

FREE PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Wedding Essentials Checklist

A complete, practical guide to what your wedding truly needs - and what you can confidently skip.

REQUIRED · FUNCTIONAL · WANTED

Use One List, Make Three Decisions

A wedding does not need every item commonly associated with one. Classify each choice by what is true for your event, in your location, at your venue.

REQUIRED BY LAW

Confirm locally. Legal rules may involve documents, timing, witnesses, an authorized officiant, fees, and filing.

FUNCTIONAL

Your event would not work safely or as promised without it. The answer changes with venue, format, guests, and weather.

WANTED

It adds meaning, beauty, comfort, or tradition, but the wedding can still happen without it.

THE FOUR-QUESTION TEST

- ☐ Is it legally required where we are marrying?
- ☐ Would the event fail operationally without it?
- ☐ Have we promised or communicated it to guests?
- ☐ Do we simply want it?

IMPORTANT

Legal requirements vary by jurisdiction. Use this workbook to organize the process, then verify every rule with the official local government office responsible for marriage licenses and records.

Money, Contracts & Coverage

A wedding cannot stay operational if confirmed commitments exceed available funds or if contract responsibilities are unclear. Confirm the real cost and written terms before signing.

SPENDING BOUNDARY

- ☐ Confirm the total funds genuinely available
- ☐ Set a working spending ceiling
- ☐ Reserve money for taxes, fees, tips, and changes
- ☐ Separate estimates, contracted totals, paid, and remaining
- ☐ Approve every new cost before the total increases

CONTRACT CONTROL

- ☐ Read scope, dates, hours, quantities, and exclusions
- ☐ Check deposits, due dates, cancellation, and rescheduling terms
- ☐ Confirm overtime, damage, cleanup, and service charges
- ☐ Store the signed contract and current vendor contact
- ☐ Verify whether liability or event insurance is required

CONFIRMED COMMITMENTS

COMMITMENT	CONTRACT TOTAL	PAID	BALANCE	DUE DATE	OWNER

NO VERBAL CHANGES

Any change affecting money, timing, scope, quantities, or responsibility should be confirmed in writing by someone authorized to amend the agreement. Keep the current version with the planning records.

Legally Necessary

Do not rely on a generic wedding website for the final answer. Record the official source, the deadline, and the person responsible for every legal step.

BEFORE THE CEREMONY

- ☐ Confirm eligibility and local marriage rules
- ☐ Apply for the marriage license
- ☐ Gather accepted identification
- ☐ Check residency or translation requirements
- ☐ Confirm any waiting period
- ☐ Confirm the license validity window
- ☐ Pay required fees

AT AND AFTER THE CEREMONY

- ☐ Confirm the required number of witnesses
- ☐ Use an authorized officiant or legal process
- ☐ Bring the correct documents to the ceremony
- ☐ Complete all required signatures
- ☐ File or return the completed license
- ☐ Confirm who submits the record
- ☐ Order certified copies if needed

Legal task	Official source	Owner	Deadline	Done
Obtain				☐
Bring				☐
Sign				☐
File / return				☐

Ceremony Essentials

Start with the people, place, sequence, and conditions needed for the ceremony to happen clearly, safely, and legally.

CORE FUNCTIONS

- ☐ A ceremony location and confirmed access time
- ☐ The couple and every legally required participant
- ☐ A legal officiant or approved legal process
- ☐ Required documents, witnesses, and signatures
- ☐ A clear ceremony structure or order
- ☐ A way for guests to see and hear
- ☐ Safe, accessible entry, seating, and movement

DEPENDING ON THE CEREMONY

- ☐ Guest seating
- ☐ Sound system or microphone
- ☐ Music and an assigned operator
- ☐ Processional organization
- ☐ Vows, readings, or ceremonial wording
- ☐ Weather protection or indoor backup
- ☐ Religious or cultural objects and participants

USUALLY OPTIONAL

Flowers, arches, aisle decor, printed programs, unity rituals, reserved-seat signs, elaborate entrances, and a wedding party are choices - unless a specific tradition makes one essential to you.

OUR CEREMONY CANNOT WORK WITHOUT

Can Everyone Participate?

Use this page to test the ceremony as an experience, not only as a visual setting.

Question	Yes	No	Action / owner
Can every guest enter and move safely?	☐	☐	
Is seating appropriate for the guest list?	☐	☐	
Can guests see the ceremony?	☐	☐	
Can guests hear every important moment?	☐	☐	
Do participants know where to be and when?	☐	☐	
Are required objects and documents assigned?	☐	☐	
Is there a workable weather alternative?	☐	☐	
Is the transition after the ceremony clear?	☐	☐	

ONE PERSON SHOULD OWN THE HANDOFF

Name the person who will cue the ceremony, answer vendor questions, handle documents, and move guests into the next part of the day.

Reception Essentials

A reception needs a safe place to gather and a realistic plan for food, beverages, movement, timing, comfort, and cleanup.

