

THE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF A GOOD WEDDING RECEPTION

Following is a timeline of a typical wedding and reception, along with a few highlights of what to expect during each activity. The timeline can be modified to accommodate your wishes; however – when in doubt, this is a good recommendation for a schedule that works well every time.

Set Up: The dj will need approximately 30 minutes to set up equipment before start time.

Pre-Ceremony: Guests will arrive approximately 15-20 minutes before the start of your ceremony. It is advised to have music playing while they are arriving. Without music, this can be an awkward silence and guests will not sit down until advised to.

Ceremony: Most protocol is to have a song for the bridesmaid's to walk down the aisle to, a separate song for the bride, and a final "recessional" song for the bride and groom to exit to after the ceremony is over. You can also have music for a sand ceremony or candle lighting or a singer. However, the three main songs are what you will need to decide on before your event. 50% of brides still choose the traditional songs, however the other 50% are now choosing more contemporary, upbeat songs that have meaning to them for walking down the aisle and for the recessional. Whatever you use – the choice is yours. Your dj can help give you some suggestions if you aren't sure and you can always check out you-tube for ideas.

Cocktail Hour: Typically the bride and groom are taking photos with the wedding party. Your guests are arriving at the reception location and the dj is playing soft music while they mingle and get some refreshments. It is best to not keep your guests waiting too long for your arrival. 45 minutes is usually a good amount of time. If you can take some of your formal pictures before the wedding it will save you some time here. If the cocktail hour is in a room other than the reception room then you would not need to hire a dj to play for this first hour. If it is in the same room as the reception you would definitely want the dj to be playing music for your guests instead of setting up his/her equipment to be ready to play when you arrive. If the guests are in the room while the dj is setting up it makes it look like your dj is late arriving.

Grand Entrance: Once all of the bridal party has arrived at the reception hall the dj will line everyone up outside of the room. It is customary to introduce the parents of the bride and then the groom's parents, the bridesmaids and groomsmen, flower girl and ring bearer, maid of honor and best man, and finally the bride and groom. The bride and groom sometimes choose the song for their introduction. If not – I recommend We Got A Love Thang by CeCe Penniston – it is upbeat and the words are appropriate for the occasion.

First Dance: Most couples will go into their first dance immediately after the introductions. If the meal is ready to be served or you would like to relax a little first, it is alright to wait and do

your dance at the end of the meal. This activity is good to play it by ear and see what feels best at the moment. The most difficult task is choosing one song for your first dance. The songs you especially like but did not choose can be played later in the evening for a slow dance song. Be sure to list them for your dj on your paperwork to be submitted in advance.

Parent Dances: The bride dances with her father or father figure and the groom dances with his mother. Most often this is done separately and you choose a song for each dance. These two dances can be done immediately after the first dance (bride and groom) or if the bride and groom dance before dinner, they could save the parent dances for immediately after dinner.

Toasts: While the introduction and special dances are taking place the caterers are pouring the champagne. Once the bridal party is seated, the best man will begin with his toast and then often the maid of honor will give a toast. Sometimes the father of the bride and/or groom also like to give a toast. Your dj should provide a cordless microphone to be used during this activity so that the person giving the toast can stand next to the bride and groom. The toast works best just before dinner is served – but could also be done immediately before the cake is cut.

Blessing: This is optional and happens at about 50% of wedding receptions. Normally the blessing immediately follows the toasts – prior to dinner being served.

Dinner: These days, about 90% of all receptions are a buffet style meal. The bride and groom and then the wedding party are invited to the buffet first. After that, the dj will normally call the tables up by number to avoid a long line. If your meal is a sit-down meal, allow for extra time as they normally take longer to complete. Here is where your dj begins to shine. They should play a nice mixture of old and new songs, upbeat tempo and slow love songs. When your guests are tapping their feet or singing along you know the dj is doing a great job of selecting the right music.

Dancing Begins: Most often the dance floor opens best with a popular slow song. Once people are out of their seat and on the dance floor, you can keep them going with some popular songs. It is best to start out with some oldies – this will appeal to your older crowd and children in the room and make it easy for them to ease into faster music.

Bouquet and Garter Toss: After about 20-30 minutes of dancing it is best to take a break and perform this activity. If there aren't enough single people in the room, the bouquet can be given to the couple that has been married the longest. This is determined by process of elimination during the Longevity Married Couples Dance. The dj will emcee this activity and get everyone involved.

More Dancing: When the bouquet and garter toss activity is over, it is best to go into more dancing. The room is quiet and needs to gain momentum again. A conga line works best here to get everyone back up and dancing.

Cake Cutting: Again, after 20-30 minutes of dancing has occurred it is best to take another break and cut the cake. A good dj will time this to occur approximately 1 hour before your reception is scheduled to end. The guests know that once the cake is cut they are free to leave at anytime so try to hold off on cutting the cake until the last hour of the reception. If your caterers suggest that you cut it sooner it is only because they want more time to clear the tables and clean up the dishes. Be sure to hire your photographer to be there until the end of your reception so you don't miss the cake cutting and all the dancing that happens at the end of the night as this is usually when people really cut loose and many good photos are taken.

Dollar Dance: If you are planning to do a dollar dance then the best time to do it is immediately after the cake is cut. People are eating cake, not dancing to fast music, so it is the perfect time to invite them to dance a slow song with the bride and groom. Usually need about 4-5 slow songs to get through all the guests that want to dance.

Final Round of Dancing: After everyone has had cake and a slow dance or two, it is best to wrap up the night with your fastest songs. Top 40, hip hop, Disco, and even some country all work best here. YMCA and other line dancing favorites will also encourage people to stick around and dance some more. The dj will also be working in the requests from your guests.

Departure of the Bride and Groom: Just before the bride and groom make their exit, a slow song or two is played (last song of the night). Then the dj will announce for everyone to line up outside to see the couple off. Many times the bride and groom have purchased either bubbles or rice to be used for their exit. A formal exit is not necessary – if the bride and groom choose to stay and mingle with their remaining guests and family after the reception has ended, that is perfectly fine too. Just be mindful of what time you need to vacate the reception hall to avoid paying a late fee.

Breakdown: The dj will breakdown their equipment after the last song is played. Final payment is collected and best wishes given to the happy couple.