

# **THE SECRETS TO HIRING A WEDDING RECEPTION DJ**

The Simple How-To Guide for  
Hiring the Right DJ for Your  
Special Day.

**This is your FREE e-book, *Secrets to Hiring a Wedding Reception Disc Jockey!***

**THE INSIDE SECRETS TO  
HIRING A WEDDING RECEPTION DJ**

**The Simple How-To Guide for Hiring the Right DJ  
for Your Special Day.**

*About the Author*

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# FORWARD

This e-book is part of my larger wedding information package, the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit. It is the only e-book out there written by, and containing information from, *real professionals* who work for Disney's Fairy Tale Weddings®. For more information on the *Fairy Tale Wedding Kit*, [please click here](#).

Before you read this e-book, you probably had many ideas about what hiring a DJ would be like. Hopefully, after you have read through this information, you will be a more educated and savvy consumer when it comes to Disc Jockeys.

DJs have come a long way in the past 20 years, with a lot to choose from. Today there are very capable and exceptional women in the DJ business, also. However, for easier reading, I will refer to “the DJ” as he. Please know that all of my tips and secrets apply to whomever you may hire!

You **may** have these pre-conceived notions about DJs:

1. Pretty much all DJs are the same, all they do is press buttons and play music.
2. DJs are cheaper than bands.
3. After I get my church, my reception hall, my caterer, my cake, my photographer, my videographer, then I'll get my DJ.
4. Why should I pay a lot for a DJ if he can download all the music from the internet for free?
5. All DJs have goofy routines and blow-up balloon guitars, crazy hats, and nutty props.
6. I can give a list of songs to my DJ and he can play them in order, according to my preference.
7. If my family and friends don't dance, the DJ stinks.

8. I should go watch a live performance or a video of a DJ in action to see if I like him.
9. Why would a DJ need insurance?
10. I know someone in a nightclub who DJs every night. He will be perfect for my wedding!

Hopefully, after you read this book, you will be the “super-educated” bride (or groom!) with an expertise in Disc Jockeys. Get ready to be “wowed” with all the secrets you’ll need right here!

# CHAPTER 1

## ABOUT ME

### *What Makes Me an “Expert”?*

My name is Chuck Johnson, and I live in the Orlando, Florida area. I have been a Professional Wedding DJ for over 15 years, and I regularly perform at the Walt Disney World Resort® in the Fairy Tale Weddings Department.

Although I have performed just about all types of weddings, the experience I have gained performing at Disney Weddings is invaluable. Performing there has taught the “ins and outs” of every aspect of wedding receptions... what to do and what NOT to do. Brides, and families, that come to Disney for their wedding are very specific and demanding about what they want. After all, Disney is known for flawless, exceptional customer service.

If you want to know a little more about me, you are welcome to check out my website at [www.classicdj.com](http://www.classicdj.com).

### *My Resume*

I want to be clear about my “resume”- *I am **not** an employee of Disney Weddings*. The Wedding Department auditions DJs specifically to perform Fairy Tale Weddings for them. I am lucky enough to be one of the few, select DJs they use on a regular basis. I also perform at many receptions throughout the Orlando area.

### *Why This Book?*

I have been on a mission for years to get the truth out there. I even have an entire page on my website called *The Truth*. I was dismayed for many years at the reputation of DJs. We were somewhere just above the “used car salesmen” category. Why? Our business is *UNREGULATED*. It is strictly buyer beware. Think about it. When was the last time **YOU** hired a DJ? Probably never. You’ve only heard about it. Maybe great

stories, or worse, horror stories. The situation of rarely having to hire a DJ brings out some (at best) hobbyists or (at worst) incompetent folks who are trying to make a quick buck.

***SECRET- these people are counting on the fact that you are uneducated (about DJs) or have pre-conceived notions about DJs. They are counting on the fact you probably will only hire a DJ once or twice in your lifetime. They are counting on the fact they don't need your repeat business- because in their mind, there is none.***

### ***What I Want To Do For You***

It's simple. I want to be as up-front, brutally honest, and open as I can possibly be about all aspects of Disc Jockeys... even stuff they won't tell you in a sales pitch or a website. By reading this book, you will not only get a great "DJ education," you will learn many great ideas, tips, tricks, and secrets to having the *most incredible wedding reception ever*. Period.

**[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)**

# CHAPTER TWO

## *TYPES OF DJs*

### *What's the Difference?*

When you begin your search for DJs, you will find just about anything you can imagine out there. There are two things for you to remember- *Multi-Op* and *Single Operator*. Almost all DJs will fit into one of those categories.

### *Multi-Ops*

A former DJ who wanted to expand his business usually owns these companies. He may employ OR sub-contract three to fifteen DJs on an “as-needed” basis. Many Multi-Ops will have large Yellow Pages ads or a huge internet presence. Many times (but not all), this business model usually relies on volume and *quantity* of events performed to be profitable.

### *Single Operator*

The Single Operator is just that, a DJ who works on his own. He may have working relationships with other companies to send referrals to if he is booked for a particular day. Single Operators usually start their career working for a Multi-Op to gain valuable experience.

### *What's Better?*

I will give you the pros and cons of each, and let you decide. I want to be as objective as possible, so I will try and stick to the facts as I have witnessed throughout my career. On every account, the information I am giving you generally accepted as fact throughout the DJ community, although some may deny it. Of course, there are *always* exceptions to the general rule. After reading below, I think you will come to the same conclusion as I do.

### *The PROS of Multi-Ops*

Multi-Ops usually have offices that you can visit, and a variety of different DJ personalities to choose from. They will have a business license and liability insurance, and most likely name recognition. Their prices may be cheaper in certain parts of the country.

### *The CONS of Multi-Ops*

Multi-Ops rely on volume, so you may be pressured to book immediately. You may not know who your DJ will be until just before the wedding. They may not have control over what equipment each DJ is using, as they are most likely sub-contracting each DJ, due to the part time nature of actual performance time.

**SECRET- Most all DJs perform a part-time schedule. Until there are weddings onweekday afternoons, it is unlikely any DJ works 40 hours a week performing weddings. It's true, there are full-time DJs where their DJ business is the only way they make a living. Being "onstage" is only a small percentage of what they do-many hours are spent "offstage" preparing for the event.**

### *The PROS of Single Operators*

Single Operators can focus all of their attention on you. You will be the only event they have planned for that day. You will most likely speak to the DJ who will perform at your wedding the first time you call.

You will also likely *not* be rushed to make a decision, because this DJ pretty much knows if *you* do not book him for that first Saturday in June, someone else will.

The Single Operator usually rose from the ranks of a Multi-Op and wanted to break out on his own... because of that fact you can guess he had the business sense and personality to do so. Great Single-Op DJs will also have many of the qualities of a Multi-Op, such as a business phone and license, liability insurance, and great website, and more.

### ***The CONS of Single Operators***

Unfortunately, many DJs who struggle in this category do so because they have poor business sense. You may call a DJ who does not have a business phone, or even an answering machine. He may be a teenager starting out with illegal music downloaded from the internet. You can see right away such problems on first contact with these folks.

### ***My Take***

The pros of a Single Operator far outweigh the cons. You will be able to spot right away the poor business practices of a Single-Op, so you can stay clear.

