

Helpful Planning Tips from Wedding Pros



Congratulations! You have embarked on a journey that will have a profound impact on your new life together. Planning a wedding can be very stressful. Budgets, vendors, venues, and even the weather can put you on edge.

You want everything to be perfect. We want to help!

The success of your wedding is important to everyone involved. At Wedding Music Charleston, the driving force of our business model is creating magical events that exceed your expectations. Even should you decide to use another entertainment company, we want to give you some tips that will help you. These are some simple suggestions that we have compiled from many years of weddings in a variety of venues and conditions.

Use them if they fit your vision, but this is your day to plan as you see fit.

These are merely ideas that you may not have considered.

Please don't hesitate to ask questions. **We are always here to help!**

Written by Michael D Peifer, Owner and Founder of Wedding Music Charleston, Event Music Charleston and Acoustic Music Charleston and Chairman of the Charleston DJ Alliance.

Choosing your vendors

- Be sure to **choose event professionals *with references*** to help with your important event. Inexperience, substandard equipment and a poor attitude can ruin an otherwise perfect day. Arrange meetings with your vendors and ask plenty of questions.
- ASK if your vendor has extensive **experience with weddings** and how many years he/she has been providing professional services specifically like the ones you are interested in. Ask to see photos of equipment set up

and videos if possible. **A vendor with experience should have MANY photos and videos to share.**

- Understand that there is a substantial difference between a club DJ or band, and a **Wedding** DJ or band. Experience with weddings is important. Weddings are far more detailed and require extensive planning and preparation. We do all kinds of events. No event is more complex and important than a wedding.
- Ask specifically for Master of Ceremonies services if you need one. A Master of Ceremonies will make introductions, direct the flow of the reception, make important announcements and handle details with ease. A club/party DJ will often have no experience with this. Club DJ's and Live bands often do not offer this service, unless they are specifically experienced with weddings.
- **Contracts and retainers are important.** They are an excellent tool that can protect all involved. A vendor that does not use a contract is often a vendor that is unreliable. Contracts and deposits give you security that your vendor will be available and prepared on the day of your event. **Using a family member or friend with no contract may leave you stuck at the last minute.** I have seen this *literally* hundreds of times. Get a contract signed, no matter who you are using. This will let them know how important this event is to you and encourage them not to leave you stuck.

Your Timeline

- A timeline that details the flow of events is recommended. It will help you to visualize how the event will proceed. I have an example of a timeline posted on our website site under "Forms" if you need one.
- Toasts, first dances, bouquet and garter tosses, introductions, cake-cutting and other key parts of the reception should be scheduled thoughtfully. The flow of the reception should be easy for all guests to follow including the Bride and Groom. A Master of Ceremonies can help with this. We are happy to assist if you like! A good MC works closely with your planner, catering and the photographer to make the event run smoothly.

Ceremony Tips

- Wedding ceremonies often move quickly. Be aware when choosing music that there may only be enough time to hear a brief section of the song before you are ready to move on. Choose *the specific section of the music that you want to hear* as well.
- Once the ceremony itself is over the Bride and Groom may be hungry, thirsty, tired or simply overwhelmed. They may need time to relax a bit and get something to drink or eat before moving on to other parts of the event.

- Consider your waiting guests when releasing wedding party members as they walk to the front. There is no need to separate them more than 10-15 steps for photos to be taken. **Extended walk time can subject elderly guests as well as children to much longer ceremony time.** This may not be practical for a number of reasons. There is no need for them to walk all the way to the front before the next person begins. This can be very time consuming, especially at outdoor events.
- **Runners** (fabric or paper on the floor) seem like a great idea, but in all of my years of weddings I have never seen one stay put correctly. They are far more distracting and annoying than they are helpful. I do not recommend using them.

Outdoor Events

- Outdoor and beach weddings can be lovely if planned correctly. However, weather, **temperature**, wind, mosquitos and gnats can be a real concern for you and your guests.
- **Beach weddings** require special consideration. Strong wind can be bothersome, and gnats become more active around dusk. Amplification is often needed if more than 30 guests will be in attendance, especially when the wind and surf are adding to the background noise. Be aware that there are likely going to be people on the beach that will be in your photos. We have even see drunk beach goers become unwelcome intruders in the event. Take the time to be thoughtful about these possibilities and your guests will be more likely to enjoy themselves.
- **Consider the special needs of elderly guests** as well. They are more likely to struggle with difficult conditions. Temperatures in Charleston can vary substantially. High temperatures and humidity or chilly breezes will drive elderly guests inside or worse, send them packing prematurely. They may also struggle with walking over sand or even grass.
- **Temperature** can vary wildly in Charleston, especially in the Spring and Fall. One day it may be 85 degrees and the next it may be only 45. Temperatures above 85 can feel like 95 with high humidity and likewise 50 degrees can feel like 40 with a little wind. If you want to enjoy your day you must be aware of this and have alternate plans. Dancing in hot or cold weather generally does not last long. Better to have your dance floor inside or at least protected from wind, rain and heat. Misting fans can help but they will make things wet. Heaters only help if they are in confined spaces without wind effects. **Warm weather can also affect your cake.** I have seen several cakes fall over in very warm weather.
- **Musicians are affected by temperature.** If the temp drops below 55 degrees or rises above 90 degrees your musicians truly may not be able to perform. Hands cannot be protected because they are used to make music, therefore a musician's hands will begin to cramp up from cold and not move well on the instrument. A musician's core temp is already higher due

to added activity so high temps can be difficult as well. Humidity and wind also affect the way your musicians perform. If your musician has trouble playing you and your guests will not like the temp either.

