



2026 Digital

Wedding Guide



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The joy, the commitment, the shared beginning of something new

Welcome to our digital wedding guide.

Weddings have always been more than a ceremony. They are a reflection of love, culture, family and personal story. Yet, in a world filled with endless inspiration, evolving traditions and an overwhelming number of decisions, planning a wedding can feel as daunting as it is exciting. We created this digital guide to bring clarity, confidence and a touch of joy back into the process.

At its heart, a wedding is not about perfection. It is about meaning. Whether you envision an intimate gathering under soft candlelight or a grand celebration with hundreds of guests, the most memorable weddings are those that feel authentic to the couple at the center of it all. Every choice — from the venue to the music, from

the attire to the smallest decorative detail — becomes an opportunity to tell your story.

Of course, turning vision into reality requires thoughtful planning. Budgets must be set, timelines organized and vendors carefully selected. It can be easy to become consumed by checklists and comparisons, but this guide is here to help you navigate those details without losing sight of what truly matters. You will find practical advice, expert insights and creative inspiration designed to simplify decisions and spark ideas.

Just as importantly, this guide acknowledges that no two weddings — or couples



— are the same. Traditions may guide you, but they don't define you. Perhaps you want to honor cultural customs passed down through generations, or maybe you are creating new traditions that reflect your shared values. There is no single "right way" to celebrate a marriage, only the way that feels right for you.

As you move through this journey, remember that the planning process itself is part of the experience. There will be moments of stress, certainly, but also moments of laughter, discovery and connection. Choosing flowers together, tasting cakes, writing vows — these are not just tasks to complete but memories in the making.

Our digital wedding guide is your companion through it all. It offers not

just direction but reassurance. You don't need to have every answer right away. You don't need to follow every trend. What you need is a clear sense of your priorities and the freedom to create a celebration that reflects your relationship.

In the end, long after the last song has played and the final guest has gone home, what will remain are the feelings — the joy, the commitment, the shared beginning of something new. Let this digital guide help you shape a day that honors those moments, beautifully and authentically. ■

Shane Goodman
Publisher
Iowa Living magazines

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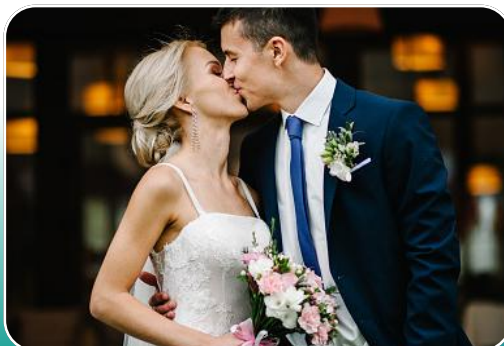
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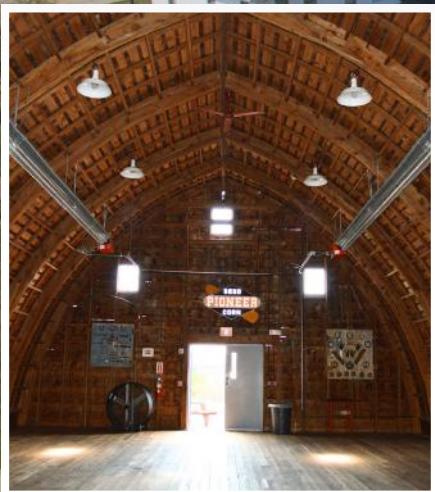


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Simple tips for a better bridal registry

Keep these tips and etiquette guidelines in mind to get the most out of your registry.

For some couples, the idea of registering for wedding gifts is an exciting way to start planning for the home they'll be sharing as newlyweds. For others, the registry is just one more chore to check off the wedding to-do list.





Regardless of where you fall on the love-it-or-hate-it spectrum, most experts agree a registry is a good idea, especially for couples who will be setting up a home together for the first time. Keep these tips and etiquette guidelines in mind to get the most out of your registry.

TAKE INVENTORY OF WHAT YOU HAVE AND WHAT YOU NEED

For couples who've lived alone or together, the registry may be a way to fill in gaps for necessities neither of you already have. It's also a good way to begin upgrading the less expensive kitchen items and furnishings you had as college students or singles. Make a list of your needs

and wants so you don't forget any essentials. If you're still in doubt, request a checklist from the store where you'll be registering so you can do some planning.

REGISTER FOR THINGS AT A WIDE RANGE OF PRICE POINTS

The whole purpose of a registry is to make it easy for your guests to get you things you'll like and need. Part of making it easy is recognizing your guests have diverse financial situations. While it's customary to gift the bride and groom, not everyone can afford an extravagant gift, especially if they've spent money on travel and attire to attend. While it's a good idea to offer modest options, don't shy away from bigger ticket

items that a small group might chip in on together.