Given the choice between a Multi-Op and a Single Operator who *both* have great business practices, the winner far and away is the Single-Op. He can focus on you, and you alone. You may pay a bit more, but you are pretty much guaranteed what you are going to get.

### ***Nightclub DJs***

The one thing I did not really mention here are nightclub DJs. There are many club DJs who perform weddings on the side. If you decide to use one, make sure they adhere to the guidelines above.

You should be wary of hiring a club DJ who has *never* hosted a wedding. Their beat-mixing skills will be excellent, but a club is an entirely different story than a reception. A club DJ may have no idea how to MC your particular event, and may only be familiar with certain types of music (he may specialize in Hip-Hop if he works regularly at a Hip-Hop club, for example.)

A nightclub DJ also has a different job to do than a Wedding Reception DJ. The club DJ must regularly “turn over” the dance floor, but also keep it as packed as possible. “Turning over” the floor ensures nightclub patrons will have a chance to visit the bar and plunk down their hard-earned cash, then go back to the dance floor and work up a thirst all over again. This is *not* the flow you want for your reception.

There are many accomplished club DJs who can do weddings very well. Simply make sure they understand the nuances of how your

reception will flow, and verify that they have been an MC (Master of Ceremonies) at weddings in the past.

I *don't* want you to be “wowed” by the fact that a DJ works in a popular club. I do want you to be “wowed” by his performance at *your* wedding!

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# CHAPTER THREE

## **BUSINESS STUFF**

### *Here's the Legal Stuff*

Ah yes, here is the boring stuff. Well, *not really*, but it is important you consider these issues when hiring a DJ.

***SECRET- There is no such thing as a “DJ License”. No matter what any person claims, in the United States there are no regulations, lawful or otherwise, that apply to mobile DJs. Many DJs will be affiliated with certain professional agencies (ADJA and NAME are two) but licenses are only granted as general business by local governments.***

Huh? For instance, I have a business license to *practice business*, issued by Orange County, Florida (where I reside) but it is *not* a “DJ License.”

### *So Why Have A Business License?*

Good question. If it doesn't guarantee anything, what good is it? Well, for one thing, it shows the DJ is *serious about his business*. In addition, the DJ is “legal.” in the sense he can enter into a business contract with you. Literally anyone can go into a local music store, plop down a couple hundred bucks for the latest “DJ in a Box” setup, and call himself a DJ. That is something you do not need.

### *Written Contracts*

You definitely want one. It does not have to be fifty pages long, but it should contain:

1. Your reception date, time, and rate.
2. Any deposits/retainer fees paid.

3. What the DJ needs for the performance (i.e.- a table, electrical outlets, access to facility, etc.)
4. What the cancellation policy is.
5. Your signature and his signature, agreeing to everything stated on the contract.

### ***Reception Information***

All DJs should have a method of finding out *what you want done* at your reception. For example, what your first dance will be, introductions, etc. You can speak on the phone or meet to discuss details, but it is best to have everything in writing. You can use my comprehensive Information Sheet- available as a separate download in [The Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)- if your DJ does not have one.

### ***Liability Insurance***

It is typical for standard insurance coverage today to be at least one million dollars. I know, you are thinking, *why does my DJ need to be covered?* It really is for *your* protection.

Let's say a friend attending your reception trips on a wire from the DJ equipment. What if she cracks her jaw and possibly her head? Unlikely, yes, but *possible*. ***I guarantee***, if her injuries are serious enough, she will sue the reception hall, the DJ, and *you*. Remember, *you* are hosting the reception. Head injuries can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The odds are with you, but why not be safe? Most all major Hotels, including those at Walt Disney World®, require DJs who perform there to be insured. If they require it, you should, too.

### ***How Will I Know About the Legal Stuff with my DJ?***

Simply ask. You can ask to see a copy of the business license to make sure he is able to conduct business transactions. You may also request to see a copy of the liability insurance policy for complete information on coverage limits.

The one last thing that *you* want to do is make sure you get all of your reception information to the DJ in a timely manner. It will not be the DJ's fault if you slack on this part! ☺

[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)

# CHAPTER FOUR

## WAYS TO DECIDE ON A DJ

### *Start at the Beginning.*

First and foremost... if you have attended a wedding with a DJ you liked, that's it, you're done! Believe it or not, that is how most of my personal business happens. Word-of-Mouth is the *single most important thing a DJ can have*. It translates to: tons of satisfied clients.

Unfortunately, many people have not attending a wedding recently, or maybe they have experienced a DJ that wasn't so great. Now what?

### *There are LOTS of sources!*

The internet (more on this in the next chapter) is quickly becoming the mode of choice for searching for DJs. In the next chapter, we will discuss advertising in more depth- but for now, let's focus on how to decide which DJ you want.

### *Watching a Video*

Many DJs will send out videos of themselves in action, many do not. Why would some DJs not send out a video?

***SECRET- Any video you watch will highlight the absolute best performance of a DJ. It's common sense; no one is going to send out material that will make him or her look bad. Go ahead- get videos from everyone. They'll all be great, and that's the problem.***

Which is exactly why some DJs will not bother with a video. It really does not tell you a thing except what the DJ looks like, and what he sounds like. Which leads me to...

### ***Watching a Performance***

Many Bridal Magazines, Websites, and well-meaning friends will give this advice: “*You better go see the DJ at a wedding reception so you can see him live, in action!*”

Believe it or not, I am not going to recommend this, either. Why?

Think about it. Would you want potential clients of the DJ that is hosting *your* wedding hanging around *your* reception? (More on this later... I will give you a story that actually happened to me)

### ***Two Main Points about Watching a Performance***

Number one, the DJ will not have time to personally speak with you. Number two; the reception you drop in on may be one where the bride has a *completely different idea* (than you) of what a perfect wedding reception is. For example, you may absolutely *hate* involvement dances like *The Chicken Dance*, *The Macarena*, *YMCA*, or others similar to that style. What if you drop in, and that is *exactly* what is happening? What if the dance floor is hopping, the DJ is into it, and people are “YMCAing” away?

You may have trouble envisioning this DJ having great success at your reception *without* these songs. Understand that great DJs are able to adapt to any style, and great DJs do not do “cookie-cutter” weddings. It may be very difficult to gauge how this DJ will *fit with your personality* if he is performing for a *completely opposite personality type than you*.

### ***Other Troubles and Such***

Sometimes receptions run late. What if you arrive at a wedding reception, and you hear some great Sinatra tunes as you walk in. To your horror, *the dance floor is completely empty! No one is dancing!* You promptly turn around and leave, not giving another thought to this DJ.

Uh-oh. What you didn't know was that dinner was running late, and Sinatra *was the dinner music*. The couple had not even danced their first dance of the evening! Because the DJ is not able to interrupt his performance to speak with you, you never knew it was only dinner music.

Or on the other hand, what if you do successfully “peek in” at the performance, and what you see is great? The DJ is handling the crowd with finesse. Everything looks perfect- so you go home and immediately pop a deposit/retainer check in the mail. Then- *after you book him-* you realize when talking to him about your reception plans, *that he is an unpleasant egomaniac?* Just looking at his performance **cannot** “*seal the deal.*”

### ***A Real-Life Experience***

Early in my own career, I did allow a potential client to visit a reception I was hosting. I spoke to the bride early on, she was very enthusiastic and we both hit it off on the telephone. She all but assured me she wanted to hire me, however, her father was paying for the wedding and wanted to “see me in action.” I reluctantly agreed for them to “peek in” on a reception being held at a local Country Club.

