Thoughts on Planning a Spectacular Wedding

A planning guide and keepsake workbook for engaged couples

By Allen Thomas

The Wedding Planner · Serving Michigan couples since 2001

westmiweddingplanner.com · easternmiweddingplanner.com

Contents

A Note Before You Begin

1. Building Your Budget
2. The Planning Timeline: Twelve Months to the Big Day
3. Choosing Your Venue and Vendors
4. The Guest List and Invitations
5. Wedding Attire
6. Ceremony and Reception Flow (with a Sample Day-of Schedule)
7. The Mistress and Master of Ceremonies
8. Planning Worksheets
9. Final Thoughts

How to use this guide

Read it through once from start to finish, then keep it close. The checklists are meant to be ticked, the worksheets are meant to be filled in, and the margins are meant for notes. Planning a wedding is a series of small, manageable decisions — this guide simply puts them in order.

A Note Before You Begin

Congratulations! Whether you said yes on a quiet evening at home or in front of a crowd of cheering friends, you have just begun one of the most joyful projects of your life together. Since 2001, The Wedding Planner has had the privilege of helping Michigan couples connect with the people who make wedding days memorable — the photographers, florists, bakers, musicians, and venues that turn a plan into a celebration.

Over those years, one truth has held steady: the most spectacular weddings are not always the largest or the most expensive. They are the ones that feel unmistakably like the couple at the center of them. They are thoughtfully planned, warmly hosted, and run smoothly enough that the two of you — and everyone you love — can simply be present and enjoy it.

This guide gathers practical thoughts on how to get there. It covers your budget, a month-by-month timeline, choosing vendors, managing your guest list, attire, and the flow of the day itself. It also includes a detailed section on one of the most underrated roles at any reception: the **Mistress and Master of Ceremonies**, the people who keep your celebration moving gracefully from the grand entrance to the last dance.

Three guiding principles

1. **Decide what matters most — together.** Before you book anything, each of you should name the two or three elements you care about most. Let those priorities guide your spending and your time.
2. **Plan early, then let go.** The work you do months ahead is what allows you to relax on the day. Once something is decided and booked, trust it and move on.
3. **Surround yourselves with good people.** Experienced, reliable vendors and a capable wedding party are the best insurance for a beautiful day.

Finding Michigan vendors

When you are ready to start your search, our directories feature wedding professionals across the state: westmiweddingplanner.com for West Michigan and easternmiweddingplanner.com for Eastern Michigan.

1. Building Your Budget

Your budget is the foundation of every other decision, so settle it before you fall in love with a venue or a gown. A clear number — and an honest conversation about where it comes from — prevents stress later.

Step one: find your total

- **Talk openly about contributions.** If family members plan to help, ask early and kindly what they would like to contribute, and whether any expectations come with it.
- **Look at your own savings and timeline.** Decide what you can comfortably set aside each month between now and the wedding.
- **Agree on a firm ceiling** — and a separate contingency cushion for the unexpected.

Step two: rank your priorities

Each of you should list the elements of the day in order of importance. Perhaps photography and food top one list while music and the dance floor top the other. Where your lists overlap, invest. Where neither of you cares much, simplify.

Step three: allocate

Every couple's allocation is different, and prices vary widely by region, season, and day of the week. Rather than relying on a formula, gather real quotes from vendors in your area and build your plan from those numbers. Use the categories below as a starting framework, and record your actual figures on the Budget Worksheet in Section 8.

Category	What it typically includes
Venue & rentals	Ceremony and reception sites, tables, chairs, linens, tents, lighting
Food & beverage	Catering, bar service, service staff, gratuities, cake or desserts
Photography & video	Photographer, videographer, engagement session, albums
Music & entertainment	DJ or band, ceremony musicians, photobooth
Flowers & décor	Bouquets, boutonnières, centerpieces, ceremony décor
Attire & beauty	Gown, suit or tuxedo, alterations, accessories, hair and makeup
Stationery	Save-the-dates, invitations, programs, signage, postage
Officiant & license	Officiant fee or donation, marriage license
Rings	Engagement and wedding bands
Transportation	Limousine, shuttle, or getaway car
Gifts & favors	Wedding party gifts, parent gifts, guest favors
Contingency	A cushion for overages and surprises

Budget-friendly thoughts

- **Consider the date.** Many venues and vendors offer different pricing for off-peak months, Fridays, or Sundays. Ask.
- **Trim the guest list first.** Nearly every cost — food, rentals, invitations, favors — grows with each guest.
- **Read every contract.** Look for service charges, gratuities, overtime rates, cake-cutting fees, and taxes that may not appear in the headline price.
- **Track deposits and due dates.** A simple payment schedule (see the worksheet) keeps you from surprises in the final month.
- **Spend where guests notice.** Comfortable seating, good food, great music, and a smooth timeline are remembered long after the details fade.

