

# From 'I Will' to 'I Do' in 8 Easy Steps

Contributed by Jo Anna Zaffree  
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So, by now you have found your soulmate. The yin to your yang. The person who completes you. The person you want to spend the rest of your life with. Congratulations!

Now for the hard part. What do you do next? Everyone has good advice for you; where to shop for your gown, the best caterer, what photographer you must have, etc. The realization of planning your wedding, the biggest, most meaningful event you will ever host, is starting to hit.

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Your head is spinning. Budget, DJ's, caterer's, oh my!

Do not distress, help is on it's way. There are not really a million details to tend to- just 999,000. Ok , maybe not that many. I have condensed your to-do list into the 8 most important steps in your planning. These are the big umbrellas over the more minute details.

The process is quite simple really, as long as you are organized and follow a plan.

This is the first step to planning the wedding of your dreams. Purchase a professionally made wedding planner.

This organizer will be your planning companion. It must contain relevant, useful information and tools. Such as; budget planner, guest list planner, calendar, wedding countdown checklist, vendor interview questions, wedding day itinerary, etc.

The binder you choose should be lightweight and durable so that you can carry it with you while meeting with your vendors or shopping for your gown. Use this planner to document all aspects of your planning. From vendor

appointments to transportation. Keep copies of your vendor contracts in your planner and have it with you on your wedding day in case of any vendor misunderstandings.

The second step is also quite easy. Sit down with your fiancé and talk about your 'dream wedding'. Is it in your church? Is it a small gathering of important friends and family? Big band and lots of dancing? A five tiered cake with fondant and sugar flowers? Is it Elegant? Or Casual?

Is it on the beach in Hawaii? Whatever your vision, write it down. You will want to convey this to your wedding vendors during the interview process.

The third step. Determine a realistic budget for your wedding. Gather together the people who will be responsible for paying for your wedding. Describe your 'dream wedding'

to them. Discuss the amount available and who will be paying for what. Remember, every bride has a budget. It will take a creative bride to have the wedding of her dreams on a realistic budget.

Number four. Complete your guest list. You may want to create an A list and a B list depending on your budget.

Step five. Interview and hire wedding vendors. By this point you will have received many recommendations from recently married friends. I suggest you interview these vendors first. Interview a minimum of three vendors per category. You want to find the perfect fit for your event.

Discuss your budget and communicate your wedding vision. Do not hire a vendor on price alone. Hire a vendor whom you feel has your best interests at heart. Do not discount your vendors referral list. Call at least three.

Number six. At this point, you may want to consider hiring a professional wedding consultant. A wedding consultant will be able to determine which vendors will be best for your event and for your budget. Your consultant will save you time and money by doing all the legwork for you, bringing your wedding vision to life, and keeping you on budget.

Seven. Plan your honeymoon. Keep in mind the season and your vacation interests. Use a certified travel agent. Feel free to browse the web for honeymoon ideas and locals, but it is best to leave the details to a professional agent.

Would you trust a plumber to do your heart surgery?

And finally, step number eight. Relax. Know that your dream wedding is being handled by industry professionals who have done this many, many times.

I wish you a lifetime of happiness together!

Cheers!

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Jo Anna Zaffree is a professional wedding consultant in Colorado. Her company, A SOLID IMAGE, has just published her first book. Your Personal Wedding Planner is a complete organizer, filled with over 275 Money Saving Tips, usually known only to wedding industry insiders. Valuable tips on everything from attire to transportation. It is a ?must have? companion for busy and budget minded brides.

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