

How Do I Choose a DJ for My Wedding?

When choosing a DJ, give consideration to these statistics compiled from national bridal magazine surveys:

- Brides spent only 5% of their budget on entertainment, but **81%** of guests said entertainment was what they remembered the most. Only 18% remembered the gown, 16% the flowers, & 8% the facility & food.
- **72%** of brides said they should have spent **more** time choosing entertainment. Almost 100% say they would have spent **more** on entertainment.
- Before the wedding, brides' highest priority was attire, followed by the facility & caterer; music was among the least of their priorities. After their wedding, **78%** said that **entertainment should have been their highest priority!**

During the initial selection process, many people have the misconception that a wedding DJ is nothing more than someone who "plays music & makes announcements." Statistics cited in a 2005 national DJ publication reveal a different perspective from brides who were surveyed **after** their wedding. When asked what was most important about their DJ experience:

- 73% said their DJ's personality & ability to interact with guests;
- 27% indicated their level of confidence & trust with their DJ;
- 17% said their DJ's skills in planning & coordinating the reception; but
- Only 9% said the way the music was played.

During the interview process for a wedding DJ, you should ask lots of questions, note their responses, & observe their behavior. Here are some key factors to evaluate:

- **Experience**
Use a local DJ who specializes in weddings. A DJ you used for a prom or pool party usually doesn't have the training & expertise needed to successfully manage a wedding reception with formal presentations & the coordination of numerous activities. Does the DJ have actual experience at your reception location? Is the DJ knowledgeable of wedding etiquette & overall event protocol?
- **Business Operations**
Is the company a single or multi-unit operator, or is it a booking agent with no control over the DJs they represent? How long has the company been in business? Does the company operate in a professional fashion? Do they specialize in weddings? Does the company have liability insurance?

- **Reputation**
Get recommendations from family & friends. Does the DJ have a good relationship with other wedding professionals? Is the DJ a member of industry associations, like Columbia Bridal Associates or the Carolina DJ Association?
- **Advance Planning**
Does the DJ ask a lot of questions? Is the DJ interested in making your wedding special? Gauge their ability to offer suggestions. What is their willingness to work with your ideas? Will the DJ coordinate his services with other vendors? Will you have personal contact versus just using forms on the Internet?
- **Musical Selections**
Does the DJ have an extensive music library to accommodate special requests? Can the DJ demonstrate a broad knowledge of all types of music?
- **Sound & Lighting Equipment**
Is the equipment appropriate for the size, acoustics, & logistics of the venue? Does the DJ use commercial equipment?
- **Back-up DJ's & Equipment**
What if something goes wrong with the DJ or the sound system? Can you be assured of a backup DJ &/or equipment if needed in the event of an emergency?
- **Personality & Presentation Style**
Do you want a subdued atmosphere or a festive party environment? The DJ will be responsible for setting the mood. Discuss the DJ's presentation style ("interactive" versus being just plain rude & offensive) to see if it fits your style.
- **Trust & Comfort**
You should have a feeling of confidence with your DJ. First impressions are usually lasting ones. Are phone calls & e-mails returned promptly? Does he show flexibility in scheduling consultations? Is he organized? Does he conduct his business affairs in an ethical fashion? Does he brag too much about equipment & music to compensate for lack of skill, ideas, or experience?
- **Price**
Your cost will depend on the following variables:
 - Experience & skill of the DJ
 - Location & size of the reception
 - Length of performance time
 - Level of services provided (DJ, emcee, reception coordinator, etc.)
 - Other add-ons (special effects lighting, additional sound equipment, etc.)

5-15% of your budget should be allocated to entertainment. On a per-person basis, compare that amount to a \$7 movie ticket.

Your wedding day is not the time to go with the lowest bidder. Also, don't base a decision solely on a phone or e-mail quote. Low prices or deep discounts may be indicative of a DJ with a bad reputation, inferior equipment, lack of experience, or other problems that could ruin your entire day.

- **Contract**
Is everything specified in a written agreement, to include a specific DJ, performance time, rate,

overtime, & any additional charges? All prices should be locked-in, subject to changes in specifications by the client.

