



What is an Open Vendor Policy at a Wedding Venue?

And How Do You Use It To Your Advantage?!?

There are a lot of reasons that factor in your choice of a wedding venue. One of the lesser-known reasons is an open vendor policy. How do you decide whether a venue with an open vendor policy is right for your big day?

What is an open vendor policy?

When you are doing your wedding planning checklist and researching wedding venues, you'll find that some venues require that the couple use a certain vendor, or that you choose from a list of their "preferred" vendors. They may have a certain caterer they require you to use or a list of caterers to choose from. A venue may tell you they have a "preferred vendor list" which usually means vendors are required to pay a fee to be on that list. Be sure to ask if you are required to use someone from their preferred list or if you are free to select your own vendors.

A wedding venue with an open vendor policy allows you to choose any vendor you prefer. They may offer you a list of recommended vendors but allow you to make your choice. There are likely some requirements, such as that the caterer has a license and insurance, but other than that the choice is up to you.

What are the perks of an open vendor policy?

An open vendor policy can be used to your advantage during wedding planning. Choosing a wedding venue with an open vendor policy allows you to select your favorite vendor (like the caterer that makes your favorite dish the best!) and other vendors that fit your wedding budget.

The good news is that you're not entirely on your own through the process of choosing vendors. A venue allowing open vendors will work with you to coordinate with your vendors, and the end result feels like an inclusive event, only better!

Choosing a wedding venue is simple, right? You just walk in, fall in love, and sign on the dotted line. In reality, choosing the right venue for your wedding may be a bit more complex—but well worth the effort. Your wedding venue dictates so many other details: décor, style, even the wedding vendors you use. You'd be crazy not to think through one of the most important details of your big day. Here are some factors to help you make the big decision about the right wedding venue for your wedding.

Location

Where do you want to be married? Think beyond just the city. Consider your options carefully. Choose a wedding venue in a prime location with nearby hotels for out-of-town guests (and guests that don't want to drive a distance to home). The hotels may also offer shuttle services for the day of your event, offering even more convenience for your guests.

Date

There are two ways to use your date to find the right wedding venue. The first option is to have a list of several dates and contact wedding venues to see what dates are available. The second option is to set your date and contact venues about the availability of that date.

Size

No matter how beautiful the venue is, it's not the right venue if it is too large or small for your guest list. Put together a guest list with your fiancé and any important family members. You may find out that your mother wants to include every one of her sewing club pals or that your father-in-law has a list of business associates that may significantly increase your guest list. Use the final guest list count to compile a list of potentially perfect wedding venues.

Your needs

Do you want a ceremony and reception in one location? Do you need assistance with wedding planning? Do you have a special idea that only some venues can accommodate? Sit down and think about your needs and your wishes (which aren't the same!) before you contact wedding venues for potential visit dates.

Style

When you picture your wedding day, are you dreaming of an elegant, traditional wedding? Are you planning a vintage day with historic details? Your wedding venue is the backdrop for all the other important details, so make sure you choose a venue that fits with your style. Talk with your fiancé about what kind of wedding he or she envisions to make sure you are contacting and visiting venues that match your tastes and style. Once you find the venue to suit your style, the rest of the details will start to fall into place.

Budget

Ah yes, we said the 'b' word: budget. Your budget is a key part of your decision process, but you need to be careful to make sure you choose a venue that fits your budget. Ask each venue for a full list of fees that could be incurred so you have a full idea of cost. You don't want to book a venue that you think is within your budget and end up with fees you didn't anticipate on what is supposed to be the best day of your life. It is a good idea to do a little research to find out what the going rate is for venues that fit your needs. The venue will be a big part of your budget, but selecting the right venue will make a big difference in the success of your day. You aren't looking for the most economical solution, but for the solution that fits your needs.

Parking

When you wedding plan, you need to think about what you want, and also what's best for your guests. As much as you want that venue with absolutely no parking, think about what is best for those joining you for your big day. Ultimately, that means parking for them (who wants to walk block after block in heels). Ask if your guests need to pay for parking so you can include the information on your invitations or wedding website.

Vendors

If you have a specific caterer in mind, add "do you allow outside caterers to come in?" to your list of questions. Some wedding venues only allow you use a specific vendor, while other venues have an open vendor policy that allows you to bring in the vendor you want to use. Ask the question up front so you don't waste your time visiting venues that won't let you use your preferred vendor.

Your Venue Tour

Don't book a wedding venue without seeing it first! They may have a great website, but you will definitely want to set up a time to tour the venue. Include those who are influential for your venue selection ... your parents? Best friends? Wedding Planner? Make sure that you are able to include those you want for your initial venue tour. Touring venues is a great way to kick off the official planning!

Stay True to Yourself

Many couples will choose venues based on the style of a wedding they fell in love with online. It's important to ask yourselves what feels authentic to you two as a couple, and to choose a space and a design that's a representation of who you are. And remember that, while a venue might have looked gorgeous with a different theme or design scheme, it may not be the perfect canvas for your wedding day.

And, at the end of the day, remember to breathe! This is a joyous time! While there are many decisions you will face, they don't all have to be made today! There is no secret to choosing your wedding venue! It's a process and there are lots of tools available to help you with your decision.

Happy Wedding Planning!