



How Successful Brides and Grooms Book a DJ

SGM Events Wedding Guide

An extensive list of helpful tips, tricks, and definitions we've learned through years of experience.



"Wedding vows are not a declaration of present love but a mutually binding promise of future love."

-Tim and Kathy Keller's
"The Meaning of Marriage"



Wedding Ceremony Overview

An American wedding ceremony consists of four parts: seating of the guests, procession of the wedding party, the ceremony, and the recession.

Seating of Guests

Traditionally starting thirty minutes before the ceremony, light background music - played by either live musicians or the DJ - is recommended to set the tone.

Pro Tip: If your DJ is providing sound at the ceremony, and you also have a musician needing amplification, consult with the DJ. Both parties may be able to use the same sound system. This scenario could lower the overall entertainment cost.

Seating music examples:

Formal: Clarke - Trumpet Voluntary

Casual: Jack Johnson - Better Together





The Procession

The wedding party walks the aisle and takes their positions at the altar. Depending on wedding party size, it's possible to have multiple songs playing at this time. If there are multiple sets of parents and grandparents, a song for that group, one for the entire bridal party, and one for the bride may be used.

Pro Tip: Make sure the DJ has the correct versions of each song requested - there are many different versions of most popular songs. Make sure the DJ has the proper titles and can send for verification if needed.

Pro Tip 2: Make sure the songs requested are extended or shortened to accommodate the required time. The DJ should be able to precisely tailor each song to your needs.

Processional music examples:

Formal: Johann Pachelbel - Canon in D
Casual: Ben E. King - Stand by Me

The Ceremony

Much like the beautiful spectrum of people who make the commitment to enter into marriage together, ceremony traditions vary greatly. But whatever they may be, the DJ and wedding officiant should be aware of ceremony specifics, so that everyone is on the same page.





The Recession

A selection of upbeat music selections at this time helps to lead the couple away from the altar and into the celebration of their marriage.

Recessional music examples:

Formal: Felix Mendelssohn

- Wedding March

Casual: Stevie Wonder

- Signed Sealed Delivered

Ceremony Sound

Some venues offer ceremony setups, while others do not. A DJ should also be able to provide this service. But no matter whom it comes from, coordinating all aspects of the ceremony sound helps avoid confusion.

Pro Tip: If the ceremony is at a location without power, a generator or battery-powered speakers and microphones will be required.

Pro Tip 2: To ensure that everyone at the ceremony can hear, we recommend having two speakers - one on each side of the altar or staging area.

Pro Tip 3: DJs require tables and linens at every setup. Although the DJ can likely provide them, using the rental company or caterer ensures all of the décor will match.



Ceremony Microphone

The most preferred microphone by officiants for a ceremony is a hands-free, lavalier clip-on microphone. It ensures they can hold a book or notes with both hands. A handheld wireless microphone is another option – especially if the couple is exchanging detailed vows. A handheld microphone also makes it much easier for selected guests to participate in the ceremony.

DJs who provide ceremony sound equipment should always use high-end professional microphones to prevent wireless signal loss. A wired microphone is highly recommended in cases of possible signal loss.

Pro Tip: Some essential parts of a wedding include the vows and ceremony service. The DJ should use high-end (preferably digital) microphones to ensure clean and clear transmission. Reputable brands include Shure, Line 6, Sennheiser, and Audio Technica. Also, note that wireless receivers can pick up interference from boats and other sea vessels if wireless microphones are in use near bodies of water.



Cocktail Reception

The cocktail reception takes place right after the ceremony. Typically, the couple, their wedding party, and immediate family are taking photos during this time. We suggest upbeat music that inspires celebration and conversation. At the end of the cocktail hour, the guests will transition to the dinner reception area.

Cocktail reception example songs:

Formal: Vitamin String Quartet – Home

Casual: Michael Bublé – Crazy Little Thing Called Love





Cocktail to Dinner

During the transition from cocktail to dinner reception, background music is played at a conversational volume level so people can mingle and chat.

Pro Tip: It is recommended that the bar be shut during this transition so guests are seated for the grand entrance.

