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Wedding Runsheet & MC Planning Tips

Take time to read this – these are GOLDEN tips gathered from years of playing weddings!

Having performed and MC'd at over 117 weddings these are a few tips to make the night run smoother for you.

The most important thing to be mindful of is the scheduling of the night and formalities so you don't run out of time and end up with only 10-20 mins of party time and dancing time at the end.

Wedding venues in this part of the world always have a room hire end time of 11pm – 12am. (In Europe they typically go until 2-3am! – basically because Europeans don't usually drink to excess like Aussies & Kiwis do ☺)

So if you are hiring live music you really want to have at least 60- 90 mins dance music time after the formalities are over.

Cocktail weddings or buffet weddings don't usually have lack of time issues but with a regular sit down formal wedding with large guest numbers of 100 or more here are some tips.

For most weddings it's best to group the formalities like this.

- Speeches
- Straight into Cake cut
- Straight into first dance

Dance music

By the end of the first dance (or by end of any other follow on special songs) - all guests should be on the dance floor joining the Bride & Groom – then it's party time - the band kicks into the dance set.

It's harder to get guests up out of their seats during the first few dance songs – but very easy to get them to join in with second half of the first dance – then they are there on the dance floor ready to party!

This is the MC's job to muster guests to join the Bride & Groom during the second half of the first dance.

If it's a rehearsed first dance the MC needs to know to ASK guests NOT to join the Bride & Groom – otherwise trust me some will just get up and join you ☺

When to have speeches?

Best to have speeches *after* mains are cleared or after dessert is cleared – rather than during mains or dessert or during clearing otherwise guests attention is not really on the speakers.

As a guideline try to begin speeches no later than 2 hours prior to room hire end time – this way you'll end up with 60-90 minutes of dance time.

If things are running late then speeches 90 minutes before room hire end is just ok.

If things are *really late* then have speeches during the main or dessert if you have to so you can buy some time.

TOP WEDDING RECEPTION PLANNING TIPS TO ENSURE A PERFECT NIGHT OF CELEBRATION AND PARTYING.

1. A wedding should have 50% formal sit down time and 50% Party / Dancing time!

Too often I've seen long drawn out table service of 3 full courses take up to 60% of the reception time....then with speeches and formalities you are left with only 1 hour of dancing time. Remember 81% of people say entertainment is the most memorable item at a wedding.

Ways to save time on dining and have more social time where guests are free to circulate and dance.

- If you have more than 100 guests consider a high quality buffet instead of table service.
- If having table service with large guests numbers - these tips can save you up to an hour of seated time...
- Have speeches during or after mains.
- Consider a simple self serve dessert served to each table rather than individual service.
- Suggest a self serve dessert be served after speeches during dancing.

For a less formal casual wedding consider cocktail service of canapes and substantial the entire night, while still providing table settings for those who want to dine seated.

2. Don't let too many unplanned speakers up to waffle on.

Occasionally there'll be an unannounced speaker - someone wishing to say congratulations and all the best - then it opens the flood gates for every drunk Uncle to get up to say their bit - they can say this to you in person - it can be a huge waste of your reception time to permit a bunch of announced speakers up.

Recently an MC allowed anyone up to speak - speeches went on for 60 minutes, we played 11 minutes of dance music - then the lights came on - end of the night. Best to keep speeches to 1/2 hour max.

3. Make sure the band is set up next to the dance floor

Recently we played a couple of venues where the dance floor was set up in the middle of the room and the band was in the corner of the room.

Another time we were told to set up on a lower level 3 stairs down from the dance floor, which was above us!

It's a lot harder for the band to interact with the audience when the audience is far away. This makes for an awkward situation and it's harder to create a party atmosphere....we can live with it, but it's just not ideal.

Best for us to be set up next to the audience on the same level or as close as possible.

4. A farewell circle at the end is a great way to acknowledge your guests for coming.

You won't realise until a few days after the wedding how little time you spent chatting to certain guests.

It's likely you'll only have 5-6 minutes of one on one conversation with any possible guest during your wedding day.

The circle at the end is a simple way to individually say thanks.

Regardless of the room size a circle or oval can be made and you can say thanks then leave before the guests do.

I usually play 1-2 slow sing along songs while you do this - it's a great wind down to the day.....if over 60 guests it can take ages to get around the whole circle so a brief goodbye is best as guests get impatient standing still for too long - for bigger weddings consider a guard of honour instead.

5. Using the services of 'friends' rather than professional wedding suppliers.

Occasionally friends may offer to conduct your ceremony, MC, provide entertainment etc.

If they are experienced in what they do then this is great.

If they are not experienced but just willing to help and if you have never seen them do what they do then you run the risk of a sloppy job.

As a wedding professional I've seen many an inexperienced celebrant having terrible trouble with a crackling speaker system while fumbling their way through the ceremony.

I've seen friends nervously MC and not stick to planned times and have speeches really late and leave only 10 mins for dancing time!

