

Choosing the right DJ or band for your big day, and choosing your wedding music will be a key part of the planning process.

Your once-in-a-lifetime special day deserves the best soundtrack, so use the wedding music selection process as an opportunity to make your dreams a reality.

Getting Started

The first step in the wedding music selection process is deciding between a band and a DJ, but there are a few key considerations:

How much do you want to spend on music?

A band is usually more expensive than a DJ but a great band provides a focal point and entertainment at your reception.

If you prefer to hear music the same way it's heard on the radio or Spotify, you may prefer a DJ.

Are there any electrical or space limitations at your venue?

A five-piece pop band with multiple amps, mics and electric guitars could blow out the power at an older venue, so be sure to communicate with your venue manager to see what the space can accommodate.

Smoke, bubbles, cold spark machines. Make sure your venue allows these devices or if you do or don't want them let your DJ or band know as they may have these as part of their show

Ask if couples usually have a band or DJ and get technical and equipment specs that you can discuss with your music professional.

Does your venue provide any equipment?

Your band or DJ will have most of their own equipment but may need a platform/stage, table electrical cables/extension cords, and other items.

How are the acoustics at your venue?

It would be hugely disappointing to hire a band and have their music sound bad because of bad acoustics, or for a too-small space to be

overwhelmed by a loud group. Talking to your venue manager will help you get a sense of what will sound best in your space.

What kind of vibe do you want to create?

Consider the type of guests who will be attending, your theme (if any) and the kind of music that will be appropriate for your guests and venue (e.g. you probably don't want only a gentle harpist playing at a blowout bash).

Due to some of the strobe lighting the DJ or band may have you may need to let them know if anyone has a history of seizures

Your Wedding Timeline and Special Songs

Once you've decided between a band or DJ, it's time to start planning out your special songs!

Here's a typical wedding-day timeline and the moments that require specific tunes:

Prelude:

Music that plays as guests are arriving and finding their seats. Usually fairly subdued.

Processional:

The wedding party's entrance.

Bride's entrance:

Recessional:

An upbeat, celebratory song ending the ceremony that sets the tone for the rest of your day.

Cocktail hour:

These songs can be upbeat (but shouldn't pull people onto the dance) or a bit more low-key. Just don't put your guests to sleep—keep the energy of the day moving.

Wedding party's entrance:

Your wedding party and parents arrive at the reception.

Choose songs that are fun and get people excited and energized.

Newlyweds' grand entrance:

This is the first time your guests are "officially" meeting you as a married couple, so pick a song that makes you happy and gets you excited for the reception.

Dinner:

Your wedding music professional will take the lead on this, but these songs should be low-key and allow guests to mingle, eat and chat.

Cake cutting:

Many couples go with a "sugar" or "sweet" theme here

First dance:

Mother-son, father-daughter and other family dances:

Whoever you're dancing with

Wedding party:

Bouquet/garter toss:

Slow songs:

Let your band or DJ know if there are any specific, romantic songs you'd like to hear during the reception.

Last dance:

A celebratory song that lets guests know the night is done and thanks them for being a part of your big day.

Your DJ or bandleader will likely put together a "script" for the day that lists your special songs, when they should be played and what the emcee should say to introduce the moment. Go over the script with your wedding music professionals well before the big event; provide a pronunciation guide for the names of groomsmen, bridesmaids and parents.

Where to look for wedding music:

You can also ask your guests to suggest a song (or two!) on their RSVP cards or on your wedding website

Finally, keep a note in your phone and jot down any songs that come to mind when you're out and about—you might hear something on the radio that you just have to include in your wedding music.

Also let the DJ or bandleader know of songs you do not want played for certain reasons

Other IDEAS

PhotoScramble:

This is where your music professional will play one long song of your choice or a few songs while you go from table to table with your photographer

And you get pictures of you and your guests at their table, this happens while the music is playing and has to be done by the time the music is done

Kinda like a photo version of musical chairs.

Dollar Dance:

This is a bunch of songs that are played while your guests line up and pay a dollar to dance with the bride and groom

Games

Shoe Game:

This is one of our favorite games to play at wedding receptions! The newlyweds take a seat in front of their guests, sitting back to back. Each has one of their shoes, and one of their partners. The emcee or a member of the bridal party acts as host, and the couple has to answer the following questions simultaneously by holding up the shoe that corresponds with their answer. Estimate approximately 15 minutes to play the shoe game, and include questions like:

- * Who said I love you first?
- * Who made the first move?
- * Who has better handwriting?
- * Who dresses better?
- * Who is the better dancer?
- * Whose phone battery always has more of a charge?
- * Who says I love you more?
- * Who is more likely to be running late?
- * Who is the better cook?
- * Who got the best grades in school?
- * Who do you love more than anyone in the world?

Though your guests won't be playing, they'll be laughing it up as your answers reveal the truth about how you view yourselves and each other in this silly game.

Marriage Advice Cards:

Include a collection of cards at the dinner table that encourage guests to share their own marriage advice for the newlyweds.

How to play: Guests old and young share their personalized marriage advice for the couple's new journey ahead. Include a place for guests to both write and place their advice cards, and later turn these into a unique guest book. For a special touch, arrange a wine bottle for each upcoming anniversary and ask guests to enter cards for each landmark year.

Longest couple dance:

All the married couples get up and dance to a slow song while the emcee searches for the longest married couple.