

# WEDDING RECEPTION TIMELINE | A NIGHT YOU WON'T FORGET

When it comes down to it, your wedding reception is one of the biggest parts of your wedding night. Having a set timeline to stick to will ensure that you and your guests get the best possible experience to make it a night you won't forget! Here is a sample wedding reception timeline and some other helpful tips to get the party started.

## Guests Move from Ceremony into Cocktail Hour | 1 Hour

While your guests are mingling with each other after the ceremony is a good time to do your couples session and formal family photos. Although the bride and groom typically won't be able to attend the cocktail hour it's still a nice time for your guests to relax and enjoy some hors d'oeuvres and drinks before they go into the main reception. Check out this [Wedding Photography Timeline](#) for suggestions on how much time should be allotted for the cocktail hour based on how many formal photos you want done.



## Guests Are Seated in Reception Hall | 15-20 Minutes

Your wedding coordinator and/or DJ/MC will get all of your guests rounded up and seated in the reception hall so that they are ready for the party to start. If necessary, they will explain how guests can find their seat and will give any other special announcements during this time. The start of getting your guests into the reception and the estimation of

how long this will take based on how many are in attendance is an essential part of your wedding reception timeline.



### Wedding Party Entrances | 5-10 Minutes

Your DJ/MC will announce your family and wedding party entrances here. This is a fun time for your wedding party and/or immediate family members to enter the reception hall with a funny dance or action that gets your guests excited and ready for your grand entrance.



### Bride and Groom Grand Entrance | 5-10 Minutes

This is your time to celebrate being introduced for the first time as the newlyweds that you are. Pick your favorite party song and strut your stuff! Make sure the bride and groom

entrance is separated from the other wedding party entrances on your wedding reception timeline so that you can have your own shining moment in the spotlight!



### First Dance | | 5-10 Minutes

After making your grand entrance, all eyes are on you and it is a perfect time to go straight into your first dance as a married couple. Whether your dance is choreographed or just a slow and sweet moment to a sentimental song, this is your moment to shine together.



### Welcome Speech | 5-10 Minutes

Now you and your forever honey are seated at your head table and it's time to thank your guests for coming. This can be done by the bride and groom or the mother and father of the bride. In some cases, this is also a good time for a blessing from a family member to commence the meal!



## Dinner is Served | 1 Hour

Make sure you grab your food first, chow down and be sure to enjoy the wedding meal you selected! Then if you want, you can make your rounds and greet your guests before your return to your table for the toasts. This is if you haven't set aside other time to mingle with your guests somewhere else in your wedding reception timeline. If you do choose to take the meal time to greet or take photos with each table, make sure you allow yourself at least 3 minutes per table and adjust the meal time accordingly.



## Toasts | 30 Minutes

While your guests are still in their seats finishing up their meal is a great time to go through the toasts. It's a good idea to start with the Best Man and Maid of Honor toasts

and then follow with anyone else you have asked to toast. If it wasn't the bride and groom that thanked their guests for being a part of their wedding day before the meal, now would be a great time to do so... before the dance party starts!



### Family Dances | 15 Minutes

This is a perfect time in the wedding reception timeline to start the dancing portion of your party with the mother & groom and father & bride dances. After the last family dance, you can have your DJ ask all your guests to come to the dance floor for a group photo. This gets everyone up and out of their seats and on the dance floor so when the music hits you will have a good crowd to get the party started!



### Open Up the Dance Floor | 30-45 Minutes

Now it's time to get your groove on! Start off the power dance session with an upbeat song that will get everyone in the room moving. In between bursts of high energy songs interlaced with some slow jams is a great opportunity to do your garter and bouquet toss, or any other fun activities you have planned on your wedding reception timeline.



### Cake Cutting & Dessert | 30 Minutes

The cake cutting ceremony lets your guests know that the party is almost over, and can be done about an hour before your grand exit or the end of the reception. After the bride and groom cut their pieces of cake, have your DJ play some slow to mid-tempo songs while your guests enjoy their dessert. During dessert is also a good time to thank your guests for coming!



### Reception Sneakout Photo Session | 20-30 Minutes

During the last dance set and after dessert is served is a great opportunity for the bride and groom to sneak out for their nighttime couples session. This is a very important time to schedule on your wedding reception timeline with your photographer. This is when they will get the romantic nighttime shots that document the perfect end to your beautiful wedding day. Just make sure to come back for your last dance!



### Keep the Party Going | 30-40 Minutes

After dessert has been enjoyed and the sugar rush begins to kick in, it's time to keep the dance party going! This last dance set will simultaneously coincide with your nighttime photo session on your wedding reception timeline. Have your DJ announce when he is playing the last song so your guests know this is their last chance to get out there and dance before the party's end. Choose an upbeat, big hit that will get everyone out on the dance floor to shut the party down!



## Grand Exit | 10-15 Minutes

After the last dance, have your DJ/MC usher everyone outside for you to make your grand exit to your getaway car. Then, it's honeymoon time... and we will just leave that timeline up to you.



Here are some downloadable sample wedding reception timelines to get you started.