

MARILYN WILSON

PHOTOGRAPHY

A COMPLIMENTARY PLANNING RESOURCE

THE EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST

A photographer-informed guide to planning a celebration that feels organized, personal, and beautifully remembered.

PLAN WITH PURPOSE. CELEBRATE WITH EASE.

01 / THE FOUNDATION

Begin with what matters most.

Before choosing decor or building a schedule, decide what you want the event to mean, feel like, and preserve.

- ☐ Write the purpose of the event in one sentence

- ☐ Choose three words that describe the desired atmosphere

- ☐ Set a total working budget and contingency amount

- ☐ Create a preliminary guest count

- ☐ Choose the date and a backup date if needed

- ☐ Identify accessibility, mobility, or dietary needs

- ☐ List the three moments that matter most

- ☐ Decide who will make final decisions

- ☐ Choose the venue and confirm capacity

- ☐ Review parking, restrooms, entrances, and accessibility

- ☐ Confirm setup, event, and breakdown times

- ☐ Read the venue rules for candles, music, decor, and photography

02 / GUEST EXPERIENCE

Plan the flow, not only the details.

Guests remember how an event made them feel. A thoughtful flow helps everyone know where to go, what to expect, and when to be fully present.

- ☐ Draft the event timeline from arrival through departure
- ☐ Allow breathing room between major moments
- ☐ Assign a host, emcee, or point person
- ☐ Plan guest arrival, greeting, and check-in
- ☐ Confirm seating, table assignments, or gathering zones
- ☐ Plan food and beverage service timing
- ☐ Choose music for arrivals, transitions, and key moments
- ☐ Prepare clear signage where guests need direction
- ☐ Create a weather plan for outdoor portions
- ☐ Arrange comfortable seating for older guests
- ☐ Plan a quiet area for children or anyone needing a break
- ☐ Confirm microphones, speakers, screens, and power access
- ☐ Build in time for greetings and informal photographs
- ☐ Plan a meaningful welcome and closing
- ☐ Decide how gifts, cards, coats, and personal items will be secured
- ☐ Share the final schedule with vendors and key participants

03 / PHOTOGRAPHY PLANNING

Make room for the memories.

The strongest event photographs come from preparation, trust, and enough time to notice both the expected moments and the quiet ones in between.

- ☐ Book the photographer and confirm coverage hours
- ☐ Share the venue address, parking details, and timeline
- ☐ Identify the event coordinator or day-of contact
- ☐ List must-have people and group photographs

- ☐ List traditions, surprises, tributes, and cannot-miss moments

- ☐ Tell the photographer about sensitive family dynamics
- ☐ Allow time for room and detail photographs before guests enter
- ☐ Set aside personal items to be photographed
- ☐ Reserve a clean, well-lit location for portraits
- ☐ Keep formal groupings focused and realistic
- ☐ Ask key people to stay nearby during group photographs
- ☐ Confirm rules about flash, movement, and restricted areas
- ☐ Plan one quiet portrait moment away from the crowd
- ☐ Choose one person to help gather family or VIPs

04 / VENDORS AND DETAILS

Confirm every handoff before event day.

A smooth event depends on clear ownership. Every vendor and helper should know what they are responsible for, when they may enter, and whom to contact.

- ☐ Confirm all contracts, balances, and payment deadlines
- ☐ Create one contact list for vendors and key helpers
- ☐ Confirm vendor arrival and loading instructions
- ☐ Share the final floor plan and timeline
- ☐ Assign responsibility for decor placement
- ☐ Label boxes by area or table
- ☐ Prepare vendor meals and breaks if appropriate
- ☐ Confirm who receives deliveries and signs for rentals
- ☐ Inspect linens, signage, favors, and printed materials
- ☐ Pack an event emergency kit
- ☐ Bring extension cords, chargers, tape, scissors, and safety pins
- ☐ Confirm cake, food, floral, and rental delivery windows
- ☐ Assign someone to protect gifts and personal belongings
- ☐ Decide who will collect keepsakes and leftover items
- ☐ Create a cleanup and rental-return plan
- ☐ Keep digital and printed copies of the final timeline

05 / THE FINAL WEEK

Finish early enough to enjoy the day.

The final week is for confirmation, not reinvention. Protect your energy by closing open decisions and giving trusted people clear responsibilities.

- ☐ Confirm the final guest count
- ☐ Review the timeline with the venue and vendors
- ☐ Send addresses, parking, and arrival times to key people
- ☐ Prepare final payments, tips, and labeled envelopes
- ☐ Charge phones and portable batteries
- ☐ Pack decor, personal items, documents, and emergency supplies
- ☐ Check the weather and activate the backup plan if needed
- ☐ Reconfirm the photography shot priorities
- ☐ Prepare names for important family and VIP photographs
- ☐ Remove stickers, tags, clutter, and packaging from details
- ☐ Assign one person to answer vendor questions
- ☐ Schedule a meal, water, and a short break for yourself
- ☐ Set an end time for planning decisions
- ☐ Trust the preparation and be present for the celebration

A NOTE FROM MARILYN

The most meaningful photographs happen when you are fully present. Once the day begins, let your preparation carry you and allow yourself to experience it.

EVENT NOTES

Your priorities, people, and moments.

Use this page during your planning meeting or share it with your photographer and event team.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS EVENT

THREE WORDS FOR THE ATMOSPHERE

THE PEOPLE WE MUST PHOTOGRAPH

THE MOMENTS WE CANNOT MISS

QUESTIONS AND FINAL REMINDERS

MARILYN WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY

MIDDLETOWN | CINCINNATI | DAYTON

Your memories, held with care.

Events, portraits, and intimate celebrations photographed with warmth, preparation, and an eye for genuine connection.

PLANNING SOMETHING MEANINGFUL?

Visit Marilyn Wilson Photography to explore the portfolio and inquire about photography for your event.

marilynwilsonphotography.com