



Spirit Unlimited Professional DJ Entertainment Wedding Planning Newsletter #3

Venues Selection Timeline

Keeping track of time is important when planning a wedding...Use the following wedding venues timeline to maximize your schedule...

12-18 months before: Begin researching and checking availability at your desired locations. Because of business conventions, most hotels are not going to book weddings anytime further out than a year.

12 months before: Book your ceremony and reception sites.

6-8 months before: If your venue is also providing your catering, meet with your venue coordinator to discuss menu options and confirm timelines.

3 months before: If your venue is also providing your catering, arrange for a taste-testing to finalize your menu.

1 week before: Supply venue coordinators with final guest count, vendor contact numbers, list of vendor requests like tables, etc., and a list of vendor delivery and set up times.

2-3 days before: Confirm your ceremony and reception venue details and timelines.

Wedding Day: Assign a family member or wedding party member to handle any ceremony and/or reception issues that may arise during the day.

Venue Styles

Understanding and identifying the various styles associated with weddings is important...Here is a look at Venues' styles...

There are generally two styles of wedding venues, **Traditional (Formal) and Casual (Informal)**.

Formal: This would include traditional ceremony locations like churches, temples, cathedrals, and synagogues as well as reception locations like hotel ballrooms and country clubs.

Informal: Usually an outdoor setting like a backyard, beach, forest, or meadow where a civil or religious ceremony is performed.

What to Look For

It is sometimes difficult to know what makes that perfect wedding venue for your needs and style...We've provided a guide to help you identify the key things to look for...

When looking at wedding ceremony and reception venues, be sure to check the following: **Availability, Changing Rooms, Proximity, Parking, and Bar Service.**

Availability: Most resort hotels won't book weddings any longer than 12 months in advance. Some ceremony locations require reservations over a year in advance. Check with the venue coordinator as soon as you have set a date.

Changing Rooms: Check with a potential ceremony location about changing rooms for you to get dressed before the wedding. Make sure the distance from the changing rooms to the ceremony site is acceptable and the size of the changing rooms is appropriate and can accommodate the entire bridal parties comfortably.

Proximity: It is important to have a reception location that is not too far from your ceremony site. Look for venues that keep your guests driving time to a minimum. This is easily solved by having a ceremony and reception at the same location like a church, synagogue, or resort hotel. Pick a ceremony and reception location that offers good airport access, entertainment, dining, and recreation options for your out-of-town guests. If there aren't many options for out-of-town guests, the responsibility rests with you, which adds to your stresses. A hotel or resort venue is usually a great option for handling the considerations of your out-of-towners.

Parking: If you are planning to use a limousine or other wedding transportation than it is important to have places for the vehicles to park during the ceremony and reception. It is also helpful to have a reception venue that has valet parking (paid by you) for your guests. If you are having your reception at a private home, check with any local parking restrictions and then book a valet parking service.

Bar Service: Some reception venues offer bar service while others require that you bring in that service. Check with your venue coordinator about which options they offer.

New Trends

Wedding trends change and evolve with each New Year...we've provided a run-down of the newest, hottest trends in wedding venues...

Recent trends in wedding ceremonies and receptions are about convenience. Instead of individual ceremony and reception locations, guests are arriving at one place. More and more, flexible Officiants are willing to go off-site. All the religious elements can be brought to an off-site location.

Weekend weddings are also a growing theme. This is especially good for venues like resorts where your guests, the ceremony, and reception are located in one place over a weekend. Planning special luncheons and day trips are great ways to expand your wedding celebration.

Live plants can be rented to dress up any location and are less expensive than cut floral arrangements. This will fill out the venue and create a romantic feeling when combined with white twinkle lights. Be certain to check with your venues about any floral restrictions before ordering your plants.

Thematic or specialty weddings are a popular option. Some couples have gotten married while skydiving, others while scuba diving; if you share a passion and/or unique hobby you can create a theme around it for your wedding day.

Some resorts offer all-inclusive packages that include guest and bridal party lodging, ceremony location, reception site, catering, wedding cake, bartending, and valet service.

Package/Options

Understanding the typical wedding venue packages and options is important...Here is a look at what is usually available for weddings...

Package

A religious ceremony location usually includes the church or synagogue along with an affiliated officiant.

Many churches and synagogues require a donation for the use of their facilities. Check with the church or synagogue coordinator about what amount is usually donated for weddings.