The reception was going great. The guests were hopping and I was expecting my “potential clients” to arrive. Well, they did arrive, later than planned. Worse yet, the father was not dressed as a “slob”- but he *did* have on jeans and a polo shirt- very underdressed. *Now, this is important...* they had to stand *by the bar* to get a view of my performance.

This particular reception had an open bar. The father of the bride getting married that day (***Reception*** Dad) sees ***Visitor*** Dad at the bar. Later, I found out ***Visitor*** Dad was asking the bartender if he knew me, my style, reputation, etc. Unfortunately, ***Reception*** Dad thought this guy was freeloading a drink, and asked who he was.

Oh boy, does it get worse. ***Visitor*** Dad says the ***Reception*** Dad, “*We’re probably going to hire your DJ for my daughter’s wedding. He invited us here tonight.*” Well, needless to say, ***Reception*** Dad blows his top. He comes to me, and asked *why I invited* strangers to drink alcohol at *his* party that *he* is paying for. I was at a loss, because as I explained above, *I did not have a chance to talk to the potential clients*

I tried to gather my thoughts in the middle of a party song. I apologized, but ***Reception*** Dad stormed off, back to the bar. Later I

found out he told my potential clients, “*I don’t appreciate you being here, and the DJ doesn’t either. Please leave!*”

A great reception went from perfect- *to in the toilet*- in less than 10 minutes. My potential clients left without ever speaking to me, because *they thought I wanted them out*. I didn’t get that job, *and* according to **Reception** Dad, I ruined his daughter’s party. Not only that, but **Visitor** Dad was taking time away from the bartender by “interviewing” him and taking him away from his duties that evening, so it affected more than just me.

Now mind you, that was many years ago, and some of that was probably my fault. And *you* would probably never show up to a wedding reception in jeans. But a simple mis-communication at the bar led to a huge misunderstanding. There is simply too much going on at a reception to try and serve two customers. Perception *is* reality, and any harmless action may be taken the wrong way.

Don’t let a great DJ get away because of something like this.

### ***So Then How Can I Hire a DJ?***

The best method: a personal meeting. Many times you can get a feel if your personalities will click simply by speaking on the telephone; if that works, super. Otherwise, meet in his office or at the local Starbucks (Bookstore Cafes are also good) face-to-face. Another good strategy is to go to a reception *before it starts*. The DJ will have a few minutes to speak with you before the guests arrive, and you can see his equipment set-up.

### ***But I Won’t See Him Perform!***

Guess what- you don’t need too. If he has been doing weddings for many years- it’s obvious he can handle it. After you have done all your research, the last thing to decide on is “personality.”

You can tell what the DJ sounds like (you want a good speaking voice) by telephone, or what he looks like by a photo on a website- or a face-to-face meeting. Do you and your fiancé “click” with the DJ? During your conversations do you feel you have chemistry together? Do

you feel like you could invite him out to dinner and it would be a fun evening?

It's the *intangible* part of hiring that right person. It will simply "feel right."

The last thought on this subject I want to leave you with is this: After all your planning, (the dress buying, catering decisions, flower choices, etc) after all that money, it comes down to one day. Your DJ/Master of Ceremonies/Host will ultimately be responsible for the overall flow and feel of the evening.

When it comes down to it, there is nothing worse than *handing over control* of the most important day of your life- to someone you feel you *can't approach*. It's that simple. See why "clicking" with personalities is so important? It doesn't really matter if every other vendor you hire is a grump. They could still do excellent work, and be grumpy. Make sure the DJ has personality! ☺

[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)

# CHAPTER FIVE

## *DJs AND ADVERTISING*

### *Help Me Through All This Stuff!*

This chapter will help you decide what's real, and what's not. If you have been searching for very long, I bet you can't believe the vast differences in the quality of websites you visit. Remember what we talked about before- DJs are *not regulated*. Let me help you navigate the DJ advertising world.

### *Yellow Pages*

It's slowly happening, the Yellow Pages are headed towards extinction. If you live in any big city, they are *huge*, and sometimes even split in two! With the coming of the internet, many people simply find them too cumbersome to use.

Many of the *large* ads you see, *believe it or not*, are from the newest DJs in your area.

***SECRET-* When DJs are trying to establish a new presence in town, the absolute quickest way to do it is by having the biggest ad, right up front. Many, if not all of the time, they are Multi-Ops, because they rely on volume. Many DJs "on call" will insure they can make a profit by quantity selling.**

Established DJs do not need this kind of exposure, and Single-Ops simply cannot afford it- they can never book enough jobs to cover the expense.

If you are using strictly the Yellow Pages, be sure to call the smaller ads and even some of the "one-liners". ***Beware-*** you will get a

mixed bag by using this method (from hobbyists to professionals) *so you must apply what you've already learned.*

### ***Calling the DJ***

Now that you've got a few numbers, go ahead and make those calls. No doubt you will get an answering machine 80% of the time. Is that bad? *It depends.*

Most Single-Ops use answering systems. If the message is clear and professional, you should have no problem leaving your number for a call back. You should expect a call within 24 hours. If you wait more than 2 days to get a response, move on to your next choice.

If you get an answer immediately (most all Multi-Ops, and some Single Ops will have someone to talk to you) you want to first establish if your date is available. Next is- *who will your DJ be?* Is the person you are speaking with the DJ who will perform at your wedding? If it is, you can almost immediately get a sense of personality. Are you feeling comfortable with the DJ?

Don't get to pricing right away- let some conversation happen first. More than anything, *feel comfortable.* (Am I starting to sound like a broken record? ☺)

If you are speaking to a Multi-Op DJ company, see if you can arrange a meeting or telephone the DJ who will handle your reception. If they cannot do this for you, move on.

One last point: Make sure whom ever you call is professional. If you are calling a DJ business listed in the Yellow Pages, and the called is answered, "*hello?*" you can almost be sure this person is not treating his business *as a business.* I would also not be comfortable leaving my personal information on a machine that simply stated, "*leave a message.*"

Whether you are talking to a live person, or an answering machine, the very least you should expect is professionalism from someone who wants to earn your business.

### ***The Big Bad Internet***

Most of my bookings nowadays come first from word-of-mouth, then from the internet. Having an easy-to-read, easy-to-navigate website is crucial. Nothing can be more frustrating than a messy, incomplete, badly designed site that you can't readily get information from.

If you would like to look at my website- please do. I do my best to keep it open, honest, and straightforward. It's at [www.classicdj.com](http://www.classicdj.com).

