

Wedding Reception Timeline Guide

This generic timeline is based on a traditional cocktail hour and a four-hour reception. It is designed to give you an hour-by-hour guide to the day's post ceremonial events.

All weddings and receptions are unique. Make yours as personal as you like. This is YOUR DAY! This is just what we have found to be effective after many years of wedding performance.

For this Timeline we will begin the clock AFTER the ceremony at 00:00 for those that will hold the ceremony off site.

Some Quick Ceremony Guidelines-

1. Prelude music generally begins 15-30 Minutes prior to the ceremony as the guests are finding their seats.
2. Once the ceremony begins the Groom and the Officiate take their places at the front of the room. This generally indicates to the guests that the ceremony is underway.
3. The Grandparents followed by the Parents of the Bride and Groom are then escorted to their seats near the front of the room.
4. The Bridal Party then move to their places on either side of the Groom and Officiate. Bridesmaids on the left, Groomsmen on the right.
5. Some Ceremonies have a Flower Girl and/or Ring bearer. They make their way up the aisle just prior to the Bridal Entrance. Young Children often become either shy or intimidated by all of the eyes on them and at times they either refuse to proceed or begin to cry. Designate someone to assist them if needed. 😊
6. The Officiate will then instruct the guests to rise from their seats for the entrance of the Bride. This is important to make all of the guests aware that she is approaching and they need to pay attention and stop chatting. It draws all eyes to the Bride where they belong.

From this point all Ceremonies differ- Choose the one that suits you best and do not feel forced necessarily to follow tradition. Be yourself!

Once the Ceremony is complete, the Bride and Groom will exit first, followed by the Bridal Party, then the Parents and Grandparents of the Bride and Groom. Often the Officiate will give the guests instructions

about what is to come afterward. Let your DJ or Musicians know what to expect so they can lower the music for this.

Now begins the Reception Timeline at 00:00.

00:00 | The Cocktail Hour

After being pronounced husband and wife, the newlyweds are often the first to leave the wedding ceremony, heading off (with photographer in tow) for pictures together before the partying gets under way. Your guests will head to the reception site for cocktails. Depending on the logistics of the event, your cocktail hour will begin immediately (if the ceremony and reception are held at the same venue), or it might start more than half an hour later (if there's travel involved). Cocktails will kick off your reception and will often last an hour (though it may be longer if no photos are taken in advance). During this time the staff will serve appetizers and drinks, which will get people mingling and in the mood.

Don't forget: Greeting your guests is essential! Many travel a long distance and set aside a large amount of time for this event so you should be sure to acknowledge them when possible, even briefly.

It's may be convenient for the couple, along with their parents and the wedding party, to form a receiving line outside the ceremony site to greet guests before the escape for photographs. Many couples are opting for this post ceremony receiving line rather than going from table to table during dinner. It can also be helpful to have some photos made in advance to minimize your time away from your guests, allowing you to spend precious time with family as opposed to your photographer.

01:00 | Newlyweds' Arrival/First Dance

Here's the part where the bride and groom make their grand entrance. The coordinator will usually make sure guests are seated before the DJ or Master of Ceremonies alerts them to your imminent arrival. Often both sets of parents and the wedding party are introduced, followed by the announcement of the couple for the first time as husband and wife. In many cases, your newlywed first dance will begin as you step out onto the floor after being announced. Have someone let your DJ know when you are almost ready. Alternately, you can wait until after the first course of the meal is served, but since everyone is already cheering you

as you enter the reception, use the applause as encouragement enough to skim away any shyness and step on out.

01:20 | Hungry?

Following your first dance, you might want to take the opportunity -- while all eyes are still on you, since hopefully no one yet has had too much to drink -- to thank everyone en masse for taking part in your wedding. A family member, often a parent of the bride, will say a blessing (depending on the families' beliefs).

If you're having a seated meal, the band or DJ will play subdued, conversation-friendly background music as the wait staff makes the rounds. If you're having a buffet, your coordinator, DJ/MC or bandleader can dictate how the rotation will work by calling each table when it's time to head to the front of the line. Remember: The bride and groom may be famished at this point and should do everything possible to take their seats and eat so they can enjoy the rest of the fun.

02:00 | Cheers & Toasts

Keep in mind that you may prefer that the toasts given by the best man and the maid of honor occur between dinner courses, to spread out the high-emotion, much-anticipated moments and keep guests in their seats. You may also choose to wait until dinner is complete before toasts are given.

02:30 | Cake Cutting

Some planners choose to have the cake cutting directly following dinner and toasts. Others will wait until later and couple the cake cutting with other activities. Throughout the dancing portion of your evening the music will need to stop for any extracurricular activities you've planned. (Bouquet toss, the garter toss, the centerpiece giveaways, and whatever else you've dreamed up). Try to bunch these together to minimize dancing interruption. Once people begin hitting the floor it is good to keep them there as much as possible. If you do choose to toss the bouquet, make sure to get a tossing bouquet from the florist so you can keep your original one as a memento. Give your photographer/videographer and DJ or Band Leader a few minutes notice when you move into critical activities so they can prepare.

03:00 -Party Time

Guests are going to follow the lead of the bride and groom. Once you are ready, the newlyweds and the bridal party should be the first ones on the dance floor so people know it's time to start partying. Give your DJ/Bandleader a few minutes of advance notice to prepare and get ready to cut loose!

DANCING TIP 1: CLOTHING- You may want to consider a quick wardrobe change before you begin dancing. Often your beautiful dress and sharp tux can be less than comfortable for dancing, not to mention quite warm. It can also be easy to tear your lovely dress when you and all of your guests are having fun on the floor.

DANCING TIP 2: FANS- Dance Floor fans are always a big hit. Inside or outside the dance floor gets very warm during energetic dancing. A couple of small blower fans work very well to keep people comfortable on the floor and dancing.

04:45 | Last Dance

It is your preference whether you want to end your wedding on a high note and choose a dance song that is fast and festive or have one last chance to swoon in one another's arms. Either way you will want to leave a lasting impression. Choose your last dance carefully.

05:00 | Final Farewell

Now the time has come to say good-bye. Your coordinator will usher everyone into the foyer or onto the steps outdoors so that as you make your grand exit from the reception, friends and family can blow bubbles, light sparklers, or toss rose petals -- and cheer to your successful celebration and future together. Be aware that it often takes 10-15 minutes for guests to find their way to the farewell location and get prepared to see you off. Make time in the schedule for this.

There is often a hard cut off time for music that the venue or local Police will strictly enforce. Be aware that the DJ or Band will be forced to stop

all music at this time. (Generally 10-11 PM depending on the venue)

Remember- The most important thing is for YOU to have a great time! Don't get overwhelmed.

Take care not to overbook yourself with tasks or activities or you may find that you have no quality time for family and friends. Many couples find themselves too exhausted to enjoy the reception as they were so busy with preparation for the day. Delegate day-of tasks well and RELAX when the day arrives.

You have likely invested a lot of money in your event. All of the plans and decorations mean nothing if you don't enjoy them!

Call us if you have questions. We are happy to help you!

Blessings!

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