2. The Planning Timeline

Twelve months is a comfortable planning window, but many couples plan beautiful weddings in less time — simply compress the steps below. If your date falls in a popular season, book your venue and key vendors as early as you can.

12 Months or More Before

- ☐ Celebrate your engagement — and announce it to family first.
- ☐ Discuss your vision, style, and the size of the celebration.
- ☐ Set your total budget and rank your priorities.
- ☐ Draft a preliminary guest list to estimate your headcount.
- ☐ Choose your wedding date (and a backup or two).
- ☐ Research and tour ceremony and reception venues.
- ☐ Book your venue and confirm what it includes.
- ☐ Consider hiring a wedding planner or day-of coordinator.
- ☐ Start a wedding binder, folder, or shared spreadsheet.

10 to 11 Months Before

- ☐ Book your photographer and videographer.
- ☐ Book your DJ or band.
- ☐ Book your caterer, if not provided by the venue.
- ☐ Choose your officiant and confirm availability.
- ☐ Ask your wedding party to stand with you.
- ☐ Begin thinking about your Mistress and/or Master of Ceremonies.
- ☐ Plan an engagement photo session.

8 to 9 Months Before

- ☐ Shop for the wedding gown and begin attire planning.
- ☐ Book your florist.
- ☐ Reserve hotel room blocks for out-of-town guests.
- ☐ Set up a wedding website and gift registry.
- ☐ Send save-the-dates (especially for destination or holiday weddings).

☐ Book a photobooth and any specialty entertainment.

6 to 7 Months Before

☐ Choose bridesmaid attire.

☐ Book rentals: tents, linens, lighting, furniture, specialty items.

☐ Arrange transportation for the wedding day.

☐ Book hair and makeup artists; schedule trials.

☐ Plan your honeymoon and check passport dates.

☐ Begin designing invitations and stationery.

4 to 5 Months Before

☐ Schedule cake tastings and order your cake.

☐ Choose suits or tuxedos for the groom and groomsmen.

☐ Plan the rehearsal and rehearsal dinner.

☐ Purchase wedding bands.

☐ Finalize your ceremony details with your officiant.

☐ Order invitations, programs, and day-of stationery.

2 to 3 Months Before

☐ Mail invitations (often six to eight weeks ahead).

☐ Finalize the menu and bar with your caterer.

☐ Meet with your DJ or band about music and announcements.

☐ Meet with your MC to review the reception timeline.

☐ Begin gown fittings and alterations.

☐ Purchase wedding party and parent gifts.

☐ Write your vows, if you are writing your own.

☐ Confirm vendor arrival times and contact details.

1 Month Before

☐ Obtain your marriage license (check your county clerk's requirements and timing).

☐ Follow up on any missing RSVPs.

☐ Create your seating chart.

☐ Give final headcount to the caterer and venue.

- ☐ Finalize the day-of timeline and share it with all vendors.
- ☐ Prepare final payments and gratuity envelopes.
- ☐ Hold a final walk-through at the venue.
- ☐ Final dress fitting; break in your shoes.

1 to 2 Weeks Before

- ☐ Confirm every vendor one last time — times, addresses, contacts.
- ☐ Send the final run sheet to your MC, DJ, planner, and photographer.
- ☐ Deliver place cards, guest book, favors, and décor to the venue or planner.
- ☐ Pack for the honeymoon.
- ☐ Prepare an emergency kit (see Final Thoughts).
- ☐ Schedule a little rest — a massage, a quiet dinner, an early night.

The Day Before

- ☐ Attend the rehearsal and rehearsal dinner.
- ☐ Hand off rings, license, final payments, and gifts to trusted people.
- ☐ Charge phones and cameras; lay out attire and accessories.
- ☐ Drink water, eat well, and go to bed early.