SPACE & FLOW

- ☐ Confirmed reception space
- ☐ Capacity and guest flow
- ☐ Tables and chairs as needed
- ☐ Accessible routes and seating
- ☐ Restrooms
- ☐ Weather and climate plan

SERVICE

- ☐ Food service plan
- ☐ Beverage and water plan
- ☐ Tableware and service equipment
- ☐ Staffing responsibilities
- ☐ Dietary information process
- ☐ Alcohol rules and service plan

OPERATIONS

- ☐ Power and lighting
- ☐ Setup and delivery access
- ☐ Timeline and key transitions
- ☐ Waste and cleanup plan
- ☐ Parking or transportation
- ☐ End time and departure plan

RECEPTION PROMISES MADE TO GUESTS

BUILD FROM THE CONTRACT

Mark what the venue includes first. Only then source the missing equipment, staff, rentals, and services.

Venue Infrastructure Audit

Confirm what exists, what is included, and who is responsible. A beautiful space is not automatically an operationally complete venue.

Infrastructure	Included	Need to source	Owner / notes
Safe capacity and usable spaces	☐	☐	
Guest and vendor access	☐	☐	
Rain / weather backup	☐	☐	
Accessibility	☐	☐	
Parking / transportation	☐	☐	
Restrooms	☐	☐	
Power capacity	☐	☐	
Functional lighting	☐	☐	
Heating / cooling	☐	☐	
Food-service facilities	☐	☐	
Alcohol permissions	☐	☐	
Furniture and rentals	☐	☐	
Setup / cleanup	☐	☐	
Waste removal	☐	☐	

Hire Functions, Not Traditions

There is no universal vendor list. Identify the function first, then decide whether a professional, the venue, or someone you trust can own it safely.

Function	Professional	Venue / included	Trusted person	NOT NEEDED
Legal ceremony	☐	☐	☐	☐
Venue operations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Food preparation and service	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beverage service	☐	☐	☐	☐
Photography / documentation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Music / sound	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flowers / styling	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rentals	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning / coordination	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beauty / dressing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transportation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cake / dessert	☐	☐	☐	☐

THE RESPONSIBILITY TEST

For each function, ask: Who does the work? Who provides the equipment? Who makes decisions if the plan changes? Who cleans up afterward?

Who Owns Each Critical Function?

Use this page for the functions that could disrupt the day if responsibility is vague.

Critical function	Responsible person / company	Contact	Backup
Feed guests			
Serve beverages			
Control ceremony sound			
Control reception music			
Set up spaces			
Run the timeline			
Answer vendor questions			
Handle legal documents			
Move guests / transport			
Manage weather changes			
Clean up and close the venue			

THE ONE FUNCTION STILL WITHOUT A CLEAR OWNER

Information Guests Need

Guests need enough information to arrive prepared, participate comfortably, and understand what applies to them.

ALWAYS CLARIFY

☐ Names / event purpose

☐ Wedding date

☐ Ceremony start time

☐ Full venue address

☐ RSVP method and deadline

☐ Dress guidance if relevant

USEFUL LOGISTICS

☐ Parking instructions

☐ Transportation or shuttle details

☐ Hotel information

☐ Accessibility details

☐ Meal or allergy questions

☐ Indoor / outdoor conditions

WHEN APPLICABLE

☐ Children policy

☐ Additional-event details

☐ Destination travel guidance

☐ Passport / visa timing

☐ Weather expectations

☐ Contact for guest questions

Information	Where guests will find it	When it will be sent	Owner

Clothing, Rings & Personal Items

Appropriate clothing is necessary; a prescribed bridal look is not. Plan for lead time, fit, comfort, weather, and responsibility.

WEARABILITY

- ☐ Choose clothing appropriate to the event and climate
- ☐ Allow ordering and delivery lead time
- ☐ Schedule alterations if needed
- ☐ Plan steaming, pressing, or garment care
- ☐ Confirm shoes are wearable on the venue surface
- ☐ Pack required undergarments and accessories

OWNERSHIP

- ☐ Decide whether rings are part of the ceremony
- ☐ Complete sizing and engraving in time
- ☐ Assign one named ring carrier
- ☐ Pack personal documents and medication
- ☐ Create a dressing-location plan
- ☐ Assign help for buttons, trains, or complex attire

OPTIONAL BY DEFAULT

Matching wedding-party outfits, multiple looks, specialty accessories, new jewelry, and ceremonial rings are not universal requirements.

ITEMS THAT MUST ARRIVE AT THE VENUE WITH US

Food & Beverage Checklist

The longer guests are gathered, the more important an appropriate food and beverage plan becomes. Match service to timing, venue rules, and guest needs.

FOOD

- ☐ Service format and menu
- ☐ Guest count deadline
- ☐ Dietary needs process
- ☐ Vendor meals
- ☐ Children's meals if applicable
- ☐ Service timing
- ☐ Kitchen / prep requirements

BEVERAGES

- ☐ Drinking water
- ☐ Nonalcoholic choices
- ☐ Alcohol decision
- ☐ Licensing / venue rules
- ☐ Qualified service if required
- ☐ Glassware and ice
- ☐ Service start and end times

Decision	Final answer	Owner	Deadline
Final guest count			
Dietary list			
Menu approval			
Beverage quantities			
Service timeline			

Music & Photography

Music and photography are optional choices. Sound reinforcement may be functional when guests cannot hear without it. Once included, each needs clear scope, equipment, access, timing, and ownership.