A civil ceremony location can come with or without an officiant. Some public locations like parks and beaches may require a special fee and/or permit. Check with the city of your potential public location about their wedding requirements.

An all-inclusive hotel resort can offer a “one-stop” option of handling every aspect of the wedding from ceremony to reception to lodging.

Options

Extras at the ceremony site could include a Public Address or “P.A.” system. This is recommended for your officiant if the ceremony is outdoors. Usually, Officiants prefer to be amplified instead of having to project over outside noises. It also insures your guests will hear those special words of your ceremony.

Extras at a reception site can include options like a dance floor, risers for the band, additional electricity outlets, cake cutting costs, corkage fees, valet parking, etc. Be sure to get a clear understanding of what is included and what will be charged extra.

The venue is a major part of your budget. Insure that you are not surprised with hidden charges by asking a lot of questions!

Keys to Success

Here are some expert tips to make sure your wedding venues' experience is the best it possibly can be...

If you are having your ceremony in a religious venue, there usually is a Wedding Ceremony Coordinator. This person will help coordinate your ceremony on your wedding day.

Make certain there are comfortable areas for the immediate family to wait for the guest arrivals before the wedding ceremony.

Find a ceremony venue that has beautiful indoor and/or outdoor locations for wedding photographs.

If you are going to book a resort or hotel where catering is part of the package, ask to have a meeting with the Catering Manager to see if their menu and food service will be within your standards. Taste testing is usually a standard part of the process.

Also, if you are booking a resort, make note of how service-oriented they are. You will be working with them for quite a length of time, not to mention on that crucial day of your dreams. Make sure their level of service meets with your expectations. Assess this the first time you visit the property. The ratings of 4 or 5 Stars and Diamonds reflect a higher standard that usually means quality service. The success of your wedding day can hinge on the service you receive from your resort.

Be sure to select a ceremony venue and reception venue that is easily accessible for your vendors as well as your guests.

When working with a venue coordinator it's best to find a manager that has been at that property for at least two years. The coordinator can help create a smooth event because they know all the subtleties of that property and the entire team on-site.

If considering a "non-resort" location, make sure you personally have the ability and time to handle massive details, or hire someone who can! Most non-resort venues lack all the conveniences and weather back-ups available at resorts. These have to be created at a non-resort venue. Other details to consider at a "non-resort" are sufficient changing rooms, refreshments for the bridal party to sustain them through the day, convenient restroom facilities, ample parking, transportation for out of town guests, and backup plans for inclement weather.

Questions

When you meet with your prospective wedding venue coordinator, you'll want to ask all the right questions...we've provided a list of what you should make sure to ask when you first speak with them about your wedding...Their responses, as well as attitude, will speak volumes about their service...

Ceremony Venue

1. Is your site available on our requested date?

2. How many hours is the site available for?

3. How many weddings typically go on at the same time and how is that handled? We suggest you choose a venue that is not a "wedding line-up", but instead offers you a sense of seclusion.

4. Will there be an on-site coordinator there for us during the ceremony?

5. Does your site charge a standard fee, donation, or officiant's fee?

6. Can the site handle our estimated guest list?

7. Are there any restrictions on attire, decorations, music, photography, and/or videography?

8. Can outside musicians be brought in?

9. Is a permit needed for an outdoor, public location? If so, where/when should we apply?

Reception Venue

1. Is your site available on our requested date?

2. How many hours is the site available for?

3. Do you charge for overtime?

4. Do you charge by flat fee, per hour, or per guest?

5. Can we bring in outside caterers, cake designers and/or floral designers?

6. Does the site have a liquor license?

7. May we provide our own liquor?

8. Do you have a sample floor plan with pictures?

9. What is your waiter-to-guest ratio? (if applicable)

10. Does the facility have food preparation areas?

11. Does the facility have electrical power?

12. Is there a dance floor or can one be rented?

13. Are there any dress code restrictions?

14. Are there any entertainment, decoration, or photo restrictions?

15. Do you have parking facilities?

16. Do you have adequate rest room facilities?

17. Will there be other weddings at the same time as ours? If the answer is “yes”, we recommend finding out exactly how the venue separates them. Consider sound as well as view. Make sure this is acceptable to you.