Wedding DJ Frequently Asked Questions

When should I book my DJ?

DJ services should be booked once your date, time, & location have been confirmed, usually 9-12 months in advance. Don't take a chance - - contact us now to check availability & reserve your date!

My wedding is outside the Columbia area. Is that a problem?

No. We have established working relationships with vendors & facilities throughout South Carolina, as well as Charlotte & Augusta. Travel charges may apply.

How do I book & pay for DJ services?

We require a signed contract & \$200 deposit. The deposit is applied to the balance due. Final payment is normally made no later than the conclusion of the reception.

Why do you offer different DJ packages?

Each wedding is unique. Some clients want a casual atmosphere with no formalities or advance planning. Others prefer a traditional reception with a grand entrance, first dance, toasts, etc. Many clients need someone to plan, organize, &/or coordinate the reception. Our packages allow you the flexibility to choose what services you need.

I'm price shopping. Is this how I should make my decision?

We get calls and e-mail every day asking "How much do you charge for a DJ?" We can't answer that question fairly without a lot more information. Try going to a car dealership and asking, "How much do you charge for a car?" The salesman can't help you without asking a lot of questions - - Do you want a compact, SUV, or luxury sedan? How much car can you afford? What features are most important to you?

In most cases, folks who only ask about the price of DJ services do so because they don't know the right questions to ask.

Pricing for DJ services depends on the following variables:

- Experience & skill of the DJ
- Location & size of the reception
- Length of performance time
- Level of services provided (DJ, emcee, coordinator, planning)
- Other add-ons (special effects lighting, additional sound equipment, etc.)

5-15% of your budget should be allocated to entertainment. On a per-person basis, compare that amount to a \$7 movie ticket.

Unlike other companies who sell their services as a "one size fits all" commodity, we value your opinions, preferences, & budget. The only way to get an accurate price quote is to take the time to ask questions, compare offerings, & determine your true needs.

It is important to understand that price should never be your only consideration. You can always find a cheaper price. But, are you getting cheaper quality in return? Your wedding day is not the time to go with the lowest bidder. Also, don't base a decision solely on the basis of a phone or e-mail quote. Low prices or deep discounts may be indicative of a DJ with a bad reputation, inferior equipment, lack of experience, or other problems that could ruin your entire day.

How do we plan & organize the reception?

We don't believe in "cookie cutter" receptions - - your wedding should be reflective of your style & preferences. Using our experience, a series of thorough questionnaires, & face-to-face consultations between your booking date and the wedding, we will ask all the right questions & make suggestions to ensure that no detail is overlooked.

Do I need to pick out all the songs for the reception?

No. First, we will help you decide on the music formats preferred by you & your guests. In addition to songs for formal dances & other activities, we ask you to give us a list of 10-20 "must play" songs & any songs or artists not to be played. Your DJ will then blend your preferences with his experience to play the right songs throughout the reception.

Will I meet my DJ before the wedding?

Absolutely! Depending on the package you select, you can even have unlimited consultation sessions.

When should reception details be finalized?

Decisions regarding the sequencing of activities & the selection of songs should be finalized about a month before the wedding, but we are masterful at making last-minute changes, if needed.

How to Decide Between a Band or DJ

Performance Issues & Music Selections

Unless you book the original artist, a band will play "their" version of the song you select for your first dance, as well as "covers" of everything else. Some bands don't have the depth of talent or musical knowledge to play a wide variety of music. Many bands have a limited song list & might have trouble taking requests from you or your guests. Personnel changes between the booking date & your reception could adversely change the sound & quality you heard on a demo tape. All bands take rest breaks that usually stop or interrupt the music.

A DJ can take requests & provide thousands of song selections that feature the actual artists & original arrangements you know and love - - with no breaks or other interruptions.

Planning & Emcee Services

Most bands are only in the business of playing music & may not be knowledgeable in the nuances of wedding etiquette, event sequencing, or public speaking. That lack of ability could place more responsibility on you to plan & organize all the details. You may also have to rely on someone else to make all the announcements & presentations needed during a reception. Most DJs can easily

manage all these details & coordinate the entire reception, while ensuring a smooth musical transition from start to finish.