The Wedding Day

- ☐ Eat a real breakfast and stay hydrated.
- ☐ Give yourself more time than you think you need.
- ☐ Hand your phone to someone you trust.
- ☐ Let your planner, MC, and wedding party handle the details.
- ☐ Take a moment alone together to breathe it all in.
- ☐ Enjoy every minute — you planned for this.

3. Choosing Your Venue and Vendors

Your vendors are the team that brings your day to life. Look for professionals whose work you love, whose reviews and references are consistently strong, and who communicate clearly and promptly. Always get the agreement in writing.

Questions to Ask Every Vendor

Are you available on our date? What exactly is included in your package? What are the deposit, payment schedule, and cancellation policy? Do you carry liability insurance? Who will be working our event — you or an associate? What happens if you are ill or have an emergency? Can you provide references from recent couples?

The Venue

- Does the capacity comfortably fit your guest count — seated, with a dance floor?
- What is included: tables, chairs, linens, staff, setup, cleanup?
- Is there an on-site coordinator, and what does that person handle?
- Are there exclusive or preferred vendor requirements (especially catering)?
- What is the rain or weather backup plan for outdoor spaces?
- What are the start and end times, noise restrictions, and overtime rates?
- Is there parking, accessibility, and a space to get ready?

Photographer & Videographer

- Review full galleries from complete weddings, not just highlights.
- Ask how many hours are included and how overtime is billed.
- Clarify whether a second shooter is included.
- Ask about delivery timelines, image rights, and album options.
- Share a list of must-have shots and family groupings in advance.
- Make sure your personalities click — they will be with you all day.

DJ or Band

- Ask to see them perform, or watch video of a live event.
- Confirm whether they will also serve as MC, or work alongside yours.
- Discuss your must-play and do-not-play lists.
- Ask about equipment, backup gear, microphones, and lighting.
- Confirm ceremony sound if your ceremony and reception are in different spaces.

- Clarify setup time, power needs, and breaks (especially for bands).

Florist

- Bring photos, your color palette, and your venue details.
- Ask what blooms are in season for your date.
- Discuss bouquets, boutonnières, corsages, ceremony pieces, and centerpieces.
- Ask whether ceremony flowers can be moved to the reception.
- Confirm delivery, setup, and teardown times.

Caterer

- Schedule a tasting before you sign.
- Ask about plated, buffet, family-style, and station options.
- Confirm accommodations for allergies and dietary needs.
- Clarify staffing levels, service charges, and gratuity.
- Ask about bar service, licensing, and liability.
- Confirm whether vendor meals are offered.

Cake & Desserts

- Taste before you order — flavors and fillings matter.
- Bring inspiration photos and your guest count.
- Ask about delivery, setup, and any cake-cutting fees at your venue.
- Consider a smaller display cake paired with a sheet cake or dessert table.
- Ask how the top tier can be saved, if you plan to keep it.

Officiant

- Meet in person or by video to be sure you feel comfortable.
- Ask about their ceremony style, length, and personalization.
- Confirm their availability for the rehearsal.
- Understand who files the marriage license and when.
- Check any requirements if you are marrying in a place of worship.

Photobooth

- Ask about open-air versus enclosed setups and space needs.
- Review backdrop options, props, and custom print templates.
- Ask whether an attendant is included.
- Confirm digital sharing and print options.

- Clarify hours and setup time.

Rentals

- Make a complete list: tables, chairs, linens, tableware, glassware, lighting, tents, lounge furniture, dance floor.
- Confirm delivery and pickup windows with your venue.
- Ask who is responsible for setup, breakdown, and damage.
- Count twice — then add a small cushion.

4. The Guest List and Invitations

Building the list

The guest list is often the most emotional part of planning. Start by agreeing on your total capacity and budget, then build the list in tiers.

- **Tier one:** immediate family and the friends you cannot imagine the day without.
- **Tier two:** extended family and close friends.
- **Tier three:** colleagues, family friends, and acquaintances.
- Decide early — and apply consistently — your policies on plus-ones, children, and coworkers.
- If families are contributing, discuss how many guests each side may invite.

Save-the-dates

- Most couples send save-the-dates several months ahead; send earlier for destination or holiday weddings.
- Send only to guests you are certain to invite.
- Include your names, date, city, and wedding website.

Invitations

- Mail invitations roughly six to eight weeks before the wedding.
- Set the RSVP date about three to four weeks before the wedding, giving you time for your final headcount.
- Have a complete suite weighed at the post office before buying postage.
- Address envelopes carefully and include exactly who is invited.
- Include or link to details: accommodations, directions, dress code, and registry (registry information belongs on the website rather than the invitation itself).