Some things to look for:

1. If there is a link to prices, there should be a price there. Or at least something like: *packages starting at \$595*, or this: *If your wedding budget is \$10,000, we estimate your cost for entertainment will be between 8-9% of your budget.*
2. If the DJ does not provide prices, do not fear, he must account for all the variables for your reception. After you call him, use the 24-hour rule again.
3. Look for references, and explanations of how the DJ will make your day special. Be wary of websites that use scare tactics about other DJs. *Good DJs co-exist everywhere.* Someone who trashes competition is not the professional you are looking for.
4. Sometimes emails can go a little longer without being answered, but I would not wait more than 72 hours. You probably want to call, though. That is the best way to get the ball rolling.
5. Don't compare apples and oranges. We will talk about prices in Chapter 6, but one rule here: Do not email a bunch of DJs and ask for a quote on a four-hour reception. It's like emailing all the car dealers in your city and asking for a quote on a 4-wheel car. You do not know what you are getting *until you speak to the DJ.*

The theme here is obvious: Attractive websites can help you navigate through your choices, *but you still need to pick up the phone.*

### ***Where Are the DJ Websites?***

One of my favorite choices is [www.adja.org](http://www.adja.org). It will help you locate a DJ in your city. If you use a search engine such as Google, type in: *your city +DJ*, and that will get good results, too. Also good are sites that deal with DJs specifically. Be aware that some DJ search sites that *refer you to other DJs* sometimes charge those DJs to be listed. That is not a bad thing, just something to be aware of.

Wedding sites that deal with *all aspects of weddings* are usually less helpful because they want to encompass the whole wedding experience, *not just concentrate on your entertainment*.

**[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)**

## CHAPTER SIX

### **THE GOOD STUFF: PRICES**

#### ***Why Are There so Many Varied Prices?***

Okay, so why are DJs priced the way they are? Why spend \$795 for one, if you can get another DJ for \$200? Or why spend \$1400 when you can get someone for \$900? Believe it or not, I am *not* going to tell you that you have to spend a certain amount to get the “perfect” DJ. After all, it's ***your*** money, and ***you*** should decide how to spend it.

If you want to spend \$1400, \$800, or \$200, and *you feel like it's the right thing*, by all means, do it. It's your party. It's no use getting sleepless nights, or being so worried over your wedding expenses, that you second-guess yourself.

#### ***My Advice To You***

I am going to tell you that *almost always* (but not every time) the old saying still goes: “***You get what you pay for.***”

Unfortunately, in the majority of the weddings planned nowadays, the DJ is the last component to be added to a wedding reception. It may be simply because when you think of weddings, these things come to mind: The beautiful wedding dress, flowers, invitations, the church, and photography. A DJ is just simply not on that list most of the time.

Yet, if wedding consumers looked at it logically *instead of* emotionally (a very difficult thing to do when we're talking weddings), they might see this:

1. If the flowers come on your wedding day and they are the wrong type, you, and your family, may be very upset. But, more than likely it *will not ruin your whole wedding day*. Most guests did not know what type of flowers you ordered, and probably would not notice.

2. If you paid for steak, and the caterer served chicken, you would be livid, and demand a refund. Again though, your guests more than likely don't know what's on the menu *and they won't notice the difference.*

See the pattern? Many things (hopefully not at *your* wedding) could happen *without the guests even realizing it.* But, if your DJ/Host for your reception is not up to par, ***everyone notices.***

### ***Scare Tactics?***

These aren't meant to be scare tactics, they are illustrative examples. I have personally seen these things happen, and a lot more.

I hosted a wedding where the in-laws were fighting over who would pay for the open bar (yes, right at the reception, in the bride's dressing area, *as the wedding party is about to be introduced!*) Let me tell you, the bride and groom, and some of the wedding party, were highly upset. Even though the caterer had set up the wrong bar, the guests in the reception hall were blissfully unaware of the situation.

At another wedding, the bride and groom entered their reception and everything was wonderful. Soon, however, the bride was in tears speaking with her mother. *It turns out her wedding cake was completely wrong; she had never even seen it before.* Apparently her cake was delivered to another wedding, and she got the wrong one. But again, she and her mother *were the only people aware of this situation.* Many of the guests commented on what a beautiful cake it was. The best part- ***the groom had no idea anything was wrong!***

I am giving you these examples to change how you think about receptions. Take a step back; look at it from an unemotional, business point-of-view. You may get an entirely different perspective on how you should approach your day. Even if you hire a band, the above examples should be enlightening.

Now let's move on to the best part- explanation of prices.

### ***Four Basic Types of Rate Structures***

I want to lay it out for you plain and simple. DJs are very competitive, and sometimes it's difficult to be at this profession full-time. The way I see it, DJs are priced four different ways.

#### ***Type 1/The Cheapest DJs***

Many part-time operators are *excellent* DJs. Many have talent, but may have no business savvy. Unfortunately, many also have no business license, business telephone line, or insurance. This *could* be a risky proposition, as you know from reading above. But I guarantee you; this is how all DJs start. Unfortunately, some stay this way. It is entirely possible for you to spend \$150-\$250 and be totally happy with your DJ. Again, ***you*** have to be comfortable with your decision.

If this is the route you are taking, it should *be only on the advice of another bride* who has used this DJ, or someone *you have already seen* at a wedding where you have attended as a guest. Beware of ***“I have a friend of a friend who is a DJ.”*** That DJ may be only a hobbyist and not know much about wedding receptions. Although *there are DJs who have talent in this category*, the majority are beginners. Be extremely careful and thorough here when making your choice.

There has been a lot of talk throughout the wedding industry of Multi-Op DJ companies offering a “bare bones” package. For example, you pay \$300, and there is no planning session, no guarantee, no refund, and no service. The DJ (someone you *do not* choose) shows up, and plays music. He may be in a suit, and may have hosting abilities, or not. I would *strongly recommend* ***TO NEVER USE THESE SERVICES.*** The company does not care about your day, only making the booking.

The Multi-Ops are using this business model: *Many brides cannot afford an \$800 DJ, so we will offer this instead. To a bride, it's better than nothing.* Sometimes that is simply not true. *Sometimes*, if it isn't done right, it isn't worth doing at all. Maybe you can just rent your own equipment (more on that later). The company may send out new DJs *to learn how to do weddings* in this scenario. Your special day ***is not*** a training ground for future DJs.

If you really are caught in a budget crunch, save your \$300 and have a close friend play music and host your day. You won't spend a cent, and he will be honored to do it. Even if there is no dancing and guests leave early, you won't be out the 300 bucks for a no-service package deal. We will deal more with budgets a little later, and I'll show you how you can potentially stretch your wedding dollar.

### ***Type 2/Cheap to Moderate DJs***

The next group of operators, priced from \$400-\$600, are all over the map. Some are weekend DJs, moving up from the previous category, usually working alone. Some have a business license, phone, and insurance, some do not. Many large DJ Companies fall into this category.

The Multi-Ops, which we have discussed above, can keep a price at this level because of volume, using 5 to 15 DJs per weekend. Again, it doesn't mean that they are not good, they simply rely a quantity of jobs for their profit margin (Make sure you use all the rules we talked about if you use a Multi-Op.)

You'll find many DJs priced this way. If you select a DJ from this category, choose someone who uses a business phone, has a business license, and is insured. Also, choose someone with many years of experience. Don't forget, using a Multi-Op, go with a company who can guarantee *which* DJ will host your wedding. Remember, you need to feel comfortable with the whole process. They should impress *you*.

