

How to make your wedding stand out

Introduction

For your wedding, whether you plan on inviting 50 guests or 500 guests, you want the same thing: a fun, memorable time for you, your family, and all of your guests. Your guests may attend many weddings throughout the year, but how do you make yours stand out as that unforgettable wedding that your guests still talk about long after wedding day passes?

When planning a wedding, there are so many factors to consider! Of course, picking where you will spend your magical day is of the utmost importance. But once your venue is established, then there's the décor, flowers, catering, cake, entertainment, etc. The list can be overwhelming and costs can add up quickly. There's a reason most couples wait a year or more between their engagement and wedding day. Almost like a second job, couples spend countless hours planning and their (or parents') hard-earned money with the hope that their wedding day is perfect.

So much happens on wedding day and each part is customizable. With some research and planning, you can really deviate from boring, cookie-cutter wedding traditions and spice up your wedding reception to make it one for the ages.

1 *Follow the Timeline!*

A timeline really helps keep your wedding day organized. Believe it or not, everything will fly by so quickly that before you know it, it's over! Always allow some time for you to enjoy the celebration with your new spouse. After all, you both just made probably the biggest commitment of your lives. Working with an experienced wedding planner/coordinator is a must and will ensure that you have time for everything from cutting the cake to breaking it down on the dance floor with your guests. While following the schedule won't always be perfect, a general outline of the evening will allow you to accomplish everything on your reception checklist.

Wedding Planning Timeline

A SUPER HELPFUL CHECKLIST AND STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PLAN YOUR BIG DAY



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WHEN YOU GET ENGAGED

- Settle on your budget.
- Start gathering names and addresses for your guest list.
- Narrow down your potential date to two or three.
- Research locations for your wedding venue.
- Create a wedding website.

12 MONTHS BEFORE

- Hire a photographer. DON'T procrastinate. Many photographers are fully-booked up to a year in advance.
- Begin shopping for wedding dresses.
- Choose your bridal party and attendants.
- Finalize date after considering venue and photographer availability.
- Book a block of hotel rooms for out-of-state guests.

11 MONTHS BEFORE

- Plan ceremony and reception decor.
- Set up an appointment with your florist to decide what types of bouquets and centerpieces you need.
- Book your caterer.

10 MONTHS BEFORE

- Finalize your guest list
- Set up gift registries.
- Search for an officiant or have a friend or family member get ordained to perform the ceremony.
- Choose ceremony and reception music. Test out your playlist a few times before the big day so you know what music is best during dancing versus dinner time.

9 MONTHS BEFORE

- Order your gown and have any necessary alterations done.

8 MONTHS BEFORE

- Order hair accessories.
- Order jewelry.
- Plan and book your honeymoon (for international excursions).

6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Edit, proof and print your wedding invitations. Don't forget the envelopes and stamps!
- Do a few run-throughs on your hairstyle and makeup so you can test out products and make tweaks to your final look.

5 MONTHS BEFORE

- Make arrangements for any rentals items (tables, chairs, linens, etc.) you need.
- Arrange any additional sound equipment you'll need to provide music for the ceremony and reception.

4 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose groom's attire and make necessary alterations.
- Purchase any other bridal accessories including shoes, lingerie and garter.
- Plan and book your honeymoon (for local excursions).
- Send out Save the Date cards.

3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book accommodations for your wedding night.

2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Address, stamp and mail your invitations.
- Finalize the menu with your caterer. Don't forget drinks! If alcohol is not included in your catering bill, ask about bringing in your own.

6 WEEKS BEFORE

- Purchase wedding bands.
- Confirm number of bouquets, centerpieces and boutonnieres with florist.

4 WEEKS BEFORE

- Finish any DIY projects.

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Get your local marriage license lined up.
- Create a wedding day schedule and pass it out to important parties (including photographer).
- Give a final guest head count to the caterer.
- Finalize seating chart.
- Confirm all vendors' arrival or delivery times on the wedding day.