18. Should we hire security or do you provide it, if necessary?

19. Will there be an on-site coordinator present at our reception?

Things to Avoid

Knowing the pitfalls and traps ahead of time can help save you money, time, and your sanity...Here's a list of things to avoid when planning your wedding venues...

- ✓ Do not create unrealistic expectations. If the bridal couple has unrealistic expectations about their ceremony and/or reception, then it is necessary to listen to the advice of the experts because they have the experience.
- ✓ Avoid losing track of your timeline. Timelines are very complicated and need to be adhered to. There are so many components to a timeline that affect all the elements; so wanting to adjust something usually throws off many things. For example, on the spot deciding to extend the cocktail hour means that meals will end up having to be stored instead of served freshly prepared-this effects each course, from the crispness of the salad to the tenderness of the meat. This could lend itself to disappointment because the food suddenly was below standard and not as promised.
- ✓ Weather is the greatest concern for outdoor weddings and receptions. It is vital to have a contingency plan in place that can serve as a backup for the wedding ceremony and reception. If the weather looks threatening, don't compromise great photos and the guests' comfort in order to stay with your original plan. Flexibility is the key!
- ✓ Certain churches, synagogues, temples, and private facilities restrict or do not allow decorations, outside food or beverage service, outside musicians, videography and/or photography. It is imperative to make certain what, if any, restrictions may need to be addressed before selecting a site.
- ✓ Avoid reception sites that are too far away from your ceremony location. Keep the driving of your guests to a minimum if possible.

References

Checking the reputation, credentials, and service record of a prospective wedding venue is important before you hire them...

References

There are several resources available to check the references of a particular wedding venue:

- Family and friends who have recently been married.
- Better Business Bureau (B.B.B.).
- Other local wedding vendors.

Contract/Payment

Knowing what to include in a contract with a wedding venue is important...We've created a list of important points to consider...

Contract

- Name and contact information for you and the venue.
- Date, time frame of your ceremony, and time frame of your reception.
- Name(s) of specific rooms requested.
- What time outside vendors will be able to set up?
- Approximate totals for guests and number of tables needed.
- Name of venue manager who will be present during your event.
- List of itemized items that the venue will provide.
- Venue proof of insurance and liquor license.
- Itemized list of setup, cleanup, overtime, and other fees.
- Total cost, itemized.
- Deposit amount due.
- Balance and balance due date.
- Cancellation and refund policy.
- Name of acceptable substitute in case of emergency.
- Site Manager's signature
- Your signatures.

Payment

A non-refundable deposit is due with the contract when reserving the date.

The remaining balance is due typically two weeks prior to the wedding. If the wedding is canceled or postponed, some venues may allow you to transfer the amount to another date, if the venue is able to re-book your original date.

Credit cards are required to be on file for any additional charges that may additionally occur.

Backup Plans

Having a "Plan B" is always a good idea when it comes to planning your wedding...Here's a look at some ways to cover your bases...

It is important to have contingency plans in place for backup locations.

Backup Location: Have a secondary location standing by for your ceremony and/or reception in case of weather or disaster. This is especially important if your ceremony and/or reception are outdoors.

Be sure to address the contingency plans in your written contract.

Checklists

New Trends

- Single Location
- Weekend Wedding
- Live Plant Rentals
- Thematic Wedding
- All-inclusive Wedding Resort Package

Timeline

- Identify Ceremony Location
- Reserve Ceremony Location
- Identify Reception Location
- Reserve Reception Location
- Confirm Timeline
- Confirm Menu
- Final Guest Count
- Vendor Contact Numbers
- Vendor Requests
- Vendor Delivery & Setup Schedule
- Confirm Ceremony Details
- Confirm Reception Details
- Assign Wedding Party Member to
- Handle Venue Problems

Styles

- Traditional Ceremony Location
- Traditional Reception Location
- Casual Ceremony Location
- Casual Reception Location

What to Look for

- Ceremony Site Changing
- Rooms
- Proximity
- On-site Parking
- Valet Parking
- Bar Service

Package/Options

- Religious Ceremony Site
- Civil Ceremony Site
- All-inclusive Hotel Resort
- Public Address System
- Dance Floor Rental
- Risers for the Band
- Additional Electricity
- Cake Cutting Cost

- Corkage Fees
- Valet Parking
- Ceremony Venue Budget
- Reception Venue Budget

Keys to Success

- Meet with Wedding Ceremony Coordinator
- Ceremony Changing Rooms
- Ceremony Reception Area
- Beautiful Photo Backdrops
- Meet with Catering Manager
- Assess Service Standards
- Central Location for Guests
- Venue Coordinator Experience
- Check Non-resort Amenities

Things to Look For

- Have Realistic Expectations
- Adhere to Timeline
- Backup Locations
- Check Venue Restrictions
- Nearby Reception Site

Resources/References

- Family References
- Friend References
- Check BBB/Visit BBB online

Worksheet

Deciding on the themes and styles of your wedding is a complex task...Here's a worksheet to help you plan out your ideal wedding venues experience...