Tracking RSVPs

Use the Guest Tracker in Section 8 or a shared spreadsheet. Record each response, meal choice, dietary needs, table assignment, and whether a thank-you note has been sent. A few days after the RSVP date, kindly follow up with anyone who hasn't responded.

Seating thoughts

- Seat parents and grandparents where they can see you and the dance floor.
- Group guests who know one another, and keep a mix of ages and energies.

- Keep older guests away from speakers; seat young families near exits.
- Finalize the chart only after your final headcount — and expect a last-minute change or two.

5. Wedding Attire

For the bride

- Begin shopping about eight to ten months ahead; many gowns require several months to order, plus time for alterations.
- Bring only a few trusted opinions to appointments.
- Consider your venue, season, and comfort — you will sit, dance, hug, and walk all day.
- Plan for multiple fittings, and bring your actual shoes and undergarments.
- Choose your veil, headpiece, jewelry, and shoes after the gown.

For the groom

- Decide between renting and purchasing a suit or tuxedo.
- Coordinate the style and color with the overall look of the wedding party.
- Schedule tailoring well in advance; get final fittings close to the date.
- Don't forget shoes, socks, belt or suspenders, cufflinks, and a boutonnière.

For the wedding party

- Offer guidance on color and length, and be mindful of what you are asking attendants to spend.
- Set ordering deadlines so everything arrives in time for alterations.
- Coordinate the groomsmen's measurements and pickup together.

Day-of comfort

- Break in shoes beforehand — and pack a comfortable backup pair for dancing.
- Practice bustling the gown with the person who will do it.
- Keep a small kit of safety pins, fashion tape, stain remover, and blotting papers.

6. Ceremony and Reception Flow

A traditional ceremony order

Every faith and culture has its own beautiful traditions; adapt this outline to yours with your officiant.

1. Prelude music as guests are seated
2. Seating of grandparents and parents
3. Processional: officiant, groom and groomsmen, bridesmaids, ring bearer and flower girl, then the bride
4. Welcome and opening words
5. Readings or a personal reflection
6. Exchange of vows
7. Exchange of rings
8. Unity ritual, if desired
9. Declaration of marriage and the first kiss
10. Recessional

A typical reception flow

1. Cocktail hour while the couple takes photos
2. Guests seated; MC welcomes and makes announcements
3. Grand entrance of the wedding party and the couple
4. Welcome remarks and blessing or grace
5. Dinner service
6. Toasts and speeches
7. First dance, then parent dances
8. Cake cutting
9. Open dancing
10. Bouquet and garter toss, or other traditions
11. Last dance and grand send-off

Sample day-of schedule

This sample assumes a 4:00 p.m. ceremony with a reception at the same venue. Adjust every time to fit your venue, photographer, and travel between locations.

Time	Event	Notes
9:00 a.m.	Hair and makeup begin	Bride and attendants; allow extra time
11:00 a.m.	Florist and décor deliveries	Planner or venue receives
12:00 p.m.	Photographer arrives	Detail shots: rings, invitations, attire
12:30 p.m.	Light lunch for the wedding party	Keep snacks and water on hand
1:30 p.m.	Bride dresses	Getting-ready photos
2:00 p.m.	First look (optional)	Followed by couple portraits
2:30 p.m.	Wedding party and family photos	Use a written shot list
3:15 p.m.	DJ or ceremony musicians set up	Sound check with microphones
3:30 p.m.	Guests begin arriving	Prelude music; ushers seat guests
4:00 p.m.	Ceremony begins	Typically 20–40 minutes
4:30 p.m.	Cocktail hour	Remaining family photos
5:30 p.m.	Guests seated for reception	MC welcome and announcements
5:40 p.m.	Grand entrance	Wedding party, then the couple
5:50 p.m.	Welcome, blessing, dinner service	
6:45 p.m.	Toasts and speeches	Parents, maid of honor, best man
7:10 p.m.	First dance and parent dances	
7:30 p.m.	Cake cutting	Dessert served
7:45 p.m.	Dancing begins	Photobooth opens
9:00 p.m.	Bouquet and garter toss (optional)	
10:45 p.m.	Last dance	
11:00 p.m.	Grand send-off	Sparklers, bubbles, or a classic exit

7. The Mistress and Master of Ceremonies

If the wedding planner is the director behind the curtain, the Mistress or Master of Ceremonies — the MC — is the host on the stage. The MC welcomes your guests, introduces the moments that matter, keeps the evening on schedule, and smooths over the little surprises that every celebration brings. A wonderful MC is a gift to the couple: guests feel cared for, the evening flows, and the two of you never have to watch the clock.