- **Equipment is affected by temperature and weather conditions.** Direct sun will overheat equipment and may shut the unit down. Very high temps and very low temps cause equipment to malfunction and/or fail. Rain, snow and condensation is very bad for equipment. Gear must be protected from any precipitation. Therefore, a roof and sidewalls are critical near your music set up. It is never fun to have equipment fail during your event.

Table set up- leave room to move

- Not all guests are 5'3" and 110 lbs. Often we see tables set up so closely together in the venue that once people sit down there is no way to move around. Remember also that the wedding party will need to be able enter during introductions and you will need to be able to wander around and chat with guests. There needs to be room between table and chairs for this.

Tents and Rain

- Rain does not fall straight down, and it will splash once it hits the ground. If rain is threatening in any way you should have sidewalls on your tent. Dirt floors can become very muddy and messy with rain splashing in. Your vendor's equipment can easily get wet and this can be expensive. Reserve sidewalls in case there is rain.
- Electricity and water do not mix. GFI (Ground fault interrupter) circuits, designed for outdoor outlets, will trip when they get wet (Lord willing) and shut down the party. Worse still, someone can get seriously injured. All outlets and connections will need to be protected from rain. If not, there is potential for catastrophe.
- Even a short drizzle of rain can get Ceremony chairs and equipment wet. Prepare with several towels, possible umbrellas and reserve a small tent for the Ceremony equipment if rain is even the smallest percentage possible.

High Heels and Footwear

- Ladies shoes with high heels can be dangerous in wet conditions and difficult to manage in grass, sand, gravel and dirt. Have them bring a change of shoes for dancing and walking on uneven surfaces. Hot sand or rocks and shells can also be tough on bare feet. Flip flops can be a fun alternative and they will also protect their feet if someone drops a glass (Party-foul glass breakage happens often at weddings) Wet dance floors due to spilled drinks or tracked-in rain can be trouble unless you have good shoes. Injuries are not what we want at weddings.
- On the previous note- **If you have glass at your wedding there will most likely be broken glass on the floor.** Consider glass alternatives.

It will save everyone a lot of trouble and embarrassment. Cut, bleeding feet are no fun. I have seen it many, many times. Dancing with drinks is inevitable and slippery. There will be a party foul or even several. Also consider how to clean up wet floors due to dropped drinks. A mop or towels can be a lifesaver. Your venue may not assist with this cleanup.

Insurance for your event

- Accidents can happen, and as the host of the event you are likely responsible. **This is your event** so injured parties or even the event venue may look to you for compensation. Event Liability Insurance can cover you if you need it. Your vendors may have insurance, but it will only cover issues directly related to their negligence, not alcohol related issues or injuries due to a fall or other mishap. Don't expect the venue or others to cover you. Cover yourself and your guests.

Buffet timing- Catering hints

- If your group is over 100 guests, moving everyone through a buffet line can be VERY time consuming. Be aware that people move through buffet lines slowly so there can be a real backup of guests waiting to eat. (Picture 120 guests standing in a line waiting to eat- bad form) Here are some hints to help move things along. 1. It is always best to allow access from BOTH side of the table if possible to make things move more quickly. 2. Having different stations breaks up the backlog so there is not just one line. 3. Releasing tables 2-3 at a time helps keep the line down but does not move the line faster and makes some guests feel devalued. Speak with your catering company to find ways to make dinner move quickly so you can get to your fun time.
- Messy food and beautiful, expensive clothes are generally not a good mix. Be aware of how guests will need to eat your selections. Frogmore stew with corn on the cob is tough to eat while looking dignified. 😊

Cake, sweets and party favors

- I have literally worked at thousands of weddings, and I can tell you that generally only 30% of your guests will eat cake or sweets. They are focused on enjoying each other and having fun. Virtually every wedding has a lot of wasted cake and sweets to throw away. This is an expense that you can avoid. Get a small cake that you can cut but **be frugal about sweets** for all your guests. Once they eat dinner they will be on to other things.
- Party favors are also unnecessary expense in my experience. Every wedding with party favors has an abundance of wasted expense that could be avoided. Often there are dozens and dozens of favors left behind. Your guests are focused on YOU and the fun they are having with one another, not sweets and party favors.

Moving between activities can take time

- Once your guests are ready to dance we find it easier if they are encouraged to *continue* doing so. Moving guests back and forth between dancing and other events can be difficult and frustrating for them. Grouping your special events together can be helpful. It seems beneficial to schedule most of the dancing during the last 2-3 hours of the reception in general, this will allow your guests to settle into the music and relax a bit. However, this is simply a recommendation based on our experience. You may have a unique vision for your event and we are always happy to accommodate!

Parking and loading

- Pay attention to where you and your vendors will have to park and load/unload equipment. This will affect not only your family and guests, but it will **likely affect your pricing as well**. Experienced vendors know the venues that are difficult for loading and parking. Some refuse to work at those venues, others charge more because they will need help, or the event prep will take more time. Many vendors use carts to move heavy items, so stairs or uneven surfaces can cause undue difficulty.
- We have over 20 years of experience with local venues and we also have insider's info including photos and video of logistics pertaining to most local venues. Contact Michael Peifer at 843-442-2525 or michaeldpeifer@gmail.com for access to this valuable information.

We hope these tips will help you have the magical event you are dreaming of. Let us know if you have any questions.

We are happy to assist even if you don't hire us!

Michael D Peifer- Owner and President

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Michael Peifer



Michael and New Naval Officers



Michael and Renate Peifer with Erin Kienzle, Lowcountry Live TV



Michael with Mayor Joseph P Riley Jr

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