

The Bridal Extravaganza

Entertainment

While things like food and flowers enjoy a universal appeal, the choice of entertainment for your wedding reception often must satisfy diverse tastes. Weddings typically involve a mixed audience of young and old, and so you may want entertainment that will cater to both.

Options

Reception entertainment options include DJs, bands, orchestras, violinists, and polka bands. Many couples will use a combination of entertainers at their reception. Cocktail hours require livelier background music, while dinner calls for quieter selections. Dance music should be a mixture that calls everyone from his or her seats at one time or another. You may start with a strolling violinist, pianist or string quartet for dinner music and then have a band or DJ for the remainder of the evening. You can also have a separate DJ to fill in break times of your live performers. If you are having your ceremony and reception at the same facility, many entertainers can supply the music for both events.

Booking Entertainment

You should begin looking for entertainment as soon as you have your reception facility booked. Many bands and DJs book more than one year in advance. Start by asking friends for references. Another source of entertainers is a booking agency. They will be able to show you hundreds of acts on videotape. This is very convenient and can save you a lot of time. Most booking agencies do not charge a commission; they earn their fee directly from the musicians they represent.

Live Band

If you are considering live entertainment, the number of musicians should be proportionate to the number of guests, and the size of your reception location. Consider a trio, or four to five musicians for a party of 50 to 175, and a seven or eight member band for 175 to 250 people. A large area may need more musicians for the music to be heard by everyone, but this will depend on the acoustics and the individual band.

Professional musician's rates will vary. Be certain that you understand what the band's price includes as far as playing time versus break time.

When considering a band, review its play list. Look for a band that can play a variety of music that will fit into your style of reception. Many bands will play a mixture of Top 40, rock, oldies, polkas, etc. Others may play big band selections; show tunes, waltzes, fox trots, Latin rhythms and ballads. Inquire about their policy on learning new songs at your request.

When signing a contract with a band or booking agent, follow the guidelines as listed on page 31. Be sure to list the names of the bandleader and other key band members. Ask to be informed of any band changes, and make it clear that while minor band members may come and go, you expect the essential presentation to remain unchanged.

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DJ

A DJ is an ideal solution for people who want to hear original artist's recordings. The DJ can also act as an emcee and coordinator—either by addressing the reception directly, or more subtly by pacing the activities through the selection of music. The job of emcee requires a strong personality and some homework.

Etiquette Tip:

Assign a friend or relative to make the DJ aware of any last minute changes in the wedding party due to illness or other emergency. Also, provide a pronunciation guide for all names, first and last, no matter how obvious they may seem.

A DJ should provide his/her own sound system. Be sure that it is adequate but not overpowering for the space at your reception. When selecting a DJ listen for clarity and consistency of sound—big speakers do not always mean quality.

Requests and Play Lists

Most DJs will not allow you to see them in action at an actual wedding (not fair to the couple and not a good time to talk). But do ask for references and/or videotapes.

Ask to see sample play lists. Ask whether the DJ will acquire requested music for your reception and if there is an extra charge. If you provide the DJ with recordings, assign someone to retrieve these the night of the reception.

Requests can be a big issue with DJs and couples. Try not to micro-manage the entire play list—find a balance between your requests and the DJ's experience and sense of timing. Ask about allowing a friend or relative to sing a special song.

Questions for Your Entertainers

1. How many years have you been in the wedding business?

You will want to have an established professional in charge of your reception. A professional DJ or band leader will know the normal order of events for a wedding, will be able to work with the photographer, videographer, and caterer, and will be able to act as the master of ceremonies, if you so desire. If your facility has a director, have your entertainers contact them prior to the wedding to coordinate roles.

2. What kind of equipment do you use?

Your DJ or band should have professional audio equipment. Inquire about their equipment in advance, regardless of the size of your reception, because professional sound equipment will make a big difference in your wedding music. Be sure to discuss appropriate volume and speaker placement. And speak up if there are certain styles, songs or artists you do not want played.

3. Will the band or DJ meet you in person?

Some entertainers try to do all of their bookings over the telephone. Insist on a face-to-face meeting to allow you to gauge body language and your overall compatibility.

4. What is your fee, and how long do you play?

Always ask your entertainers about their fee and the length of time they will play. Find out

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how many, if any breaks will be taken. Most bands require a (10-15 minute) break each hour for each member. These breaks can be staggered or all members may break at the same time. Some bands will provide recorded music during their breaks so there is not a lull in the reception. If you're hiring a band, ask if they can learn any of your special requests that may not be in their repertoire. Discuss setup times, procedures and overtime policies.

5. What will the band or DJ wear?

Be sure to ask about a dress code, as musicians may have a different idea of what is appropriate at a wedding.

Choosing Your Entertainers

For all reception entertainers you should provide a list of songs you want played for specific parts of the reception such as the first dance, your parents' dance, the bride's dance with her father, the groom's dance with his mother, cutting the cake, tossing the bouquet and garter, departure, etc. A general timetable of events should be worked out in advance between you, the caterer, photographer and musicians.

Your DJ or bandleader should have a very pleasing personality. They will help to hold the reception together, making sure everything goes as planned. Be sure that he/she is flexible, patient, and very understanding about the tone and type of reception that you desire.

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Entertainer _____ Phone _____
Address _____ State _____ Zip _____
FAX _____ Emergency No. _____
Consultant _____ Business Hours _____
Email _____ Web Site Address _____

Entertainer _____ Phone _____
Address _____ State _____ Zip _____
FAX _____ Emergency No. _____
Consultant _____ Business Hours _____
Email _____ Web Site Address _____

Entertainment Details

1. Number of Members in Band/Number of DJs _____
Hours Needed _____
Overtime Available/Fee _____
DJ/Band leader Serving as Master of Ceremonies? _____
Set Up Time _____

2. Number of Members in Band/Number of DJs _____
Hours Needed _____
Overtime Available/Fee _____
DJ/Band leader Serving as Master of Ceremonies? _____
Set Up Time _____

Favorite Songs to be played by: #1 or #2 Entertainer (specify)

Dinner Music _____
First Dance Music _____ Approx Time _____
Bridal (Money) Dance _____ Approx Time _____
Other Dance Music _____

Fun Songs (Bird Song, Hokey Pokey, etc.) _____

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Special

Requests _____

1. Total _____

Deposit Paid _____ Date _____

Balance Due _____

Balance Due on or Before _____

Make Checks Payable To: _____

2. Total _____

Deposit Paid _____ Date _____

Balance Due _____

Balance Due on or Before _____

Make Checks Payable To: _____

Cancellation Policies and Notes _____