Some couples choose one MC; others choose a pair — often a Mistress and a Master of Ceremonies who share the microphone. Professional DJs frequently handle MC duties as well. Whatever you choose, be sure everyone knows exactly who owns which responsibility.

Choosing your MC

Look for someone who is:

- **Comfortable speaking in front of a crowd** — warm and clear, not necessarily a comedian.
- **Organized and reliable** — able to follow a schedule and adjust it calmly.
- **Socially gracious** — knows, or can quickly learn, the names and relationships of key guests.
- **Discreet and level-headed** — able to handle a delay or a hiccup without drawing attention to it.
- **Willing to stay sober-minded** — able to celebrate while remaining sharp until the last announcement.
- **Not overloaded** — ideally not someone with heavy duties elsewhere, such as a parent hosting or a best man juggling a speech and ring duty.

Good candidates

- A friend or relative who is a natural host or experienced public speaker
- A sibling or cousin who knows both families well
- A pair — one from each family — to share the role and represent both sides
- Your professional DJ or band leader, especially for a larger reception

Making the ask

Invite your MC several months ahead, explain what the role involves (share this section!), and give them a chance to say no gracefully. Thank them with a gift, just as you would your wedding party.

Responsibilities before the wedding

- ☐ Meet with the couple to learn their vision, style, and the tone they want — formal, playful, or somewhere in between.
- ☐ Review the full reception timeline and order of events.
- ☐ Learn names and correct pronunciations of the wedding party, parents, grandparents, and speakers. Write them phonetically.
- ☐ Confirm the order of the grand entrance and how each person or pair should be introduced.
- ☐ Gather the list of toast and speech givers, the order, and the agreed time limit for each.
- ☐ Confirm any sensitive family dynamics — who should not be seated together, deceased relatives to be honored, divorced parents' preferences.
- ☐ Collect announcements: buffet release order, photobooth, cake, send-off, shuttles, last call.
- ☐ Prepare a written script and a printed run sheet (samples follow).
- ☐ Attend the rehearsal, if possible, to meet the wedding party and vendors.
- ☐ Practice aloud — especially the names and the welcome.

Coordinating with the planner, DJ, and venue

The MC sits at the center of a small team. Clear roles prevent awkward overlaps — such as two people reaching for the microphone at once.

Partner	What to coordinate
Wedding planner or coordinator	Overall timeline, cues for each segment, who signals the MC, how changes are communicated on the day
DJ or band	Microphone handoffs, music cues for entrances and dances, who makes which announcement, volume during speeches
Venue manager / catering captain	Dinner service timing, table release order, when the kitchen needs guests seated, cake cutting and service, last call, end time
Photographer & videographer	Advance notice before key moments — entrances, toasts, first dance, cake — so they are in position
Speakers	Order of speeches, time limits, where to stand, and how to use the microphone

- Exchange cell phone numbers with the planner, DJ, and venue manager.
- Arrive early enough to do a microphone check and find a spot near the DJ or head table.
- Agree on a simple hand signal or text for "we need five more minutes" or "ready to go."

Running the reception timeline

The MC is the keeper of the clock — gently. Guests should feel the evening flowing naturally, never rushed.

- **Keep the run sheet in hand** — printed, not only on a phone.
- **Check in with the kitchen before each segment.** Dinner timing drives everything that follows.
- **Give the couple a quiet heads-up** a few minutes before each moment that involves them.
- **Cue vendors** — the photographer especially — before every announcement.
- **Watch the room's energy.** If the dance floor is full, a planned tradition can wait a song or two.

Introductions and the grand entrance

- ☐ Line up the wedding party in order outside the room a few minutes ahead.
- ☐ Confirm each name and pronunciation one final time.
- ☐ Agree on the entrance music with the DJ and the cue to start.
- ☐ Ask guests to stand (if desired) and give a warm welcome before introductions begin.
- ☐ Introduce the couple exactly as they have requested — for example, "Mr. and Mrs.," both first names, or a shared surname.
- ☐ Invite applause, then move smoothly into the first dance or the welcome toast as planned.