MUSIC / SOUND

- ☐ Decide where music is needed
- ☐ Choose live, DJ, playlist, or none
- ☐ Confirm sound equipment and power
- ☐ Assign an operator for every transition
- ☐ List key songs and do-not-play requests
- ☐ Confirm volume and end-time rules

PHOTOGRAPHY

- ☐ Decide what you want documented
- ☐ Set coverage start and end times
- ☐ Confirm venue access and restrictions
- ☐ Create a short priority photo list
- ☐ Name the person who gathers groups
- ☐ Confirm delivery and usage terms

MOMENTS THAT REQUIRE A CUE OR NAMED OWNER

KEEP THE LIST INTENTIONAL

A short, specific priority list is more useful than a copied list of dozens of generic songs or photographs.

Functional or Decorative?

Separate what helps the event operate from what changes its appearance. The same item may be functional at one wedding and optional at another.

Item	Functional here	Decorative only	Not needed	Reason / owner
Lighting	☐	☐	☐	
Directional signage	☐	☐	☐	
Table numbers	☐	☐	☐	
Place cards	☐	☐	☐	
Weather protection	☐	☐	☐	
Ceremony focal point	☐	☐	☐	
Centerpieces	☐	☐	☐	
Floral installations	☐	☐	☐	
Specialty linens	☐	☐	☐	
Backdrop	☐	☐	☐	
Printed menus	☐	☐	☐	
Favors	☐	☐	☐	
Guest book	☐	☐	☐	
Photo booth	☐	☐	☐	

Emergency Kit & Response Plan

A small kit is useful. A named person, accessible information, and a workable response plan matter more.

PACK ONLY WHAT IS USEFUL

- ☐ Basic first aid
- ☐ Stain treatment
- ☐ Fashion tape and safety pins
- ☐ Small sewing kit
- ☐ Personal medication (kept with its user)
- ☐ Tissues
- ☐ Phone chargers / power bank
- ☐ Water and simple snacks
- ☐ Garment-care tools

NAME AN OWNER

- ☐ Vendor questions
- ☐ Legal documents and rings
- ☐ Weather decision
- ☐ Emergency contacts
- ☐ Guest health concern
- ☐ Small timeline changes
- ☐ Lost item / delivery issue

Situation	Decision maker	Contact / backup
Unsafe weather		
Medical issue		
Vendor delay		
Power / sound failure		

Choose Extras on Purpose

Optional does not mean unimportant. It means the choice belongs to you - not to a generic wedding template.

MARK ONE CHOICE FOR EACH ITEM

KEEP · SKIP · DECIDE LATER

Wedding favors	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Printed ceremony programs	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Printed menus	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Guest book	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Photo booth	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Matching wedding-party accessories	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Specialty signage	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Formal cake cutting	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Bouquet or garter toss	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Grand entrance or exit	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Formal dances	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Wedding party	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Multiple attire changes	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Elaborate floral installations	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER
Reception after the ceremony	☐ KEEP	☐ SKIP	☐ LATER

A COMPLETE WEDDING CAN BE SIMPLE

Legal validity, safe operations, and clear guest care create completeness. Extras should earn their place through meaning or genuine enjoyment.

What Can We Eliminate?

Use this page when budget, time, or complexity needs to come down. Remove the item only after confirming that no legal, safety, access, or guest promise depends on it.

Item / service	Why it is on the plan	Impact if removed	Decision
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later
			Keep / Skip / Later

BEFORE REMOVING IT, CONFIRM

- ☐ It is not legally required.
- ☐ The event remains safe and operational.
- ☐ Guests were not promised it, or we can communicate the change.
- ☐ No essential function loses its owner.

Our Wedding Essentials at a Glance

Transfer only what is confirmed. This page becomes the final one-page operational check before the wedding week.

COMMITMENTS Budget, contracts, payments, insurance	LEGAL Documents, witnesses, officiant, signatures, filing
CEREMONY Place, people, sequence, sound, access, weather	RECEPTION Space, comfort, flow, timing, cleanup
VENUE Power, lighting, restrooms, climate, access, rules	VENDORS Every critical function has an owner and backup
GUESTS Time, address, RSVP, dress, transport, access	HOSPITALITY Food, water, beverages, dietary needs, service
PERSONAL Attire, rings if used, documents, medication	EXPERIENCE Music and photography scope, equipment, cues
BACKUP Weather, emergencies, contacts, decision makers	OPTIONAL Extras intentionally kept; everything else removed

THE THREE ITEMS STILL NEEDING A DECISION

COMPLETE MEANS SUPPORTED Your wedding is ready when legal, financial, and operational needs are covered; responsibilities are clear; guest promises can be kept; and every extra that remains is there by choice. If one essential function lacks money, a written commitment, or a named owner, it is not yet complete.

NOTES & LOOSE ENDS

Notes

Use this space for reminders, questions, and anything you want to revisit.