Ceremony Venue

Ceremony Type

- Religious
- Civil

Venue

- Church
- Secular Space
- Religions: _____

Location

- Indoors
- Outdoors

Length

- Full length
- Vows-only
- Vow Exchange

Rituals

- Ring Exchange

- Readings
- Music/Singing Performance
- Unity Candle
- Rope
- Wine-sharing
- Moment of Silence
- Offering to Ancestors
- Ketubah
- B'deken
- Sheva Brachot
- Tish
- Kiddushin
- Yichud
- Breaking the Glass
- Family Vow Exchange
- Family Unity Candle
- Ring Exchange between New Parent and Child

Guests

- All Reception Guests
- Special Ceremony Guests
- Couple and Family

New Trends

- Single Location
- Weekend Wedding
- Live Plant Rentals
- Thematic Wedding
- All-inclusive Wedding Resort Package

Special Requirements

- Guest Parking
- Parking Service/Valet
- Disabled Access
- Coat and Hat Check
- Vows: _____
- Readings/Performances: _____

Reception Venue

Uses

- Ceremony
- Dressing
- Reception
- Dancing

Services

- All-inclusive
- Rentals Included
- Bring Your Own Services

Location

- Indoors

- Outdoors
- Combination

Features

- Walking Distance from Ceremony Site
- Drive From Ceremony
- Lovely Interior
- Beautiful View
- Best During Daylight
- Best During Evening

Location

- In Nature
- Near Ocean
- Near Lake
- Metropolitan

Look

- Elaborate/Traditional
- Modern/Contemporary
- Rustic/Old Fashioned

Special Requirements

- Guest Parking
- Parking Service/Valet
- Disabled Access
- Coat and Hat Check
- Children's Recreation Room

Wedding Venues Checklist

Your decision for your ceremony and reception venues will be the defining factor for your wedding's style and theme... We've created a checklist to help you visualize your perfect wedding day locations...

Ceremony Rental Items

- Altar or Chuppah
- Chairs
- Candelabra
- Flower Stands
- Tent(s)

Ceremony Location

- Church
- Resort Hotel
- Bed & Breakfast Inn
- Country Club
- Private Athletic Club
- Historical Building
- Private Home
- Private Estate
- Winery

- Ranch
- University Chapel
- Yacht or Boat
- Military Club
- Restaurant
- Museum
- Fairgrounds
- Racetracks
- Art Gallery
- Community Center
- Elk's Club/Rotary Club/Women's Club
- Civic Theater
- Public Beach
- Amusement Park
- Zoo

Other Items

- Unity Candle
- Aisle Runner
- Ring Pillow

Reception Rental Items

- Kitchen Cooking Facilities
- Plates/Silverware/Glasses
- Tables
- Chairs
- Linens
- Dance Floor
- Risers for the Band
- Extra Lighting
- Tents

Reception Location

- Church Hall
- Resort Hotel
- Bed & Breakfast Inn
- Country Club
- Private Athletic Club
- Historical Building
- Private Home
- Private Estate
- Fairgrounds
- Racetracks
- Winery
- Ranch
- University Chapel
- Yacht or Boat
- Military Club
- Restaurant
- Museum

- Art Gallery
- Community Center
- Elk's Club/Rotary Club/Women's Club
- Civic Theater
- Public Beach
- Amusement Park
- Zoo

Ceremony Venue Budget = _____

Reception Venue Budget = _____

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This guide is provided by Spirit Unlimited Professional DJ Entertainment to assist new couples as they navigate their way through the year leading up to their wedding day. Included are only suggestions and ultimate decisions need to be made by the couple. Spirit Unlimited Professional DJ Entertainment is not responsible for negative outcomes as a result of following guidelines.