

# A no-nonsense wedding planning timeline: what to book and when

If you've just got engaged, congratulations! Welcome to the world of wedding planning, where you need to think about notice of marriage, licensed venues, and the fact that your dream suppliers might already be booked **18 months ago**.

This timeline is designed for real couples planning a UK wedding. It assumes the pretty standard 12–24 month engagement and focuses on what (or who) needs booking early, and what can wait.

## 18–24 months before - if you can

Not everyone can plan this far ahead, but if you're set on a popular summer Saturday or a sought-after venue, this is where things can start.

### Book, or at least narrow down your:

- **Wedding date.** Flexible dates mean easier planning, but a fixed date makes for faster bookings
- **Venue.** Civil ceremonies must take place in a licensed venue, and popular venues can book up early. If your heart is set on a venue which isn't licensed, you'll need to book a separate legal ceremony elsewhere. Religious spaces often need to work to tight schedules that may need a similar amount of notice

### Start thinking about:

- Your budget. Let's be honest, weddings are expensive
- Estimated guest list. Nearest and dearest, extended family, kids or no kids
- Ceremony type. Civil, religious, celebrant led

## 12–18 months before – the big bookings

This can be the busiest, and most mind-boggling time for couples.

### Book first-priority suppliers:

- **Venue.** If you haven't already done so
- **Registrar.** Booked via the local council - you'll often be guided by your venue
- **Photographer.** Popular dates regularly fill up at least 12 months ahead
- **Caterer.** If not included with venue
- **Wedding planner.** Venues can advise, guide and will help to build the timeline of your day. Some will include a coordinator who will help you through the process from booking to first dance. If your venue doesn't provide this or you want more hands-on assistance, look at getting yourself a wedding planner
- **Stationer.** If you plan to use the same creator from save the dates to place cards.

### Start researching:

- Wedding gown/outfit
- Videographer
- Band or DJ
- Florist
- Hair & makeup
- Transport
- Decor and venue styling
- Any other entertainment

### Other tasks:

- Check passport validity if you are honeymooning abroad
- Consider wedding insurance
- Get those 'save the dates' out

## 9–12 months before - securing the vibe

At this point, you're focusing on the look, feel, and flow of the day.

**Book:**

- Videographer
- Band / DJ
- Florist
- Hair & makeup artist
- Venue stylist
- Transport
- Any other suppliers - live artist, magician, musician.

**Do now:**

- Buy or order your wedding gown/outfit
- Start thinking about bridesmaids/groomsman
- Create a wedding website or similar if you need to. This can be useful for guests travelling from out of the area.
- If you're marrying abroad but legally marrying in the UK first, book your UK registry office ceremony early as these can fill up fast.

## 6–9 months before - the nitty gritty

You should now have most major suppliers booked and you're now refining the details.

**Book or arrange:**

- Cake maker
- Stationery if not already booked
- Accommodation for guests
- Celebrant. If having a non-legal ceremony

**Do now:**

- Plan your ceremony
- Decide on your décor and styling
- Order groomswear if hiring
- Send formal invitations

## 4–6 months before - peak 'wedmin'

This is unglamorous, but important.

**Book / confirm:**

- **Notice of Marriage appointment.** You can only give notice within 12 months of the wedding, but at least a month before
- Finalise your menu

**Do now:**

- Plan seating ideas
- Book pre-wedding beauty treatments
- Organise wedding rings
- Book hair and make up trials

## 2–3 months before - lock in the details

You're in the final stretch.

### Do now:

- Finalise guest numbers, chase up those stragglers
- Create seating plan
- Check in with your venue
- Write vows, if personal
- Write speeches
- Buy accessories. Shoes, veil, jewellery
- Think about any last-minute additions if there's room in the budget – it might not be too late to book a supplier you secretly wanted but dropped of the list

## 1-2 months before - final checks

Things will start to feel very real.

### Do now:

- Final payments to suppliers
- Confirm details with registrar or celebrant
- Gather seating charts, order of service, signage and any other stationery
- Pack emergency kit. Needle and thread, scissors, paracetamol and anything else that might be useful
- Confirm honeymoon details
- Confirm supplier arrival times
- Check in with your photographer and videographer about shot lists and schedules
- Confirm set lists with your Band/DJ
- Double-check venue licensing and ceremony location

## The Week Of

This is not the time for big decisions.

### Focus on:

- Delegating tasks
- Hydrating and sleeping
- Letting go of perfection. There are things that will be out of your control and that's okay. Think - plan A, B and even C.

### Do once:

- Rehearsal, if you are having one
- Put rings and important documents together, somewhere safe

## Remember. There's no "perfect" timeline

Weddings are full of variables - venue availability, supplier demand, your own priorities and good old British weather.

This timeline is a guide, not a rulebook and the list is not exhaustive.

**The most important thing?** Set a realistic budget and decide what is most important to you both.

Your wedding doesn't need to be rushed, extravagant, or flawless. It just needs to be *yours*.