KEEP ACCESS IN MIND WHEN YOU CHOOSE WHERE TO REGISTER

Avoid stores that are local or regional if you have many guests who live out of the area. Also avoid the temptation to choose online only options, as some guests will prefer to see what they're buying. Aim for a mix of large national stores and online retailers.

PLAN TO BLOCK OFF AT LEAST A FEW HOURS FOR AN IN-PERSON REGISTRY

It will take time to get everything set up. Traveling through the store, debating options and making your selections could take longer

than expected. Also be sure to ask how you can add to or edit your registry after your initial visit.

GET YOUR PARTNER INVOLVED

There are bound to be some parts of the registry your partner may not care about, but asking for input and making decisions together lets you both share in the excitement. Focus on things you'll each find useful as you settle into your new home. For example, the person who will be responsible for taking out the trash should get to pick the new kitchen trash can.

Find more inspiration for planning your way to wedded bliss at eLivingtoday.com. ■

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Playful details, bold statements

Brides walking down the aisle in 2026 are embracing a mix of nostalgia, romance and modern flair.

Designers are delivering playful embellishments, innovative fabrics and bold silhouettes that allow every bride to showcase her personal style. From dramatic bows to bubble skirts, this season's bridal fashion is anything but ordinary.





STATEMENT DETAILS TAKE CENTER STAGE

Oversized bows are making a big return, either draped across the back of a gown, cinched at the waist or perched on a shoulder. These eye-catching accents add a touch of whimsy and drama, perfect for brides who want a memorable entrance.

Unique lace is also trending, with designers experimenting beyond traditional floral patterns. Expect geometric motifs, abstract designs and even metallic threads woven into lace overlays, offering fresh takes on a timeless fabric.

Another revival is the Juliet cap, a romantic headpiece (think Romeo's sweetheart) that recalls vintage bridal styles. Often paired with a sheer veil, the

cap frames the face with delicate embroidery or beading, striking the right balance between old-world charm and contemporary sophistication.

MODERN SILHOUETTES WITH MOVEMENT

For brides seeking a fashion-forward edge, draped silhouettes are a standout. Soft folds of fabric create elegant shapes that flatter without feeling overly structured. These gowns flow gracefully with movement, offering comfort as well as style. Basque waists — which dip into a V-shape below the natural waistline — are also reappearing on runways. This detail elongates the torso and adds a regal air to ballgowns and fitted dresses alike.

Bubble skirts are bringing volume back in a playful way. Gathered hemlines create rounded shapes that feel youthful and daring, particularly in shorter styles designed for receptions or after-parties. For brides who want versatility, removable sleeves are one of the most practical trends of the year. They allow a gown to transform from a romantic, long-sleeved ceremony look into a strapless or off-the-shoulder style better suited for dancing.

COLOR AND CUSTOMIZATION

While white will always remain a classic, 2026 is seeing more brides step into color. Pale blues, blush pinks, champagne tones and even soft lavender are finding their way into bridal

collections. These hues add personality without straying too far from tradition.

Customization is key, whether through detachable details, bold accessories or mixing unexpected elements. A bride might pair a sleek gown with a bubble skirt overskirt for the reception, or layer a Juliet cap over a colorful veil.

This year's fashion is about flexibility and storytelling, creating a look that reflects who the bride is and how she wants to be remembered.

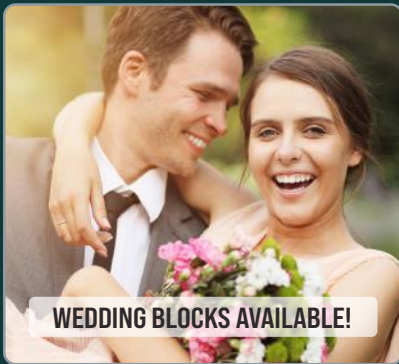
In 2026, bridal fashion celebrates both heritage and individuality.

With so many options, brides can feel free to be bold, romantic or playful and sometimes all three in one unforgettable ensemble. ■

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When to book appointments

When it comes to weddings, timing is everything, and that applies to beauty prep as much as planning the ceremony.

From hair trials to nail polish, a carefully thought-out beauty timeline helps ensure brides feel confident and radiant on the big day.





SIX MONTHS TO GO: BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION

The first step is establishing a healthy routine. Brides-to-be should schedule an initial consultation with a hairstylist and makeup artist to discuss ideas and expectations. This is the time to commit to a consistent skincare regimen, ideally guided by a dermatologist or esthetician. If professional facials are part of the plan, schedule them every four to six weeks to keep skin clear and glowing.