Transition example songs:

Formal: Frank Sinatra -

The Way You Look Tonight

Casual: Jason Mraz and Colbie Caillat -
Lucky

Grand Entrance

The grand entrance introduces the bridal party and wedding couple to guests. Traditionally in a predetermined order, the wedding party enters the reception by announcement from the DJ. High-energy music is played to pump up both the crowd and bridal party. Two songs usually work best - one for the parents and bridal party, another for the wedding couple. An example of the grand entrance introduction:

1. Flower Girls, Junior Bridesmaids & Ring Bearers
2. Bridesmaids and Groomsmen
3. Wedding Couple

Pro Tip: The bridal party should line up in the same order of the ceremony entrance with the maid/matron of honor and best man entering right before the wedding couple.

Pro Tip 2: Make sure the DJ knows the order, and has practiced the proper pronunciation of, all the names announced.

Grand entrance example songs:

Classic: Kool & the Gang - Celebration

Contemporary: Bruno Mars - Uptown Funk





First Dance Transitions

Typically after the grand entrance, the newly wedded couple shares their first dance. If the dance floor is in a separate room, then the first dance follows the dinner reception to serve as the transition into open dancing.

Pro Tip: The first dance song should be a song the couple holds dear - a song that they've enjoyed together throughout their relationship or a contemporary song that freezes the moment in time for years to come. Make sure to talk to the DJ about song choices and edits for time.

First dance example songs:

Classic: Etta James - At Last

Contemporary: Ed Sheeran - Thinking Out Loud

Welcome Speech

The welcome speech provides a chance to show appreciation to the guests for taking the time to share this special day with the newlyweds.

Prayer and Blessing

The officiant, a family member or friend can bless the meal or say a prayer if religion plays an essential part in your festivities.





Dinner

Dinner music should be played at a conversational level, so guests do not have to raise their voices to talk while sitting at their table. The style of music played during dinner varies from couple to couple, but something light is recommended.

Pro Tip: It's important for all guests and vendors to give the newlyweds time to eat. And the beginning of dinner may be their only opportunity.

Pro Tip 2: If the newlyweds get a chance to eat, it allows them opportunity to go table-to-table, spending some precious time with family members, friends, loved ones, and out-of-town guests on their special day.

Dinner example songs:

Formal: The Piano Guys - The Cello Song

Casual: Christina Perri -
A Thousand Years

Toasts

There's nothing better than sharing a few kind words, and maybe a funny story or two, about the couple everyone is celebrating. But we suggest they not exceed fifteen minutes and include a few toasts from each side. Excessive toasting inevitably results in inattentive guests.

Pro Tip: No music should be played during this time, unless it's in the background between toasts.

Pro Tip 2: If there is a champagne toast, the DJ works with the wedding planner or venue coordinator to ensure the champagne is poured before the toast begins. If there are plans for an in-hand toast, the DJ needs to remind guests to visit the bar to prepare for toasting.





Organized Dances

Following dinner and toasts, these dances are a great way to activate the dance floor. A few examples of organized dances:

Parent Dances

Parent dances are individual dances between the wedding couple and their parents. Father/daughter and mother/son dances are most common, but dancing with any beloved family member is always a nice touch.

Father/daughter dance example songs:

Classic: The Temptations - My Girl

Contemporary: John Mayer - Daughters

Mother/son dance example songs:

Classic: Ben E. King - Stand By Me

Contemporary: T. Carter Music -
A Mother's Song

Money Dance

The money dance is where the guests form two lines and pay for a dance with the bride or groom. Most couples do a money dance if it is a family tradition at weddings.

Pro Tip: Make sure to select at least three songs for the money dance.

Money dance example songs:

Formal: Louis Armstrong -
What a Wonderful World

Casual: Hidden Beach Recordings -
Get Money





Anniversary Dance

If there are multiple couples with over twenty years of marriage in attendance, the anniversary dance is a unique way to celebrate them. Throughout the song, the DJ will slowly call couples off of the dance floor by saying "If you've been married for (x) amount of years, please leave the dance floor."