Logistic Requirements

Thanks to digital technology, most sound systems used by DJs require less floor space than a twin bed, use regular 110V electricity, can be set-up in less than an hour, & provide concert-quality sound that can be customized to the acoustics of a particular location. From a visual & creative perspective, DJ hardware can blend into any décor or design scheme. Large bands may need several hours of set-up time, 220V electrical hookups, & a large amount of floor space for equipment. A separate location may also be needed for a sound technician.

Booking Arrangements & Contracts

Many bands use multiple independent booking agents & contracts. In some cases, these third-party arrangements may not give you the degree of direct control you need to ensure quality, artistic consistency, & a guarantee of getting exactly what you want.

Cost

Generally, the booking fee for a quality band suitable for a wedding reception is at least 2-3 times the cost of a DJ. For large show bands & orchestras, the cost difference is even greater. In addition, you must consider additional charges (under the contract “rider”) for travel, lodging, & meals. You may also have indirect costs, such as additional facility charges for larger space, longer rental time, & special electrical connections.

Also, consider your budget when planning for your entertainment. A rule of thumb suggests allocating a minimum of 5-10% of your reception budget for entertainment. An experienced DJ/emcee with a professional sound system can ensure a lifetime of happy memories from your special day & give you greater spending flexibility for food, photography, & luxury items.

Favorite “First Dance” Wedding Songs

A Little More Time On You - N Sync
A Moment Like This – Kelly Clarkson
A Page Is Turned – Bebo Norman
After All - Peter Cetera & Cher
Always - Atlantic Starr
Always & Forever - Heatwave/Luther Vandross
Amazed - Lonestar
Anything, Anytime, Anywhere – Jimmy Buffett
At Last - Etta James
At The Beginning - Richard Marx & Donna Lewis
Beautiful In My Eyes - Joshua Kadison
Because You Loved Me - Celine Dion
Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me - Gladys Knight & The Pips
Can't Help Falling In Love - Elvis Presley
Chances Are - Johnny Mathis
Change The World - Eric Clapton
Come Away With Me – Norah Jones
Don't Know Much - Linda Ronstadt & Aaron Neville
Embraceable You - Nat King Cole
Endless Love - Diana Ross & Lionel Richie
Everything I Do, I Do It For You - Bryan Adams
Faithfully - Journey

Forever & Ever Amen - Randy Travis
For The First Time - Kenny Loggins
From This Moment On - Shania Twain
Give Me Forever (I Do) - John Tesh
Grow Old With Me - Mary Chapin Carpenter
Have I Told You Lately - Van Morrison/Rod Stewart
Here & Now - Luther Vandross
Hold Me - Whitney Houston & Teddy Pendergrass
I Believe In You & Me - Four Tops/Whitney Houston
I Cross My Heart - George Strait
I Do (Cherish You) - 98 Degrees
I Don't Wanna Miss A Thing - Aerosmith
I Finally Found Someone - Bryan Adams & Barbra Streisand
I Only Have Eyes For You - The Flamingos
I Swear - John Michael Montgomery/All-4-One
I Will Always Love You - Whitney Houston
I'll Always Love You - Taylor Dayne
I'll Be There - Jackson 5
I'm In The Mood For Love - Ella Fitzgerald
I've Got A Crush On You - Linda Ronstadt
If - Bread
In My Life - The Beatles
In The Still of the Night -The Five Satins
It Had To Be You - Harry Connick, Jr.
It's De-Lovely - Sarah Vaughn
It's Your Love - Tim McGraw & Faith Hill
Just You & I - Eddie Rabbitt & Crystal Gayle
Keeper Of The Stars - Tracy Byrd
Let's Do It (Let's Fall In Love) - Louis Armstrong
Let's Stay Together - Al Green
L-O-V-E - Nat "King" Cole
Love Is All Around - Wet Wet Wet
Love Of A Lifetime - Firehouse
Love Of My Life - Sammy Kershaw/Jim Brickman
Love Will Keep Us Alive - The Eagles
Loving You - Minnie Riperton
Me & You - Kenny Chesney
My Baby Just Cares For Me - Nina Simone
Nobody Does It Better - Carly Simon
Nothing Compares To You - Sinead O'Connor
Now & Forever - Richard Marx
One Boy, One Girl - Colin Raye
One In A Million You - Larry Graham
Only You - The Platters
Open Arms - Journey
Our Love Is Here To Stay - Billie Holiday
Release - Pearl Jam
Ribbon In The Sky - Stevie Wonder
Sea Of Love - Honeydrippers
Shining Star - Manhattans
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes - Platters
Some Enchanted Evening - South Pacific
Someone To Watch Over Me – Frank Sinatra/Sting
Stand By Me - Ben E. King
Suddenly - Billy Ocean
'S Wonderful - Ella Fitzgerald
The Best Is Yet To Come - Frank Sinatra
The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face - Roberta Flack