Hair health matters too. If a bride plans to grow out her hair, now's the time to talk trims, treatments or

color goals. For those considering a spray tan, a trial run a few months out ensures the right shade and application method.

THREE MONTHS TO TWO WEEKS: PERFECTING THE LOOK

Around the three-month mark, book a hair and makeup trial. Bring inspiration photos, accessories and even your veil if you have one. This is the chance to test curls vs. updos, natural vs. glam makeup, and make adjustments before the wedding week.

Continue with regular facials but stop anything too aggressive like peels or extractions at least a month

before the wedding.

If you're planning cosmetic treatments such as teeth whitening or injectables, this window gives enough time for results to settle.

Two weeks out is the best time for a final hair trim and color touch-up, so roots and split ends don't distract from the overall look.

Brides opting for a spray tan should do a trial one week before the big day to confirm the shade.

ONE WEEK TO THE BIG DAY: THE FINISHING TOUCHES

During the final week, less is more. Keep skincare simple and hydrate to avoid irritation. Book manicure

and pedicure appointments two to three days before the wedding so polish stays fresh. Classic shades, French tips or subtle sparkle remain popular choices.

If a spray tan is part of your look, schedule it two to three days before the wedding to allow color to settle naturally. Waxing should also happen at least three days prior to reduce the risk of redness.

Finally, pack a small day-of beauty kit: lipstick, blotting papers, setting spray, and bobby pins. The best bridal beauty timeline balances preparation with peace of mind, letting every bride shine with confidence from the aisle to the last dance. ■

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Your complete wedding timeline checklist

A step-by-step guide to staying organized
until your wedding day

Planning a wedding can feel overwhelming, but breaking it down into simple steps makes the process much more enjoyable. This checklist is designed to guide you through each stage—from the early excitement of setting your date to the final details leading up to your big day. Use it as a flexible roadmap to stay organized, reduce stress, and make sure nothing important gets overlooked. Most importantly, remember this is your celebration—take it one step at a time and enjoy the journey along the way.





WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

12-18+ MONTHS BEFORE

- Set budget
- Create guest list
- Choose wedding date
- Book venue
- Book ceremony location
- Hire wedding planner
- Start inspiration board (colors, style, theme)

9-12 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book photographer/videographer
- Book caterer
- Book DJ or band

- Purchase wedding dress
- Choose wedding party
- Create wedding website

6-9 MONTHS BEFORE

- Send Save the Dates
- Book florist
- Book hair & makeup
- Reserve rentals (chairs, linens, etc.)
- Order bridesmaid dresses
- Start registry
- Plan honeymoon

4-6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Order invitations

- Plan ceremony details
- Schedule dress fittings
- Book transportation
- Order cake or desserts

2-3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Send invitations
- Finalize menu
- Confirm all vendors
- Write vows
- Start seating chart

1 MONTH BEFORE

- Final dress fitting
- Obtain marriage license
- Finalize headcount
- Create wedding day timeline

- Pay remaining balances

WEEK OF WEDDING

- Pack for honeymoon
- Prepare vendor tips/payments
- Confirm final details with vendors
- Attend rehearsal
- Host rehearsal dinner
- Relax and enjoy

WEDDING DAY

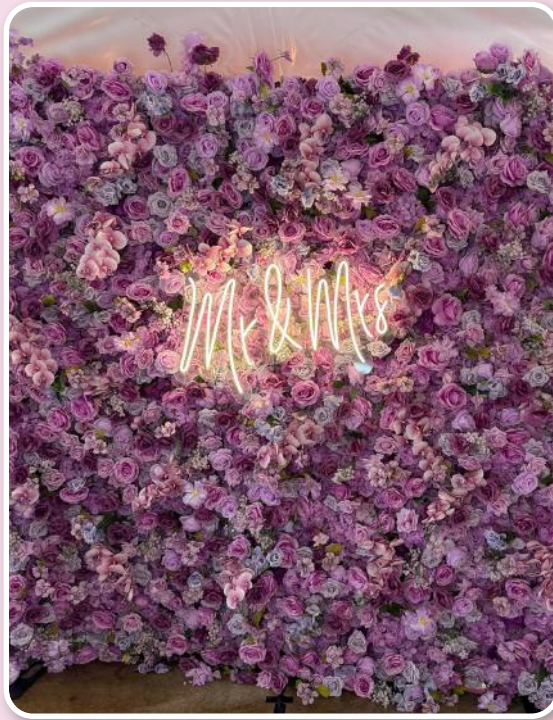
- Eat breakfast
- Get ready
- Stay present and enjoy every moment
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