### ***Type 3/Moderate to Expensive DJs***

Next we have the category I fall under. Priced from \$600-\$1000, this category is a pretty small group, there just aren't very many of us. I charge the rate I do for my years of experience, professional audio equipment, MC & hosting abilities, and personalized service. **Anyone** you hire in this category, *at the very minimum*, should offer:

- 1. Years of experience**
- 2. A valid business license**

- 3. A business telephone line**
- 4. Liability insurance**
- 5. Experience in high profile events**
- 6. Reliability guarantee**
- 7. Easy to reach**
- 8. Professional equipment**
- 9. Back-up emergency equipment**
- 10. Thousands of songs**
- 11. Various packages to choose from**
- 12. References**

You may ask yourself why DJs (or the really good ones, anyway) are priced the way they are (expensive). Think about it this way: You *could* go out and rent the equipment yourself. As a matter of fact, I recently added an equipment rental option to my business. If you simply can't afford the DJ you want, you can at least have a professional set-up. [You can click here to see my information.](#) Think about this for a rental: You would need at least two speakers, an amplifier, CD players, and a mixer. To get this setup in a *professional grade* would be about a \$350 rental. Add a wireless microphone for another \$50. We haven't even talked about the thousands of songs most DJs bring with them; if you could rent that type of collection, I would guess it would rent for at least \$100. (I can tell you *my collection* of CDs have a total of cost \$7500 to \$9000 throughout the years). Add the various expenses of business (license, telephone, insurance, tuxedo, travel expense, etc.) for another \$100.

Have you added it all up yet? It is now at \$600 and we still have not calculated the actual hours a talented DJ/MC will get paid for his time. At a four-hour reception, we can figure a one-hour consultation, and another hour (minimum) prep from the DJ before the wedding day. The DJ will arrive at least one hour *before* the reception, and leave about 30 minutes after it ends. That is over 7 hours of work involved in your four-hour event, sometimes more.

You can see now why DJs *who truly are professional and take their businesses seriously as a career*, charge the prices they do. You will pay *even more* for a more talented or in-demand DJ.

So then, why do some DJs charge so little? There could be a multitude of reasons, but it boils down to this: They are either brand-new to the business, hobbyists, or they cut back somewhere else. Old equipment, old songs, and little or no planning are all parts of cutting back, but there is something new: the internet.

Music illegally downloaded from the internet may be fine for your personal use; however, it has no place in a real business. *Always* ask *any* prospective entertainer how they obtain their music. *“What difference does it make?”* you may ask. There are two real answers:

One, the quality of illegally downloaded music may sound fine in your portable CD player. But in a large hall, it suffers. Two, (more importantly) if a company has a library of illegally copied music; it *probably* will not affect you. That is, of course, unless it is confiscated from them *the day before your wedding*. That is one phone call you *don't* want to get. Odds are it wouldn't happen... but, just like the insurance situation, if it does, *it's really bad*.

Most all DJs use digital CDs or MP3s *legally* recorded in a computer format. This is a big sticking point with me. Any DJ you hire should take the time and effort to provide quality, legal recordings, whether on CD or on a computer.

Another real life (and unfortunate) example of how illegal music is affecting our industry is in the school dance market. I stopped performing school dances years ago, however the latest trend is for schools to forgo a reputable DJ and hire a "DJ wannabe". They will "save money" by paying \$100 to a student from their school with a thousand illegal downloaded songs and a laptop. It is a horrible practice (school districts are on tight budgets, but if they charge 300 students \$7 each for a ticket, *their profit is \$2,100!*) This also makes it appear that schools are condoning stealing to its students. One sad by-product from this whole situation is that more and more schools are canceling dances altogether because of past experiences with sub-par, hobbyist DJs.

### ***Type 4/Very Expensive DJs***

This category is also a pretty small one. These are the folks who charge \$1300-\$2000 for a reception. These are the DJs and larger companies who regularly perform at conventions or huge weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. These guys and gals are great! Their parties come with full professional stage lighting, props, sometimes two (or three) DJs, and even dancers, plus much, much, more. If you've got the money, and this sounds like fun to you, by all means go for it. You'll have a blast!

### ***Summing Up The Pricing Game***

It all comes down to the old saying- you really do get what you pay for. I hoped I have shed light on why DJs are like airline tickets (all over the map!) This way, you really do know what to look for, and you can make your way through truths and not-so-truths in the sales pitch.

### ***A New Way to Look At Budgets***

Many folks have looked at their weddings budgets with certain pre-conceptions of fixed prices that they will pay. Sometimes, with a little creative thinking, you can see something that wasn't there before.

### ***How Can I Do It?***

*"I really want to spend the money on a great DJ, but I simply don't have the money!"* Let's look at a few things here from a different perspective.

Because your wedding is mostly an *intangible* thing (in other words, it's not product you buy, but an idea of what you think is perfect) it is harder to make price = memorable wedding day.

For example, take champagne. If the best man stands up, gives a toast that is insulting to the guests and mortifies the bride and groom, it won't matter a hill of beans if you bought *the most expensive champagne in the world*. The guests won't remember the money you spent on champagne; they'll remember how insensitive the best man was.

On the other hand, if your best man gives a thoughtful, poignant toast that touches everyone in the room, you could have just the *existing*

*beverages on the table* and it wouldn't make a difference. Not buying champagne could save you \$300-\$600.

Remember, the *intangibles* are what make up the majority of your day. Will guests remember the little squares of cheese they ate, or might you save \$300-\$400 by *not* having a cheese tray?

How about personalized napkins or matches? Many couples still order these *only because they got a good deal* when ordering their invitations. (Most receptions are non-smoking nowadays, anyway!) With a little thought about what you want your guests to *experience and remember*, you may be able to creatively modify your budget in ways you never imagined.

[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## AT THE RECEPTION

### ***Making Your Day Perfect***

So you've hired the perfect DJ and now you are ready for the reception! I'm going to start at the beginning and go through your night... let's take it step-by-step.

### ***Before The Reception Starts***

Make sure you have arranged with your hotel/reception hall for the arrival of your vendors, especially the DJ. You'll want to make sure he has free parking for the evening, and can park at a location close to where he will have to unload equipment. If he cannot park close, at least make sure he can get as close as possible to the location for unloading.

*Another important thing:* make sure there is *ramped or elevator access* to your reception location. Many DJs will charge extra *even if they have to go up one stair*. This is because while most equipment is extremely heavy, the DJ can move it easily if it's on wheels. When he comes to stairs, he will need assistance. A DJ may have to hire extra help to load equipment up stairs, or over curbs. Do not expect "someone from the hotel" or one of your guests to assist- most DJs will politely decline because of liability reasons.

If your DJ needs a table, the hall/hotel should have no problem with this. Have your caterer decorate the table with linens to match your guests' tables, ready *at least* one hour before your start time. If your DJ is using a lighting system or light show, he will need two separate-circuit outlets (not just two outlets, they must be on separate circuits so they will not trip a breaker). More extensive light shows may need special electric requirements, check with your hall to make sure.