The One - Elton John
The Way You Look Tonight - Tony Bennett/Frank Sinatra
Three Times A Lady - Commodores
Tonight & Forever - Carly Simon
Tonight I Celebrate My Love For You - Roberta Flack & Peabo Bryson
True Love Ways - Buddy Holly
Truly - Lionel Richie
Truly, Madly, Deeply - Savage Garden
Unchained Melody - Righteous Brothers
Unforgettable - Nat "King" Cole & Natalie Cole
Up Where We Belong - Joe Cocker & Jennifer Warren
Valentine - Martina McBride
Vision Of Love - Mariah Carey
Wedding Song (There Is Love) - Captain & Tennille
What A Wonderful World - Louis Armstrong
When A Man Loves A Woman - Percy Sledge/Michael Bolton
When I Fall In Love - Nat King Cole
When I Said I Do - Clint Black & Lisa Hartman
When Love Finds You - Vince Gill
When You Love A Woman - Journey
Wonderful Tonight - Eric Clapton
Wonderful, Wonderful - Johnny Mathis
You Are The Everything - R.E.M.
You Are So Beautiful - Joe Cocker
You Had Me From Hello – Kenny Chesney
You Mean The World To Me - Toni Braxton
You Send Me - Sam Cooke
You're My Best Friend – Queen

Father/Daughter Dance Suggestions

Butterfly Kisses - Bob Carlisle
Can You Feel the Love Tonight - Elton John
Daddy's Little Girl - Al Martino/Mills Bros.
Hero – Mariah Carey
I Believe In Miracles - Engelbert Humperdinck
Isn't She Lovely - Stevie Wonder
Lean On Me - Bill Withers
My Funny Valentine - Carly Simon
My Girl - The Temptations
She's Leaving Home - The Beatles
Sunrise, Sunset - Fiddler on the Roof
Thank Heaven For Little Girls - Merle Haggard
The Way You Look Tonight - Frank Sinatra/Tony Bennett
Times Of Your Life - Paul Anka
Tough Little Boys – Gary Allen
Turn Around - Harry Belafonte
You Are So Beautiful To Me - Joe Cocker
You're the Inspiration - Chicago
Was That Only Yesterday – Julian Brown
Whenever I See Your Smiling Face - James Taylor

Mother/Son Dance Selections

A Song For Momma – Boyz II Men
A Song For My Son – Mikki Viereck
Because You Loved Me - Celine Dion

Blessed - Elton John
Can I Have This Dance - Anne Murray
Have I Told You Lately - Rod Stewart/Van Morrison
Hero - Mariah Carey
In My Life - The Beatles
Lean On Me - Bill Withers
Stand by Me - Ben E. King
Sunrise, Sunset - Fiddler on the Roof
Through The Years - Kenny Rogers
Unforgettable - Nat "King" Cole & Natalie Cole
What A Wonderful World - Louis Armstrong
Whenever I See Your Smiling Face - James Taylor
Wind Beneath My Wings - Bette Midler
You Are The Sunshine Of My Life - Stevie Wonder
You've Got A Friend - James Taylor