Questions to Ask a Wedding Planner Before You Hire

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Before you hire a planner

The best time to find out how a wedding planner works is before you sign. These are the questions we wish we had asked, grouped by topic, with what we learned planning our own wedding in 2026.

Part 1 is for the interview: how a planner handles your budget, vendors, design and communication. Part 2 is for after you hire them: the owners, deadlines and deliverables worth confirming in writing.

A good planner will welcome these questions. Clear answers up front make the whole year easier for both of you.

Part 1: Questions to ask before you sign

Use these to understand a planner's process, fees and fit.

Budget

Building and tracking the budget

- How do you build and manage the overall budget? Is it itemized, including each vendor, rentals, taxes, service fees, labor, delivery, gratuities and damage waivers?
- How often is the budget updated, and can we see it at any time? Is it updated whenever a quote changes, or on a weekly or monthly schedule?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Ask how you'll know what changed, not just how often it's updated. A budget that changes without a note is hard to trust.

- How do you decide the first budget split across categories, and how do you plan for surprises?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Our early estimates ended up far from our final costs. Ask how the planner builds estimates and how they'll flag the gap as real quotes come in.

- If our budget is a set number, is that everything we should expect to spend, including fees and a cushion, or should we expect costs beyond it?

  > WHAT WE LEARNED
  > Asking this makes sure you both treat the number as a ceiling, not a starting point.

Staying on budget

- Before you show us a vendor or design, do you check it against our budget? If it's over, will you bring options at lower price points?
- How will you tell us when a category is trending over budget, and how would you suggest rebalancing other categories?
- If an estimate goes up a lot, how will you explain why and show us ways to bring it down?

Invoices and payments

- How do you track estimates, quotes, revisions, contracts, invoices, deposits and final payments?
- How will we hear about upcoming payments, and how much notice will we get? Will you keep one payment schedule for everything?
- Do you check vendor invoices for wrong quantities, price increases, duplicate charges and surprise fees before sending them to us?
- How do you make sure final invoices match what we actually approved?

Communication and availability

- What are your working hours? Can you meet on evenings or weekends?

  > WHAT WE LEARNED
  > Ask what availability looks like in the last two months, not just today. Schedules tend to tighten as the date gets close, so agree on it early.

- How often will we meet, and do meetings get more frequent closer to the wedding?
- Will you send a recap after each meeting with decisions, open tasks, owners and deadlines?
- If we disagree with a recommendation or are unhappy with how something went, how do we raise it and resolve it?

Planning process and follow-through

- What tool do you use to track tasks, deadlines and vendor deliverables? Will we have access, and how often do you check it? If we comment or tag you there, will you see it and reply, or should we message you separately?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Agree on one place for requests and how each of you will know there's something new. Otherwise notes can sit unread.

- How do you keep tasks from falling through the cracks when many vendors and people are involved?
- How do you catch problems or missed details before they get urgent or expensive?
- Can you walk us through your process from signing to the wedding day, including the major milestones?
- When something is missed, how do you handle it and fix it?
- Can you share a time something went wrong at a wedding, how you solved it and how you told the couple?

Vendors and contracts

- Do you have a list of recommended vendors? How did you build it, and do you receive referral fees, commissions or other incentives from any of them?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Ask about incentives directly. You want recommendations based on quality, fit and budget, and a good planner will be glad to tell you.

- How do you review vendor contracts before we sign? Do you read the full agreement, including itemized pricing, deliverables, hours, exclusions, cancellation terms and who is responsible for what? If you use software to review contracts, how do you double-check it?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  We found an important detail in a new vendor's contract three days before our wedding. Ask how every line gets reviewed, especially for vendors the planner hasn't worked with before.

- Who talks to vendors, follows up on missing deliverables and sorts out discrepancies?
- If a vendor changes price, deliverables or availability after we've chosen them, how do you handle it?
- If a vendor cancels, doesn't deliver or underperforms, what will you do to find a solution?

- When sourcing rentals and services, do you compare prices across vendors, including what the venue or our existing vendors offer? Do you negotiate or combine orders to cut delivery and labor costs?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Check what your venue already offers. Venues often rent tables, chairs, linens and glassware for less than an outside rental company.

Design, florals and creative direction

- What does your design presentation look like? Can we see mood boards, renderings and photos from finished weddings? How do you make sure the design shows what we'll actually see on the day?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Bring your own references, like a Pinterest board, and agree up front whether the planner's mood board is a loose starting point or the target. If you'd like realistic renderings, ask whether that's part of their process.

- Will you confirm the venue allows each design element, and that it's practical, before showing it to us?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  Our venue didn't allow candles, and learning that late meant redoing part of the decor ourselves. Ask for venue rules to be confirmed before the design is final.

