

Wedding Reception Order of Events

You will need to provide a timeline of events for several of your vendors (photographer, reception hall, caterer, DJ, etc.). The following is a guideline for the order of events at the reception.

Receiving Line

To ensure that you are able to greet each guest at your wedding, arrange a receiving line either directly after the ceremony or at the beginning of the reception. If possible, do not wait until after dinner as some guests may not stay for the dance following the dinner.

Cocktail Hour

Begin the reception with a cocktail hour to give your guests time to travel from the ceremony to the reception site. This also gives guests a place to gather while the wedding party has pictures taken.

Introduction of the Wedding Party

After the guests have arrived at the reception hall, have the wedding party enter while the emcee announces each couple. The groomsmen and bridesmaids enter first, followed by the parents of the couple and the bridal couple.

Dancing

Some choose to have the First Dance, Father/Daughter Dance, Mother/Son Dance occur before the dinner, immediately after the introduction of the bride and the groom. This option allows for the dancing to begin earlier in the evening and avoids a lull between the dinner and the dance. If you choose to wait, the dance can begin after the cake cutting.

Dinner

Typically the wedding party is served first. This allows the bridal couple to finish eating before many of the guests so that they can walk around and mingle with seated guests – or have more pictures taken. Toasts may also be given while guests eat.

Toasts

Typically, the best man will deliver the first toast, followed by the maid-of-honor, the father-of-the-groom and the father-of-the-bride. Or, the parents hosting the reception may choose to go first. The bridal couple can conclude the toasts with a toast of gratitude.

Cake Cutting

The bride and groom cut the cake. Additional toasts may be given at this time.

Bouquet and Garter Toss, Wedding Party Dance, Dollar Dance, Etc.

Talk with your DJ/band prior to the wedding day to coordinate what special dances you want played at the reception and a general timeline of the dances.

Departure of the Bridal Couple

Arrange to have the DJ/band announce the last song of the evening. The couple leaves after the last dance amid bubbles, sparklers, etc. Guests depart after the couple.