymoon reservations.
- Have a follow-up meeting or phone call with the officiant to go over ceremony timing and details.
- Do paperwork for official documents if you and/or your partner are changing your name(s).
- Work out wedding day timing and details (who will get the bride there, where the wedding party will dress, etc) and draw up a schedule.

- Get final prewedding haircut, if necessary.
- Call or email wedding party to relay critical info related to rehearsal and wedding (dates, times, directions, duties).
- Get a head start on thank-you notes if you can.
- Finalize any special preferences, readings, or other ceremony details with your officiant. Put it in writing if you can.

Two weeks out:

- Harass guests who haven't RSVP'd for the wedding and rehearsal dinner.
- Give final head count to the caterer. Confirm set-up instructions and menu items.
- Call location manager and make sure your vendors all have access to the site when they need it.
- Confirm head count, delivery time, and location with the cakemaker.
- Make extra sure that everyone who's helping you with the wedding gets a special, pointed thank you.
- Determine any wedding day assignments for members of the wedding party, and make lists/info sheets as needed.
- If you're doing a seating chart, figure it out now.
- Confirm all final payment amounts with your vendors.
- Confirm location, date, and time with photographer; create your "must-take" photo list.
- Touch base with your officiant and give him/her rehearsal details and wedding day schedule.
- Confirm delivery locations, times, and final arrangement count with florist.
- Make sure your partner has their wedding attire all ready to go and fitted.
- Fax transportation providers a schedule and addresses for pickups on wedding day.
- Prepare your toasts or thanks to friends and family.
- Distribute wedding-day directions, schedule, and contact list to all parents, attendants, and vendors.
- Designate who will meet, greet, and handle each vendor on the wedding day.
- Procure sedatives for night before wedding. Give them a trial run.

The week before:

- Put together an overnight bag for your wedding night (toothbrush, vibrator, etc.) and designate someone to deliver it to the hotel for you.
- If you're the froofy type, get a manicure and pedicure and confirm big-day beauty appointments.
- Designate someone to collect the wedding gifts (and any cash) brought to the party.
- Confirm date, location, time, and playlist with band/DJ and/or ceremony or cocktail hour musicians.
- Leave a copy of your honeymoon itinerary with someone in case of emergency.
- Put final payments and cash tips in marked envelopes and give to a designated family or friend to distribute on the wedding day.
- Prepare a wedding day freakout kit (aspirin, makeup, safety pins, mints, Cliff bar, etc.).

The day before

- Rehearse the ceremony with officiant and wedding party.
- Confirm all specific honeymoon travel plans (including transportation to airport, etc.).
- Assemble both your and your partners entire outfits.
- Set your alarm and arrange for backup.
- Make sure your vows are memorized
- Take a sedative and/or masturbate. It will help you sleep.

Wedding day

- Set aside special time during the day to step aside and breath for a few seconds.
- Confirm with people who you expect to give/lead toasts at the reception.
- Take a moment to thank your parents and tell them you love them.
- Relax, smile, and enjoy the day!

After the wedding

- Mail special letters and/or gifts to your parents and other special helpers to thank them for their help and support.
- Make sure all vendor bills have been paid in full.
- Find out when you can expect wedding photos and/or video.
- Within two months of your wedding, send all thank-you notes.
- Submit your wedding story to Offbeat Bride: <http://offbeatbride.com/submissions> :)