- How many rounds of design changes are included, and what happens if the first proposal misses our vision?
- How do you separate must-have design elements from optional upgrades so we can decide where to spend?
- If our design is over budget, will you suggest other materials or approaches that get a similar look?
- How do you make sure the final design matches what vendors can produce and what's in their contracts?
- Will we get a final design plan with the specific arrangements, quantities and placements for the day?

- Who transports, sets up, packs and returns our own decor? Is that included in your fee?

> **WHAT WE LEARNED**
> We had enough DIY decor that we rented a moving truck and asked friends to drive it between locations. Sort out who moves your own items early.

Contract, scope and fees

- What's included in your fee, and what costs extra? Are there limits on meetings, design changes, vendor proposals or hours?
- What is not included in your services?
- What is your policy for cancellations, postponements, scope changes and refunds?
- Can we see examples of the documents you use, like an itemized budget, vendor tracker, payment schedule, rental inventory and timeline, with past clients' details removed?
- How many people from your team will be there on the wedding day, and what will each of them do?

Part 2: What to agree on after you hire

Once you've signed, confirm owners, deadlines and deliverables in writing.

Rentals and production

- Set a deadline for a complete, itemized rental proposal with quantities, unit prices, delivery, setup, labor, taxes and damage waivers. Ask that any later change be shared and approved before orders are final.
- How will you confirm that lighting, draping, staging, the dance floor, sound and any special installations are contracted and confirmed?
- Who coordinates rental delivery, setup, breakdown, pickup and damage checks?

The venue

- How will you confirm the venue's rules on candles and open flames, decor installs, sound levels, timing and vendor access?
- Will you do a site visit and work directly with the venue on logistics before the design and production plan is final?
- How do you plan around the venue's limits, like outdoor ground, power, accessibility, loading areas and install rules?
- Who gets permits, insurance certificates and venue approvals?
- How do you make sure every vendor knows and follows the venue's rules?

Guests, hotels and transportation

- Will you coordinate hotel room blocks, check how many rooms are booked and track booking deadlines?
- How do you plan for guests with accessibility needs, dietary restrictions or allergies?
- If children are coming, how do you handle their seating, childcare, high chairs and anything else they need?
- How do you think through the guest experience, including arrivals, wait times, moving between events, restroom access and getting home?
- If you're running shuttles: how do you work out shuttle capacity, pickup times, routes and return trips from real guest counts and the timeline?
- If you're running shuttles: who confirms the details with the shuttle company and sends clear instructions to guests?

Timeline, photography and entertainment

- How do you build the wedding-day timeline, and how do you make sure it fits vendor contract hours and venue rules?
- Will you check the photography and videography contracts against the timeline so every moment is covered without surprise overtime?
- How do you schedule hair and makeup, getting ready, a first look, family photos, the ceremony, cocktail hour, dinner, toasts and dancing?
- How do you build in vendor setup, load-in, vendor meals, transitions and breakdown?
- When will we get the final timeline, and how will you confirm every vendor has reviewed their part?
- If the day runs behind, who adjusts the schedule and tells the vendors?

Weather and backup plans

- What's the plan for rain, wind or extreme heat, especially for an outdoor wedding?
- Will you confirm the backup space fits our guest count, catering, entertainment and design?
- How do you prepare for vendor cancellations, late deliveries, broken equipment or transportation delays?
- Who handles emergencies, guest issues and vendor conflicts during the event?
- How do you spot risks early, and will we hear the backup plans before the wedding week?

The final month and the day itself

- What does your last 30 days look like, and what do you check and confirm before the wedding?
- Will you do a final review of vendor contracts, payments, guest counts, rental orders, floor plans and the production schedule?
- Who oversees vendor arrivals, setup and installation so everything matches the approved plan?
- Will someone check in person that flowers, decor, furniture, rentals and signs are right before guests arrive?
- Who handles last-minute changes, vendor questions and surprises so we and our families aren't pulled away?
- Who handles final payments, vendor tips, personal belongings, gifts and important items at the end of the night?
- Will your team supervise breakdown, rental returns and damage records, and who settles any charges after the wedding?
- If we're bringing DIY or our own decor, how will you plan its storage, transport, setup and breakdown? Will you tell us if the amount needs extra staff or another vehicle?
- How will you make sure every vendor's meal is counted?

  WHAT WE LEARNED

  We got an invoice after our wedding for vendor meals that weren't in the final count. Ask for a list of every vendor who needs a meal, and check it against your vendor list.

Take the list with you

Download these questions as a PDF to bring to your planner interviews.

Most of these questions come down to one thing: can you both see the same budget, payments, vendors and timeline, and know when something changes? Vow keeps all of that in one place, for couples and the planners they work with.