Starting with "less than twenty-four hours," the DJ calls "one year," "five years," "ten years," and on until the couple with the longest lasting marriage is left alone on the floor. One to three timeless classic love songs should cover this organized dance.

Anniversary dance example songs:

Formal: Nat King Cole - Unforgettable

Casual: Israel Kamakawiwo'Ole -
Somewhere Over the Rainbow

Open Dancing

Once most of the formalities are over, it's time to open the dance floor! A good DJ caters to the inevitable spectrum of wedding attendees to make sure guests are enjoying an optimal experience. When taking a generational approach to the music, older music is first and it gets more contemporary as the night goes on.

Pro Tip: A group photo before open dancing serves two purposes: First, it's a great way to get a picture of everyone attending. But it's also a great way to activate the dance floor. Right after the group photo, turn down the lights, turn on dance floor lighting, and play a well-known song. Since people are already on the dance floor, there's a far better chance they'll join in.





Bouquet Toss

The bouquet toss is when the bride stands on the dance floor and throws her bouquet to all the single women in attendance. The tradition is based on the thought that whomever catches the bouquet is the next to get married.

Bouquet toss example songs:

Classic: Aretha Franklin - Respect

Contemporary: Beyoncé - Single Ladies

Garter Toss

There are two parts to the garter toss; the garter retrieval and the garter toss. It's the same tradition as the garter toss, just with the groom and the single men in attendance.

Garter retrieval example songs:

Classic: Marvin Gaye - Let's Get It On
Contemporary: Ginuwine - Pony

Garter toss example songs:

Classic: Queen -
Another One Bites the Dust
Contemporary: Robin Thicke - Blurred Lines





Cake Cutting

A wedding cake symbolizes good fortune and fertility, and is also believed to bring luck to anyone who eats it. An upbeat and sweet love song best compliments the cutting of the cake.

Cake cutting example songs:

Classic: The Archies - Sugar Sugar

Contemporary: DNCE - Cake by the Ocean

The Last Song

The closing song of the night should draw everyone to the dance floor, concluding the night by singing and dancing together. Ideally, after the DJ announces the last song, the guests surround the new couple and sing along.

Last song example songs:

Classic: Bill Medley -

(I've Had) The Time of My Life

Contemporary: Justin Timberlake -

Can't Stop the Feeling



Types of DJs

There are three types of DJs:

Radio - Radio DJs play music and use their personalities to engage the listeners via AM, FM, digital, or Internet stations.

Club - Club DJs run the dance floors at bars and nightclubs.

Mobile - Mobile DJs play private events and provide sound equipment. A traditional wedding DJ is an example of a mobile DJ.

A timeline of the crucial moments in the history of DJs:

- 1943: Jimmy Savile played jazz records in a public space for the first time.
- 1947: Savile uses twin turntables to play one song after another for continuous play for first time.
- 1947: Whiskey à Go-Go nightclub opened in Paris, France, the first of its kind.
- 1969: The first DJ mixer is Rudy Bozak's classic CMA-10-2DL.
- 1969: Francis Grasso beat matches two records at New York's Sanctuary nightclub.
- 1973: Hip-hop is born in New York pairing the DJ and the MC.
- 1974: Disco hits mainstream pop charts in the USA catapulting the DJ to the forefront of the nightclub culture.
- 1974: Technics releases the first SL-1200 turntable with a revolutionary new design.
- 1979: Technics releases the SL-1200 MK2 which remains an industry standard for DJs.
- 1988: Pioneer releases the CDJ-100's, the first CD player with a pitch controller allowing the DJ to mix with CDs.
- 1993: MP3 file format released to the public enabling DJs to expand their library, beyond what they could buy on vinyl.
- 1998: The debut of Final Scratch marks the first digital DJ system to give DJs control of MP3 files through unique time-coded vinyl records and CDs.
- 2004: Serato Scratch Live released. It becomes the software standard for open format nightclub DJs.
- 2007: Pioneer releases the CDJ-400 featuring a USB input.