Toasts and speeches

- Confirm the order — commonly a parent or host first, followed by the maid of honor and best man, and closing with a thank-you from the couple.
- Agree on a time limit with each speaker ahead of time; a few minutes is plenty.
- Make sure every glass is filled before toasts begin, coordinating with catering.
- Introduce each speaker by name and relationship to the couple.
- Hand the microphone directly to each speaker and show them how to hold it.
- If a speech runs long, wait for a natural pause, then gently step forward with a smile and a thank-you.

Announcements

Typical announcements an MC may make:

- Welcome and housekeeping: restrooms, unplugged-ceremony requests, the photobooth, guest book
- Dinner service and the table release order for buffets

- Honoring loved ones who have passed or could not attend (only as the couple wishes)
- Cake cutting, the first dance, parent dances, and special dances
- Bouquet and garter toss or other traditions
- Last call, shuttles, and transportation
- The grand send-off: where to gather, what to hold, and when

Keep each announcement short, clear, and cheerful. Say the most important information twice.

Keeping time

- Build small buffers into the timeline; few receptions run exactly to the minute.
- Know which items are firm (the venue's end time, the kitchen's dinner service) and which are flexible.
- If running behind, shorten transitions rather than cutting the couple's favorite moments.
- Quietly remind speakers of their time limit just before they speak.
- Communicate any change to the DJ, planner, and photographer right away.

Handling hiccups gracefully

If this happens...	Try this
A speaker is missing or not ready	Move to the next speaker or segment and circle back later.
Dinner is running late	Fill the moment: invite guests to the photobooth, sign the guest book, or play a light game.
A microphone fails	Have a backup from the DJ ready; meanwhile, speak from a spot where everyone can hear.
A guest has had too much to drink	Quietly alert the planner or venue staff; never address it from the microphone.
A speech becomes inappropriate	At a natural pause, step in warmly: "Let's raise our glasses!" and move on.
The couple is missing for a key moment	Stall gracefully with a short story or a song; send someone to find them.
Weather or schedule changes	Coordinate with the planner, then make one clear, calm announcement.

Etiquette: do's and don'ts

Do	Don't
✓ Keep the spotlight on the couple	✗ Tell inside jokes most guests won't understand
✓ Speak slowly, clearly, and warmly	

✓ Practice names until they're easy	✗ Share embarrassing stories or mention exes
✓ Dress in keeping with the wedding party	✗ Turn the role into a stand-up routine
✓ Thank vendors and hosts by name	✗ Drink to excess
✓ Stay clear-headed all evening	✗ Ad-lib sensitive family matters
✓ Be flexible and calm under pressure	✗ Let speeches run on without a kind end
✓ Keep announcements brief	✗ Make announcements over loud music
	✗ Leave your post without a handoff

Sample MC script

Replace the bracketed details with your own. Keep the tone natural — your MC should sound like themselves.

Welcome (as guests are seated)

Good evening, everyone, and welcome! My name is [Name], and I'm [relationship to the couple]. On behalf of [Couple's names] and their families, thank you so much for being here to celebrate this wonderful day. A few quick notes before we begin: restrooms are located [location], the photobooth is open [time/location], and please take a moment to sign the guest book. In just a few minutes, we'll welcome the wedding party — so please find your seats.

Grand entrance

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the wedding party!... Please welcome the parents of the bride, [Names]!... The parents of the groom, [Names]!... [Bridesmaid] escorted by [Groomsman]!... The maid of honor, [Name], and the best man, [Name]!... And now, for the very first time, please rise and give a warm welcome to [the couple as they wish to be introduced]!

Blessing and dinner

Thank you! We are so glad you're here. To begin our dinner, I'd like to invite [Name] to offer a blessing. ... Thank you. Dinner will now be served. [For buffets: We'll invite tables up one at a time, beginning with our head table.] Enjoy!

Toasts

If everyone could make sure their glasses are filled, we'll begin our toasts. First, please welcome [Name], [relationship]. ... Thank you, [Name]. Next, the maid of honor, [Name]. ... And finally, the best man, [Name]. ... Please raise your glasses: to [Couple's names]!

First dance and parent dances

Now, please direct your attention to the dance floor as [Couple] share their first dance as a married couple. ... Next, we invite the bride and her father [or chosen partner] for a special dance ... and the groom and his mother [or chosen partner].

