



Vendor Checklist & Questions to Ask *Band or DJ*

Almost everyone likes to dance and there is nothing like an awesome band or DJ who gets the crowd. So how do you find a band or DJ that is not cheesy but also not exorbitant? Below is a checklist of things to do before you start contacting entertainment, questions to ask them, and things to look for when you get the contract.

Before the Meeting

Ask & Listen

As with all your vendors, ask friends and family for personal recommendations. Ask any of the vendors who you have already booked who their favorite band or DJ is. Visit band/DJ websites, go listen to the bands play and pay attention to what type of wedding band you are looking for.

Location Stipulations

Read your venue contract carefully so you know exactly what the stipulations are on music. Here a few things to consider: Is there a certain time music needs be shut down? Can you have live music or only acoustic? Is there a certain decibel level we have to stay within? If we want our party to go longer, can we stay? What is the cost? What happens if there is a noise complaint from neighbor or hotel guest? Can we bring in a stage and dance floor or do you provide one?

Band or DJ?

The first question to ask yourself is if you prefer a band or DJ. Either way, the band leader or DJ will likely act as your emcee for the evening. They will let guests know when it is time to be seated for dinner, they will help coordinate the timing of the toasts and provide a microphone, and they will announce the grand entrance and special dances. It's an important job and you want someone you feel very comfortable with.

Band

A band has a very different energy than a DJ, but will be limited in the repertoire of songs they can perform. Some bands only play their own music and others do cover songs. A band will generally cost more than a DJ. Bands typically have 3 to 10+ members and the more members, generally the more they will cost. Many will also bring a sound engineer which also drives up the cost. Keep in mind that you will likely need to provide vendor meals for all the band members as well. Bands typically require a stage and quite a bit of room, so be sure your venue can accommodate this before considering a band. We highly recommend seeing a band in action before booking so you can get a sense of how they are on

stage. Unless you can afford a really great band, we recommend going for a DJ instead since you can select all the music in advance.

DJ

A DJ is typically one or sometimes two people who will be playing music from their sound system for your wedding. You have more control over the type of music played and the DJ can take requests for songs. A DJ is typically less expensive than a band, but has a different energy than a band. It is important to find someone who is very good at reading the crowd instead of just playing the popular songs or songs he/she personally likes.

Questions to Ask Prospective Entertainment

Business & Experience

- Do you have my date available?
- How long have you been in business (been together as a band)?
- How many weddings did you do last year?
- Do you have liability insurance?
- Have you done an event at my location before? Are there any logistics or issues I should know about?
- Can you provide me with a few references?
- What makes you different from your competitors?
- What if something happens to you or your band members? What is the backup plan?
- Do you set up with any signs or banners with your equipment? *You don't want a large banner with the band's name on their speakers!*
- What will you (and band members) wear to my wedding?

BAND Logistics

- Will your band leader act as our emcee? Has he/she done this before?
- Will you provide a microphone for the toasts? *Make sure to know if it is a corded or cordless mic.*
- How many breaks do you take per hour and how long does each break last? Will any music be playing during the breaks? This is an important question. *Some will take 15 minutes for every hour. Some larger bands will take breaks in groups so part of the band can continue playing. Others will play an iPod of music during their breaks.*
- How long do you need to set up your equipment?
- What set up do you require? (Stage dimensions, power/generator, lighting, table for sound, shade, dance floor, etc.)
- How many performers will be at my wedding and what instruments will be included? *Find out exactly who will be performing at your wedding.*
- What type of equipment do you use? Do you have back up gear?
- Do you bring lighting?

BAND Music

- Can you provide me with samples of your music?

- How involved in can we be in selecting music for our wedding?
- Do you have a song list that I can choose from?
- Will you learn a song if I provide you with the sheet music?
- What type of music will be played during your breaks?
- Will you play music during cocktail hour and dinner?

DJ Logistics

- Who will be the actual DJ at my wedding? How long have they been a DJ?
- Will he/she act as our emcee? Has he/she done this before?
- How many events have your DJ'd for?
- Will you provide a microphone for the toasts? *Make sure to know if it is a corded or cordless mic.*
- What set up do you require? (Power, lighting, table & linen, shade, dance floor, stage, etc.)
- What type of equipment do you use? Do you have back up gear?
- Do you bring lighting?
- How many breaks do you take? Will music be playing during our breaks?
-

DJ Music

- Can you provide me with samples of a typical playlist for a wedding?
- Do you have a song list that I can choose from?
- Will you play music during cocktail hour and dinner?
- How involved in can we be in selecting music for our wedding?
- Can guests request music during the dancing? Can I have a "do not play list?"
- Do you have these songs for our first dance, father daughter/mother son, etc.?
- What would you do to motivate the crowd if no one is dancing?
- Do you have actual turntables and do you spin during the event?

Cost, Contract & Payment

- What is included in the cost of me hiring you as my band/DJ?
- How many vendor meals will you require?
- If my event runs late, how much are the overtime fees?
- Do you accept credit cards?
- What is the deposit required to hold my date and when is the final payment due?
- What is your cancellation policy?
- Can I see a copy of your contract?
- Do you charge for travel?

Reviewing the Contract

Before you confirm with a DJ or Band and pay the deposit, request a contract so you can review it in detail.

- How responsive were they? Did the proposal arrive when he/she said it would or did you have to call/email several times? If you did have to bug them, this is not a good sign. They could just be very busy or they could be unorganized, something you don't want for your wedding.
- Read the contract carefully and make note of any possible additional costs that you were not anticipating.
- Beware of any "TBD" charges. If you see this on your contract, make sure you know how much these charges will run. These will likely be on your contract if you have not made all your selections yet.
- As we noted above, make sure your venue approves of your DJ or Band *before* you book.
- Call all the references provided. Talk to other brides and find out what their experience was. Talk to your other vendors to get their feedback.
- Be clear on what the travel charges are, vendor meal requirements and equipment requirements as these are all added charges that you may not have been considering.

Booked!

- Enter in all the vendor information in the Vendor Contact Book
- Note the vendor on your Budget Spreadsheet - vendor name, total, deposit paid and date remaining payments are due (in notes section of budget).
- If you will be renting anything for your event, begin comparing rental companies and use our Rental Estimator to determine how much your rentals will be (stage, tent, dance floor, generator, tables, chairs, etc.).
- Begin keeping a note of songs you like for the cocktail hour, dinner, open dancing and special dances. Ask friends and family for their requests too.