Choosing a DJ

The best DJ for your event will have an overall professional experience that best suits your needs. Some DJs are strictly private event DJs, and they might not have the expertise to blend music and genres seamlessly.

Traditional wedding DJs may not be up to date on current music trends or be able to keep the momentum on the dance floor for an extended period.

DJs with a club or bar background may not be as comfortable on the microphone, be capable of making articulate announcements, have the experience of following a timeline, or have the presentation needed for a formal wedding.

Our DJs have expertise in the club and bars as well as extensive wedding DJ experience. "Reading the crowd" is one of the hardest skill sets for a DJ to learn, and takes many years of experience to master.

Pro Tip: The best DJs come from solid online reviews, great word of mouth or impeccable referrals.

Pro Tip 2: Meeting with various DJs better your chances to find the best fit for your wedding.

Pro Tip 3: If possible, see the DJ in action before making your decision.



A close-up photograph of a circular speaker top. The top is a polished, metallic dome shape, likely made of aluminum or steel, with a brushed finish. It is mounted on a circular opening in a brown, woven fabric mesh. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly another speaker or a panel, with a similar woven pattern. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the fabric and the metallic sheen of the speaker top.

Sound Speaker Information

Speaker tops provide the midrange and highs of the sound. Tops can produce bass as well, but depending on the guest count it is usually best to have both tops and a bass bin.

Mixing the Music

DJs combine the music using a mixer and a source controller. Turntables have been the staple for many years, and typically a DJ will have two turntables and a mixer.

Mixers have multiple inputs for audio sources and allow DJs to play various sources at once to blend music seamlessly. Mixers have inputs for wireless or corded microphones for announcements and toasts.

DJs use their headphones to cue the next song and accurately mix it into the current one.





Enhancements 1

Uplights are a great way to accent the walls in the reception room with wedding colors. Most DJs have wireless, battery-powered lights that can be placed virtually anywhere and do not require AC power. Using a tablet or smartphone, uplights can change color with the push of a button.

Dance floor lights are multi-colored lights manually controlled or sound activated to move to the music. These lights enhance the dancing experience and create a club atmosphere. Uplights can also be used as dance floor lighting.

Pin spots are focused beams of light, used to illuminate specific areas. Examples highlight locations: the sweetheart, cake, and candy table.

Pro Tip: Make sure to give the DJ all requested uplight colors before the day of the wedding.

Pro Tip 2: An attractive way to draw attention to a sweetheart or cake table draped with linen is to place an uplight underneath the table, allowing the linen to glow.

Pro Tip 3: No strobe lighting, ever.

Pro Tip 4: Change the colors of the pin spot lighting with color gels to accentuate the wedding colors.

Enhancements 2

A monogram is a great way to showcase the wedding couple's initials or names. Traditional monograms are motifs that incorporate the initials of the wedding couple.

Projecting a monogram on a wall or a dance floor requires a metal gobo, a gobo light, and an accurately sized design. Another method of projecting a monogram is with an LED projector. Projectors can be used to display a slideshow during dinner. The DJ can plug the projector into their sound to amplify the slideshow audio.

Photo booths are another excellent way for guests to interact with one another. Photo booths also provide keepsakes for the wedding couple, their friends, and family.

Pro Tip: When printing a steel gobo monogram for a traditional gobo light, the monogram will need to be designed and sent to production with enough lead-time for manufacturing.

Pro Tip 2: Extra existing room light prevents projecting a monogram or a slideshow with a projector adequately. Using a projector with a high lumen output is recommended.

Pro Tip 3: Weddings with 200 or more guests can benefit from an open-air photo booth. This method can fit more than two to three people in them at a time, ensuring shorter lines.





The Venue

There are multiple options when choosing a wedding venue. Many churches host weddings, but typically the ceremony is held at a church and the reception at another location.

Many times, a church will provide speakers and microphones for the service. Other times, music comes from the church choir, band, or organ.

Hotels can be a one-stop shop for all ceremony, cocktail hour and reception needs. Sometimes they also provide the sound equipment, but more often than not, that is the DJ's responsibility.