I've heard horror stories of totally unsuitable bands etc etc.

If you know for sure that your friend or family member can do a fantastic job - GREAT... otherwise I strongly recommend you hire seasoned pros - afterall.... the memories of your day will last a lifetime.

MC tip to save the day if things are quite late.

If dancing hasn't begun with dessert or formalities & dessert still to be served then skip the dessert – start the dancing – and ask the kitchen to serve dessert after 15 mins of dancing.

That way you still get some party time – dessert then more dancing instead of just perhaps 20-30 mins dancing right at the very end.

I always have this option up my sleeve as MC to make things go right!

Some guests will stop dancing to eat dessert – others won't.

The kitchen and staff may say it's a good way to waste desserts by serving them during dancing but.....if it's a case of sit down dessert and only 15 mins of dancing or lots of dancing and a few not eaten desserts – which would you rather have?

This has only come about as I've played at weddings where the MC wasn't aware of these time pressures and we end up playing for – *in one actual case at Linton Gardens at a wedding for 120 guests* – we played for 10 mins then lights on – end of the night!

That's about all ☺

See sample run sheet for all the things you need to consider and for the things that the MC must know to run the night smoothly.

Regards

Tim

.....Keep scrolling.....Full sample wedding runsheet below

Sample Wedding Run Sheet

Ceremony – time

Entry song – *Nice soft vocal or instrumental song*

Register song – *signing song – plus extra if it's a long signing (ask celebrant exactly how long)*

Recessional – *Popular upbeat song – usually start with Chorus as the walk to guests is short
If it's a Church service – there may be opportunity for other instrumental ditties during candle ceremonies – communion etc – check with Minister or Priest.*

Reception

Exact time guests to enter reception venue ? - band plays soft ipod music.

(ask venue to lock doors as it's not cool to have early guests wandering in while band is sound checking in their shorts and singlets – very unprofessional ☺)

Most venues do lock doors – as there is always some early guests and the staff have often not finished setting the room up.

6.45pm: Bridal party arrive to outside of venue.

*This is the first opportunity to be late – Don't let the photographer make you late in arriving!
Remember your reception has a fixed room hire end time - any lateness results in less party time at the end!*

7:00pm: Guests seated

7:10pm: MC welcomes everyone, provides overview – housekeeping – table or bar service etc.

7:15pm: MC announces bridal party. Ipod song – *to be faded in & out around MCs announcements.*

The bridal party is announced in this order:

Parents then Page boy & Flower girl – but often they are already seated with guests....

So usually just:

Bridesmaids & Groomsmen

Maid of Honour & Best Man

MC – to have get guests upstanding then announces the Bride & Groom

MC to propose toast to Bride & Groom and introduce person to say Grace if required then announce entrees to be served shortly.

7.25pm: - Entrees served

Band plays soft background music through entrees and dinner stopping for speeches etc.

8.15pm Mains served

9.00pm: MC – announces "speeches to begin in 5 mins – if anyone needs to freshen up or top up their drink for toasting now's the time as you'll be sitting down for a while during speeches"
Staff to top up drinks for toasting etc.

Speeches ideally should be no more than 5 mins long each

Speech order usually:

MC introduces father-of-bride to provide messages from people who could not attend, and make absent friends toast.

Then Father of the Bride speaks (less traditionally with wife also)

MC introduces Father of the Groom (less traditionally with wife also)

MC introduces Bridesmaids

MC introduces Maid of Honour

MC introduces Groomsman

MC introduces Best man (less traditionally with Bride also)

9:30pm: MC invites bride/groom to cut the cake. - ipod song.

This is awkward moment for Bride and Groom – they need to be directed.

MC needs to give countdown to cut cake – then after cut they just stand there while people snap pictures – until MC checks photographer is done – then acknowledges B & G then directs them to the dance floor for the first dance.

MC introduces first dance – played live by band or ipod

MC ensures lights are turned down – also check this with photographer.

MC must know – Do B & G have rehearsed dance routine – if so how long until which part of song? If they do have routine MC must tell guests this and ask them to "please wait until I call you to join the B & G" – otherwise I guarantee some guests will rush up and join in!

If no routine MC must know that after 15 -30 sec or if after routine when to invite parents of bride – then bridal party – then all guests to join the B & G on the dance floor.

By end of first dance ideally all guests are on the dance floor ready to party.

If other follow on songs planned – special father daughter dances etc them this must be all noted for MC to announce so guest don't join in too early.

Dance music – band to play up tempo dance set for at least 40 – 60 minutes with 15-20 break.

Band to play up tempo ipod dance music during break.

10.00pm - Dessert served as buffet on Tea & coffee Station.

Before second dance set MC to announce Bouquet & Garter toss.

Bouquet first then Garter.

Second Dance set

10.30pm – last drinks

10.40pm - last song

MC to announce farewell circle or Guard of Honour

Band to play last either soft song for circle or upbeat song for guard of honour.

11:00pm: Venue vacated