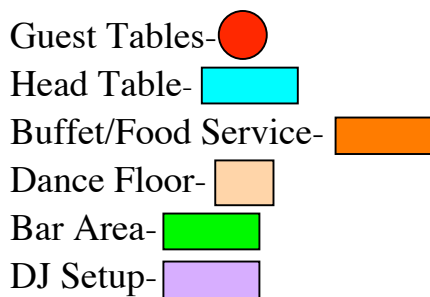
### ***Reception Room Set-Up***

You would be surprised at how many venues I go to, and the hotel staff or reception hall does not know how to properly set up a room. The

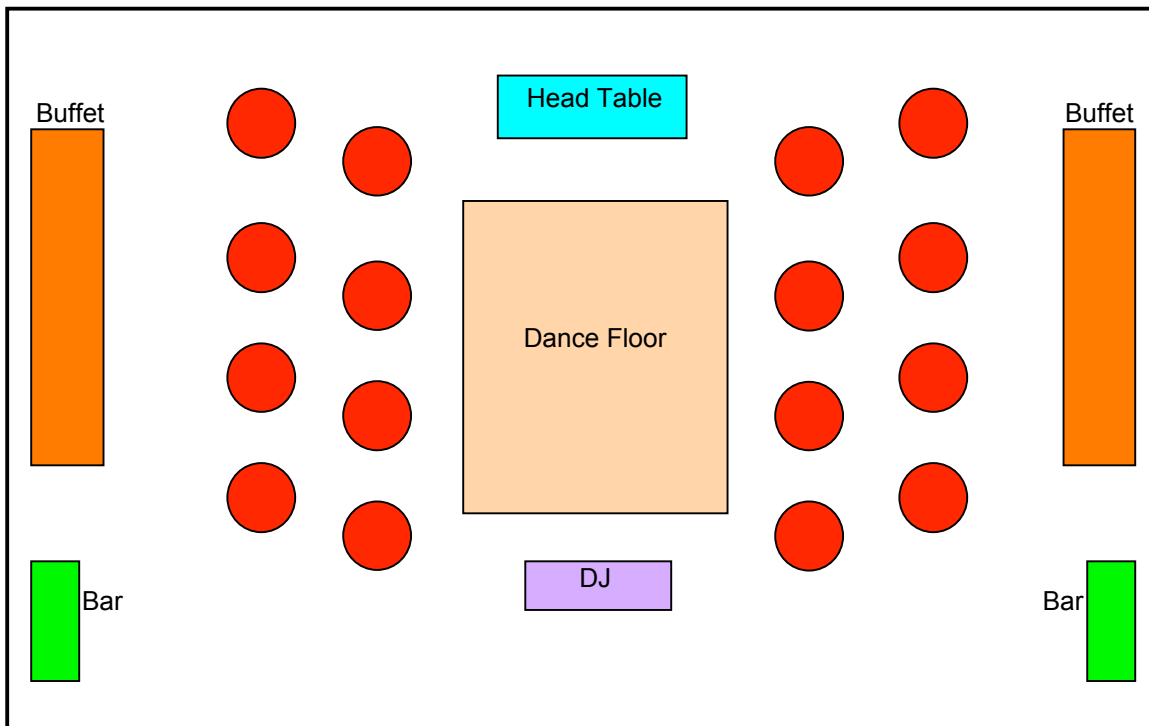
DJ table should be directly bordering the dance floor, so he has a complete view of the room (preferably not near the bar).

I cannot tell you how many times I have gotten to a hall where the hotel staff has put the DJ table in a corner, or worse yet, between guest tables and the dance floor. The DJ is your Host and MC, he should not be tucked away out of sight. If you place the DJ behind guest tables, you will hear from those guests all night about “*how loud the music is.*”

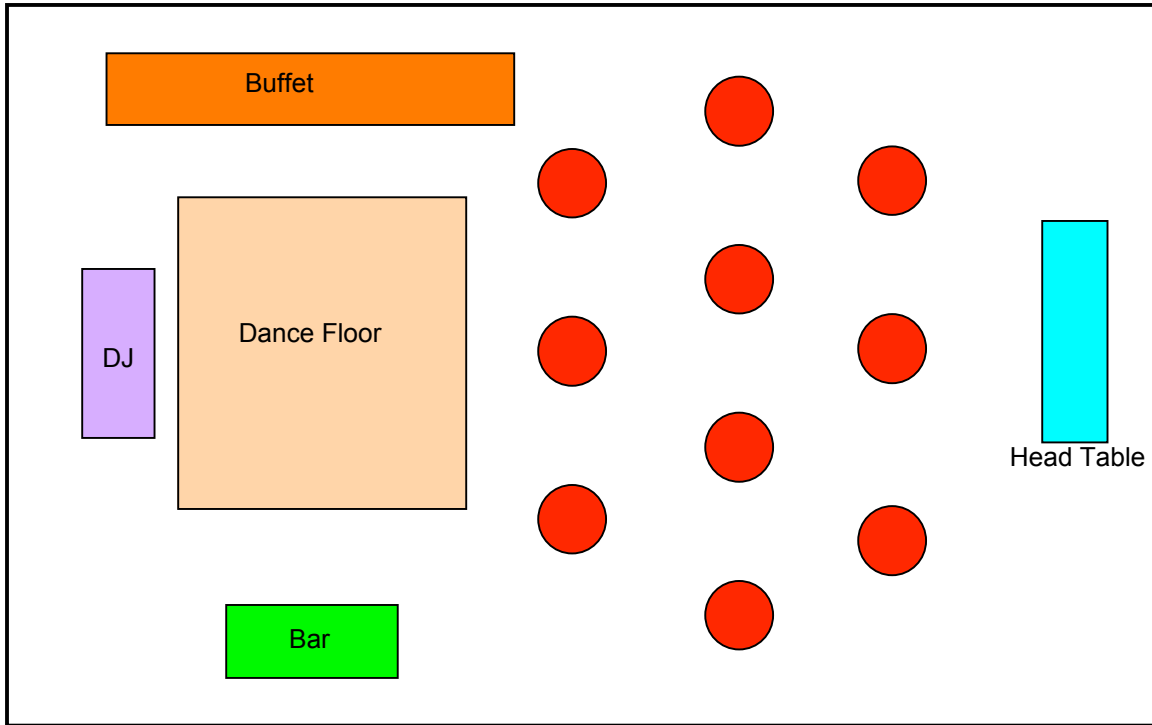
Check out these examples:



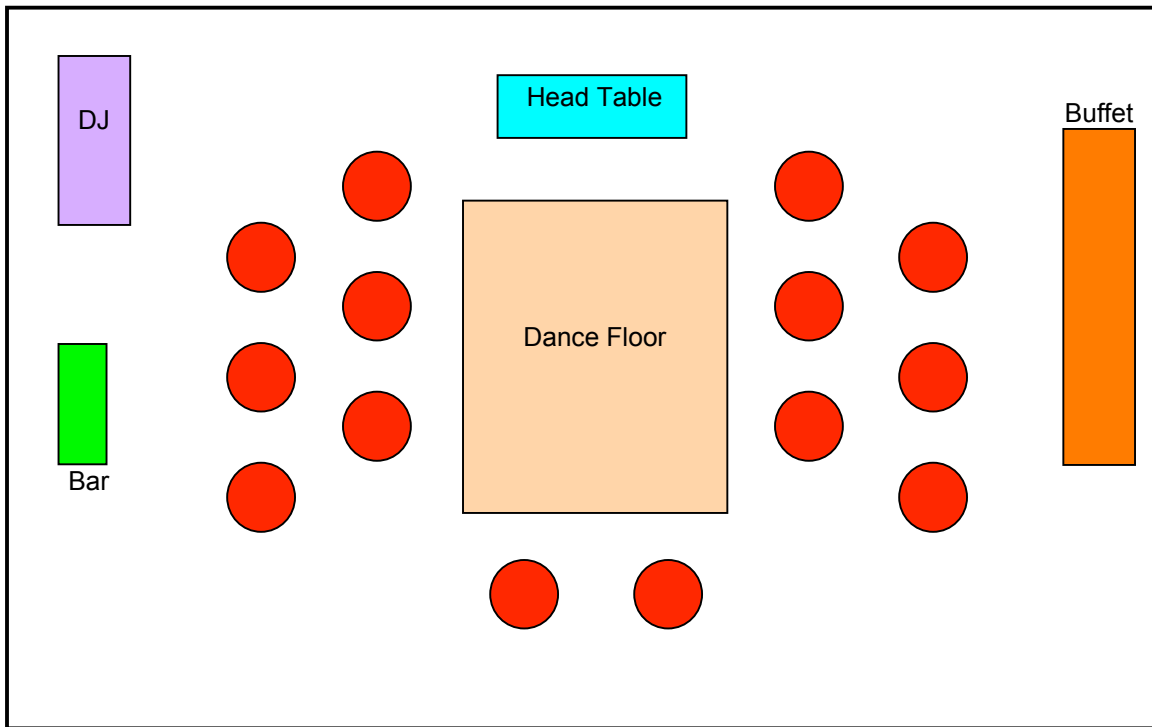
*Good Example #1*



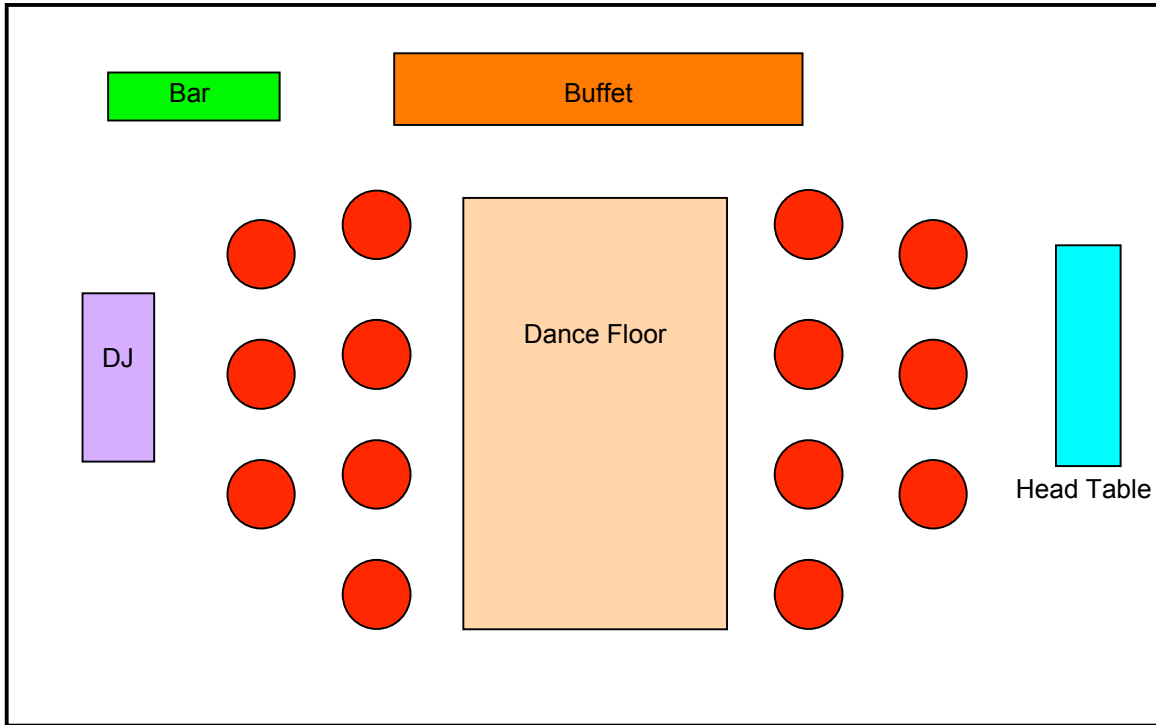
*Good Example #2*



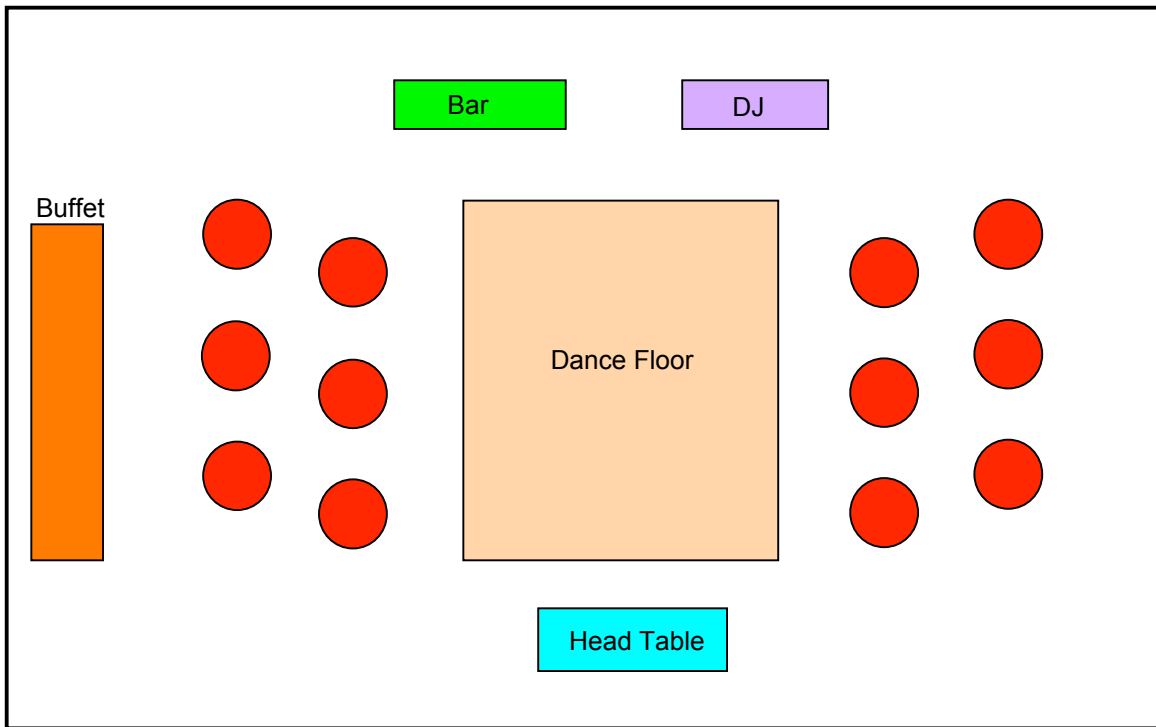
*Bad Example #1 (DJ in corner away from guests)*



*Bad Example #2 (DJ behind guest tables)*



*Bad Example #3 (Bar next to DJ)*



Of course, these are only a few examples, and sometimes the room you have may not be a perfect setup. By using these as a guide you will probably be able to get as close as possible.

### ***Music Selection***

No doubt you will want to have some input with your DJ about your music choices for your day. The *featured dances* (First Dance, Bride/Father Dance, etc) are covered under my Wedding Reception Planning Worksheet, available as a separate download in [The Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#).