Cake cutting

Photographers, get ready — [Couple] will now cut their wedding cake! Dessert will be served shortly, and the dance floor is officially open!

Last call and send-off

Friends, the bar will close in fifteen minutes, and shuttles will depart at [time] from [location]. ... It's time for our final dance of the evening. Afterward, please make your way to [location] for the grand send-off. [Sparklers/bubbles] will be handed out at the door. Thank you all for celebrating with us!

MC RUN SHEET

Print this, fill it in, and keep it in your pocket on the day.

Time	Segment	Who / Cue	Announcement or notes	✓
	Guests seated / welcome	MC; DJ lowers music	Welcome, housekeeping	
	Line up wedding party	Planner; MC confirms names		
	Grand entrance	DJ plays entrance song	Introductions in order	
	Blessing	[Name]		
	Dinner service	Catering captain signals	Table release order	
	Toasts	Glasses filled; photographer ready	Speaker order & time limits	
	First dance	DJ: [song]		
	Parent dances	DJ: [songs]		
	Cake cutting	Venue staff; photographer		
	Open dancing	DJ	Photobooth reminder	
	Traditions (bouquet, garter)	DJ; planner gathers guests		
	Last call	Bar staff	Shuttle info	
	Last dance	DJ: [song]		
	Grand send-off	Planner distributes items	Where to gather	

KEY CONTACTS ON THE DAY

Role	Name	Phone
Wedding planner/coordinator		
DJ or band leader		
Venue manager		
Catering captain		
Photographer		
Co-MC / backup		

8. Planning Worksheets

Budget Worksheet

Total budget: $_____ Contingency set aside: $_____

Category	Estimated	Actual	Deposit paid	Balance due / date
Venue & rentals				
Catering & bar				
Cake & desserts				
Photography				
Videography				
DJ / band				
Ceremony music				
Florist & décor				
Photobooth				
Attire — bride				
Attire — groom				
Hair & makeup				
Stationery & postage				
Officiant & license				
Rings				
Transportation				
Gifts & favors				
Gratuities				
Other				
TOTAL				

Vendor Contacts

Vendor	Company / contact	Phone & email	Arrival time	Contract ✓
Venue				
Planner / coordinator				
Caterer				
Photographer				
Videographer				
DJ / band				
Florist				
Baker				
Officiant				
Photobooth				
Rentals				
Hair & makeup				
Transportation				
Mistress / Master of Ceremonies				

Guest Tracker

Make as many copies of this page as you need.

Guest name(s)	# Invited	RSVP	Meal / dietary	Table	Gift	Thank-you ✓

Notes

9. Final Thoughts

A few last pieces of advice, gathered from years of helping couples bring their celebrations to life:

- **Put it all in writing.** Contracts, timelines, shot lists, and run sheets protect everyone and keep the team aligned.
- **Appoint a point person.** Someone other than the two of you should answer vendor questions on the day.
- **Build in buffer time.** Hair, photos, and travel almost always take longer than expected.
- **Feed yourselves.** Ask your caterer to set aside plates for you — and take a few minutes to actually eat.
- **Steal a quiet moment.** Step away together for a few minutes after the ceremony to let it sink in.
- **Prepare a vendor tip envelope** in advance and give it to a trusted person to distribute.
- **Thank your people.** Write thank-you notes promptly, and don't forget the vendors who served you well — a kind review means a great deal to them.
- **Remember why you're there.** At the end of the day, you will be married. Everything else is a bonus.

The Wedding-Day Emergency Kit

- ☐ Sewing kit, safety pins, and fashion tape
- ☐ Stain remover pen and lint roller
- ☐ Pain reliever, antacid, and bandages
- ☐ Blotting papers, lipstick, and compact
- ☐ Deodorant, mints, and tissues
- ☐ Phone chargers
- ☐ Snacks and water
- ☐ Clear nail polish and an extra pair of hosiery
- ☐ Copies of the timeline and vendor contacts
- ☐ Umbrellas (this is Michigan, after all)

Find Your Michigan Wedding Team

Browse wedding professionals across the state at westmiweddingplanner.com (West Michigan) and easternmiweddingplanner.com (Eastern Michigan). We have been helping Michigan couples plan their celebrations since 2001, and we would be honored to be part of yours.

With warmest wishes for a spectacular wedding and a lifetime of happiness,

Allen Thomas · The Wedding Planner