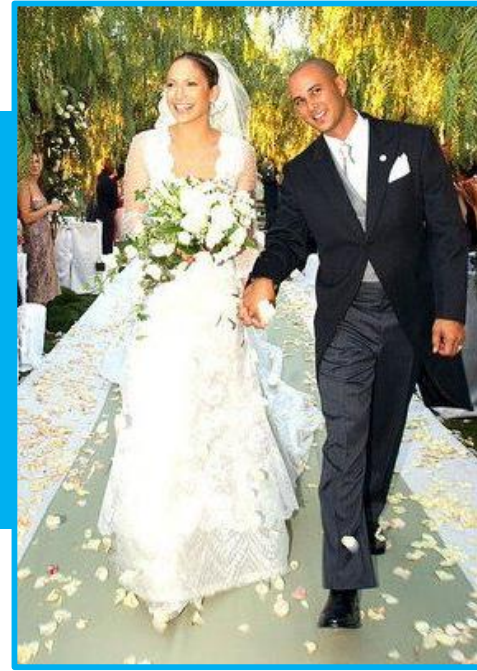
HAPPY WEDDING DAY!

- Have a trusted friend or family member handle checks for vendors to be paid on the wedding day.

2 *Unorthodox Introductions*

This is a big deal! This is the first official presentation of you as a married couple and your entourage, the people who mean the most to you. Be creative and have fun with it.

If your venue has a spiral staircase in the reception area, use it! Pick a good song for you and your crew to walk out to. Give each pair of groomsman/bridesmaid their own song. Choreograph some dance moves for everyone. Use of props is highly recommended.



3 *Be Un-traditional:*

Yes, there are things that everyone expects to happen at a wedding. Does it mean it has to? Absolutely not. For example, if most of the guests are older and married, a bouquet toss probably isn't necessary. Dances with parents can be short and sweet, just long enough for those pictures to be snapped. If you don't specify this beforehand, your DJ/host should know to fade the song out.

4 *Alcohol Bliss*



While alcohol isn't a necessity at a wedding, the general consensus is that it contributes positively to the celebration. With several different types of alcohol packages, you should opt for the one that best fits your budget and also best fits your guests. If you know you have many guests that go overboard with liquor drinks, maybe limiting the amount of liquor available or even the time that it's served can prevent any alcoholic-related issues. Many couples opt for the beer/wine package and add two signature drinks (bride/groom) to find a happy medium. From a wedding DJ's perspective, alcohol is the social lubrication that gets everyone grooving on the dance floor.

5

Cut The Toast

Simply put, long, drawn-out toasts bore guests and cuts into dance time. Give your speakers a time limit and tell them to keep it short, sweet, and classy. Tell your best man and maid of honor to keep it tasteful and NEVER mention exes! If your best friends have a lot to say, tell them to let it all out at the rehearsal dinner. There will be less people there anyways and it'll be a more intimate setting than the reception.



6

Dominate Dinner

Outside of dance time, dinner usually takes the longest during the reception. If you have a lot of guests, it may be wise to opt for the buffet option instead of plated courses for dinner. Have the DJ and/or venue staff facilitate the process so you can get everyone fed quickly. Always make sure you and your family and wedding party eat first! The most efficient manner is for you newlyweds to eat while everyone is enjoying cocktail hour. This way, when everyone is eating dinner, you both can go around and interact with all of your guests. There's nothing worse than having someone talk to you every 5 seconds while you're trying to enjoy your meal. Last thing, a wedding dinner would not be complete without dinner music! Dinner music should be played at a low volume and never overpower dinner conversation. Whether you pick classic Sinatra, Motown, or country, a little music during dinner can only enhance the mood.



7 *Book a Rockstar DJ*

Many couples spend most of their wedding budget on everything else for their wedding and try to book entertainment with what they have left. As with any other wedding vendor, experienced and skilled DJ's will be more expensive but well worth the money. Most of your guests won't remember what kind of food they ate or what color the flowers were, but they'll remember if DJ brought the party to the dance floor. A cheap DJ who operates as a human Ipod, pushing play over and over, will make your dance party unimpressive and forgettable.



Professional DJ's devote time to their craft, money to their equipment, and are knowledgeable of music. The right DJ will keep the dance floor packed, the energy up, and the party going all night long.