



**1. Dim the lights when it's time for dancing.**

Dimming the lights after dinner creates a more relaxed atmosphere and will motivate your guests to dance. Determine the desired lighting levels during dinner and for dancing when you meet with your reception facility's coordinator. Consider lighting levels that will compliment any candles you plan to use. If appropriate, ask that your lighting preferences be included in your contract with the facility.

**2. Don't let pictures and videos dominate your day.**

Select a photographer with a confident and relaxed style who will capture your special moments in an efficient and stress-free manner. Don't be held hostage by an overbearing photographer who will dominate your reception. The best photographers tend to capture rather than create great photos. Choose a video company willing to use comfortable lighting unless you and your guests want to be squinting and shielding your eyes throughout the reception. In short, don't allow the pictures to become more important than the event itself.

**3. Place your DJ and your guests near the dance floor.**

The location of the dance floor is a critical factor in the success of your reception. Avoid seating guests between your DJ and the dance floor. Placing your DJ adjacent to the dance floor maximizes your DJ's ability to control the sound and interact with the dancers. Also, avoid facilities where the dance floor is not centrally located in the reception area. Some facilities, especially smaller country clubs and restaurants, may book more guests than they can comfortably accommodate and then locate the dance floor and the DJ in an adjacent room. In such situations, your guests will not be able to view your first dance or watch reception events without moving to another area. And your DJ will have little opportunity to interact with your guests. Such arrangements will discourage dancing and are guaranteed to diminish the energy of your reception.

**4. Make sure your DJ has a reception planning form.**

Traditional reception events such as the grand entrance, toast, special dances and the bouquet/garter toss must be carefully coordinated. A professional wedding DJ should have a comprehensive reception planning form with suggested music. If the DJ you're considering doesn't have one, find a DJ who does.

**5. Invest quality time in planning your Grand Entrance.**

The Grand Entrance sets the tone and establishes the energy for the entire reception. Work closely with your DJ to stage a Grand Entrance that reflects your style and personality. Decide who will participate, where they will assemble and in what order, where they will go after being introduced. Clarify pronunciation of names, determine appropriate introductions for blended families and, of course, select the perfect music. All of this planning is usually completed when you meet personally with your DJ a few weeks before your wedding. Your DJ can offer suggestions and will take charge of the Grand Entrance at your wedding reception.



**6. Do the formal toast immediately after the Grand Entrance.**

At no other time during the reception will your guests be more attentive and focused on you, the newlyweds, than immediately following the Grand Entrance. That makes it the perfect time for formal toasts. Your DJ should provide a wireless microphone to allow the toast to be given by the best man directly from the head table. Decide if you want others, such as parents or friends, to propose additional toasts. Let your Catering Director know when you plan the toast to allow for timely pouring of the chosen beverage. Also, consider welcoming your guests following the toast. Your guests are still attentive and focused on you and the microphone is available. This is an excellent but often overlooked opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings and thank your guests for attending.

**7. The First Dance - don't wait forever to do it and don't do it forever.**

One of the special moments of the reception is the bride and groom's first dance. Having your first dance after the grand entrance, or right after dinner, is a great way to start the party. Delaying your first dance to visit with guests will deflate the energy of your reception. Once you've selected your favorite romantic ballad, practice dancing to it until you're comfortable. Consider having your DJ fade out the song at a designated time if it is exceptionally long. All of this applies as well to the newlyweds' dances with their parents. If you are uncomfortable at the prospect of dancing before all of your guests, consider taking a few dance lessons. Your DJ can recommend dance instructors who specialize in this service.

**8. Don't try to select every song your DJ will play.**

Choose the song for your first dance and other songs for specific reception events. Tell your DJ what artists and styles of music to feature or avoid, but don't micro-manage your DJ's performance. A professional wedding DJ can 'read the crowd' and knows what to play and when to play it to keep the party going. More importantly, your DJ knows which requests will clear the dance floor. You're paying for your DJ's knowledge and experience. Take advantage of it.

**9. Consider using party props to entertain and motivate your guests.**

A few inflatable guitars or colorful maracas have an amazing way of energizing your guests. Doing the YMCA with all the right hats is always a crowd pleaser and provides for great photo opportunities. Professional DJ's can provide party props at reasonable expense.

**10. Don't rule out the Macarena!**

Think twice before you reject those so-called 'cheesy' group dances like the Macarena, Chicken Dance and YMCA. These dances may be the only opportunity some of your guests will have to get on the dance floor and have some fun. You don't have to do the Hokey Pokey right after your first dance, but let your DJ keep all options open. These group dances are frequently requested by your guests and often create reception highlights and priceless photos.