I like to give couples the option of selecting about 10 songs they really like. This way, I will understand the tastes they have, but it also leaves options open for the DJ to “read” the crowd, take requests, and generally keep the party moving along.

I have had brides that have submitted over 100 songs to be played at a reception. This is not feasible- the math doesn’t work. For example:

A four-hour reception: Arrival and dinner will last approximately 90 minutes. With time out for toasts, featured dances, etc, your typical 4-hour reception will have about two good hours of dancing (maybe two and a half). The average song length is 3.5 minutes, working out to about 17 songs per hour. This equals *about* 35-45 songs per reception.

### ***The Human Jukebox***

Do not make the mistake of insisting certain songs being played at certain times, or to give the DJ a list of 40 songs to be played “in that order.” The problem arises if: the DJ is sticking to your list and *no one is dancing or responding*. You really would *not* want the DJ continue with the list- he needs to have the flexibility to do his job.

There are also problems with a 40-50 song list where the DJ can play selections “in any order,” *but cannot deviate from the list*. It again restrains the DJ too much for him to successfully do his job.

Micromanaging the DJ is the same as being in the kitchen with the caterer telling them how to prepare the food. Relax- this is what you are paying for... the DJ is paid to know his stuff! If you absolutely insist on

having total control on what music is played (and in what order), you may be happier hooking up an iPod and letting it play.

### ***But I Want MY Music!***

You and your friends and family may have definite tastes in certain music. Odds are, though, not *everyone* attending your reception likes the exact same thing. Your *wedding* is all about you. Your reception is, too, but it's *more* about your guests *celebrating your day*. Don't make the mistake of letting your ego get in the way and thinking "*It's my day and I don't care what **anyone** thinks! I'm going to do it **my** way!*" If this is the case, and you *just* can't get past it, you would probably be better off eloping in Las Vegas. To a certain extent, it *is* about your guests.

For example, once in a while the groom does not want to do that "special dance" with their mom (or dads, for the brides). The excuse usually is something like "*I don't dance that well*" or "*I don't feel comfortable.*" Those dances aren't really for the *bride or groom*, anyway. It's about *honoring your parents* for being part of your special day.

Emotions run high during this very special day of your life. If you really want your guests to attend a wedding *they will remember forever*, remember them, too.

### ***Interactive Stuff***

Most of the interactive activities such as blow-up guitars, funny glasses, and balloons, have been used to death. So much so that I never get requests for them now. Especially at weddings, the interactive DJ nowadays is more subtle and focused.

Please check my separate report located in the [Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#) for great ideas for you to use at your own reception. I have included what works best after many years of trying different approaches to "classy fun." I know you will find something there that you and your guests will enjoy.

## ***Dancing***

As I plainly state on my website, ***no one*** can guarantee your guests will dance. There may be DJs out there who claim they can, but no one can control how someone else feels or acts.

***SECRET- There are many ways to set the mood if you think have a tough crowd. The three things you want to achieve are: Having a hard-surfaced dance floor, (not carpet); dimming the lights- darker is better; and having the music at a loud, but not uncomfortable, level.***

Why so? Number one, people are reluctant to dance on carpet. The subliminal message is ***not to dance***. “*If there is no dance floor, dancing is not appropriate*” is what the message says.

Number two, having the room as dark as possible makes people less self-conscious. Notice how sometimes folks are reluctant to be first on the dance floor? The same principle applies here. If people feel other guests are not staring or looking at them, they are more apt to “get comfortable” out there. This is why receptions *at night* already have something going for them in a “party” sense. An afternoon wedding, at a Country Club with beautiful views of the golf course, can be wonderful. But it *does not* set the mood for dancing. Your DJ will have to work a little harder.

Number three, the music should be loud enough so *your guests do not hear their footsteps, or dancing steps, on the floor*. That’s right, it goes back to the old self-conscious thing. The majority of people do not consider themselves to be professional dancers, and if they can *feel* the beat of the music, they are less timid to “cut loose”

## ***Other Secrets to People Dancing***

What other things help get people on the dance floor? The old hard-and-fast rule applies here as well: an open bar can’t hurt. Alcohol simply lets people act sillier.

After your featured dances, have your DJ play a “bridal dance.” This should be a slow song where *everyone present* is invited to join you to “start your night out right.” Immediately after your slow-moving bridal dance, the DJ can play a popular fast “dance” selection. If the bride and groom *remain on the floor, at least for this one song*, you’ll be amazed at how many of your guests will stay with you. If you go to sit right down, many of your guests will follow.

### ***Food and the DJ***

There is a constant debate among professional DJs about getting fed on the job. Honestly, there is no *right* answer, but I can give you an informed opinion of my own.

It is expected for you to provide a meal to your photographer and videographer. They are spending the majority of their day with you, and they need to eat like everyone else. With the DJ, it’s a little different.

The DJ is not with you the entire day, so the case can be made *not to provide a meal*, and that is perfectly fine. However, it is a nice gesture, and every DJ I know would certainly appreciate the thought. Sometimes, the caterer, without asking you, will simply give a meal to the DJ. If you are inclined to provide a meal to your DJ, keep in mind the he will probably not want to eat “on-stage” in front of your guests. Just let your caterer know if you want to give the DJ a meal, and he can enjoy it in the kitchen or another room.

[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## *YOUR DJ and OTHER VENDORS*

### *Working Well With Others*

You should expect your DJ to be in constant communication with other vendors present at your reception. Since the DJ really is the Host once the reception starts, it is common for him to touch base with the caterer to make sure the toast is ready to go, along with other events like the beginning of dinner and your cake cutting.

### *I Don't Want To Miss a Thing*

More importantly, it is crucial for the DJ to talk to your photographer/videographer. The last thing you want is for the photographer to miss the cake cutting (because he was out of the room) and the DJ proceeded without warning him about what was coming up. Of course, it is ultimately not the DJ's responsibility if the photographer misses something, but working in harmony is the best way to do things.

### *Watch Out For Lights!*

If you are hiring a professional videographer for your day, don't forget to ask: "*How will you make sure there is enough light?*"

Remember, one of the things we talked about was having a low light level at your reception to set the correct mood. Most professional video equipment nowadays can film in low light, or they are able to have mini-floodlights mounted to the top of the camera.

Be very careful about a videographer who wants to leave on more lights than necessary in the reception hall- it will damper your guests desire to party. Fluorescent lights should especially be avoided; most people associate these with working in the office. (Not a feeling you want on your wedding day!)

Also be wary if the videographer wants to use large, stationary floodlights on tripods to direct light at the dance floor, or your guests. It is even worse if you paid for a light show from the DJ, in which case the floodlights will render it effectively useless (this is the same if you leave more lights on than necessary in the hall).

Am I picking on videographers? Maybe. The professional ones understand to be as unobtrusive as possible. Because a huge floodlight can put a foul mood into the guests, it is easy to transfer that feeling into “the DJ isn’t doing a good job” and it will reflect on the DJ more than the videographer.

[Click here for information on the Fairy Tale Wedding Kit](#)

# CONCLUSION

## *Wrapping it All Up*

Now *you* are the professional. You can consider yourself “armed and dangerous” about the once confusing world of trying to hire a Disc Jockey for your wedding.

Thanks again for reading this e-book. Don’t forget, you can get the complete [Fairy Tale Wedding Kit by clicking here.](#)

Now get out there and plan your wedding!