Beach and park weddings can be permitted through the city and often come with an affordable price. These areas are primarily for ceremonies, but can sometimes hold the reception. Most beach and park locations do not come with available power outlets, and some have restrictions on generator usage. Always be sure to make the DJ aware of any restrictions set by the venue.

Most wineries host wedding ceremonies as well as receptions. Wineries have many different locations to choose from, often using the vineyard and storage rooms as ceremony and cocktail reception sites.

There are many different types of unique event spaces that can be rented for weddings. Most just come with four walls and power outlets. These venues can be great for people who want to have an empty canvas to create their customized wedding.

Pro Tip: DJs should have separate set-ups for each location.

Equipment shouldn't be moved from one area to another during the event. When designing the layout, be sure to account for cable runs between the DJ and speakers – especially if speaker placement is not centralized next to the DJ.

Pro Tip 2: Some venues have noise restrictions requiring all amplified sound to be below a certain decibel level. It is always suggested to inquire about any noise restrictions when booking a venue for a wedding.

Pro Tip 3: DJ Insurance is usually a requirement to work at all venues with \$1,000,000 liability coverage.

Pro Tip 4: Arrival/set-up time at the venue should be at least two hours before the contracted start of the ceremony.

Multiple Venue Locations

When the ceremony is one place and the reception another, it is essential that the DJ is well prepared. The DJ will set up at the reception site first. Then it's back to the ceremony to set up, execute, and break it all down. The transition from one location to another can be time-consuming - especially when having to pack equipment in one location and perform at another.

Pro Tip: If the ceremony and the reception are at different locations, the DJ may need to have an assistant help with break down of the ceremony, more so if there is not a lot of time to get to the cocktail hour. You do not want guests to arrive and with no music playing.





Destination Weddings

A DJ always has extra logistics to consider when working a wedding outside of town. When possible, the DJ will travel with the gear needed to execute the wedding, but if a flight is involved, the DJ will be limited to what equipment he/she can bring.

Pro Tip: Resources in cities at destination weddings will need to fulfill the equipment needs for the DJ to execute the job. Mileage, flights, hotel, and meals can be extra expenses incurred by the client.

Pro Tip 2: Traveling to a destination wedding requires a DJ to arrive a day or more in advance. Early arrival ensures acquisition of the equipment, familiarization with the venue and vendors, and accounts for travel delays.

Weddings With Planners

Wedding planners work closely with vendors and DJs in the months, weeks, and days leading up to the wedding.

Pro Tip: It is crucial that the DJ and wedding planner communicate before the wedding to better understand how they will work together on event day.

Pro Tip 2: If the couple has never organized an event, dread the thought of planning a wedding, or lack the support from friends and family to help, a wedding planner is necessary.



A woman in a white lace wedding dress is shown from the waist up, standing outdoors. She is wearing a white lace halter-neck top with a matching skirt. Her hands are clasped together on a dark stone ledge. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a railing.

Weddings Without Planners

A wedding planner may not be needed for those who have previously planned parties, are organized, and can delegate responsibilities.

First priority for on-site venue coordinators is always the venue and vendor logistics. For a banquet captain, it's the food. A planner's first priority is always the couple.

With an on-site coordinator, banquet captain and a DJ in place, all that's needed is a detailed timeline. We recommend having a three-day itinerary arranged in advance so vendors can execute and the couple of honor can enjoy their big day with confidence.

Pro Tip: If there is no wedding planner, experienced DJs can fill that role by following the timeline to keep things moving, but responsibilities that fall on the DJ can take away from doing the job to its full potential.

Pro Tip: Without a wedding planner, someone will need to arrange the wedding party for the ceremony procession and grand entrance into the reception. All decor items will need to be set up by friends and family members.

Closing

A wedding celebration is a cherished event for family members and guests. By choosing the best and most experienced vendors, and being organized, the honored couple can have the best day of their lives.

We hope this guide helps you plan and illustrates the DJ's involvement in the wedding process. As always don't hesitate to contact SGM Events with any questions!



Thank You!



Just

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Contact Us Today!

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