

Groom To-Dos: 12-Month Checklist

12 Months Before

Figure out where you're going to have your ceremony and reception. Church, synagogue, remote Himalayan mountaintop? The best spots fill up fast, especially for the summer and fall months, so decide your wedding size and start looking.

Organize your guys. After you ask your best man to do the honors, make up your groomsman list. For crowd control, you'll want at least one usher per 50 guests. If your family is particularly unruly, you may want more. Get what you want. Crazy as it seems, people start buying you gifts immediately and registering may be the only way to keep your friends' and relatives' questionable tastes in check! Besides, you can now register for everything from practical household gifts to a new TV.

9 Months Before

Book the talent. Meet and greet suitable officiants. Priest, rabbi, justice of the peace, officially sanctioned Elvis impersonators -- once again, the choice is yours.

Book the other talent. It'll probably fall to you to choose the band or disk jockey. Be sure to get references and/or hear their music beforehand -- and run this one by your bride before you sign on the dotted line.

Figure out who your real friends are. Decide and start drawing up your guest list. This is something you'll probably want to get your parents in on, too.

6 Months Before

Plan your honeymoon. If you're leaving the country, now would be a good time to check or find your passport -- or get them if you and your girl don't have them -- and see what kind of shots or visas you might need.

Who's driving? Arrange for transportation to the ceremony and reception. Think limousine or horse and buggy. Note: The bus is not an option. (While you're at it, figure out where you're going after the reception -- airport? hotel? -- and make plans for getting there. FYI, tradition dictates that your best man, good guy that he is, drives you. But maybe you'll have seen enough of him by that time.)

3 Months Before

Get ready for the freeloaders. Your out-of-town guests need a place to stay, so unless you've got a couple dozen spare bedrooms, decide on a hotel and reserve a block of rooms. Let them know this in your invitations (see below).

By this time, the guest list should be finalized -- i.e., it has bridal, groom, and parental approval. Time to send out the invitations.

Get dressed! What will it be? Tails and top hat or traditional Scottish kilt? Decide and buy (or plan to rent), then pick out your groomsmen's getups.

Give a jeweler the finger. After he measures it, let your fiancée do the same and then order your wedding rings. Decide on inscriptions. Take it like a man. If you're going to tie the knot, you may have to get your blood tested. It's the law in some states (maybe even yours). So visit your doctor and roll up your sleeve.

6 to 8 Weeks Before

Get a sparkling smile. Cut down on coffee and try a whitening toothpaste. Want to really shine? Consider a professional bleaching with a dentist or use an over-the-counter whitening system.

Don't be cheap. This is one of the most important moments in your life; so put some real thought into the matter and then buy your bride a wedding gift. Make sure it's personal, make sure it's memorable, and make sure it's legal in all 50 states.

Don't be cheap, Part 2. Search high and low for the perfect groomsmen's gifts. These guys are going to put out come D-Day to make sure you look your best. Make sure you get them something decent to show for it. No paperweights please!

Don't lose it. Pick up your wedding rings and put them in a safe place. While you're at it, check the engraving carefully. A typo spells nothing but "loser."

2 Weeks Before

Do something really romantic with your wife-to-be. But before you do, pick up your marriage license.

Don't do something stupid. But have a really good time. It's your bachelor party and last chance to go crazy without the ball and chain legally attached.

1 Week Before

Get ready to relax. Double-check the honeymoon reservations, start packing your bags, and pick up travelers' checks.

Pay the man (or woman). Wouldn't it be great if your officiant presided over your wedding just for the sake of spreading a little more love on this lonely planet? Yeah, right. Put his or her fee in an envelope and give it to your best man for post-vow delivery.

Say something. You are expected to speak to the crowd at your wedding reception. Sound sensitive and intelligent, start coming up with that impromptu toast to her family now.

Rally the troops. Give your groomsmen the rehearsal dinner low-down and make sure everybody's got his monkey suit pressed and ready. By the way, get a haircut already.

Day Before

Make her cry. Write a sweet little "I love you" note (or other touching trick) and leave it somewhere she'll find it on wedding morning, particularly if you won't be seeing her before the ceremony.