

If you have ever been to a company party, fundraiser, awards banquet, or any other semi-formal event, including Wedding Receptions, you will find a basic format:

- Cocktails
- Formalities or Introductions
- Dinner
- Formalities
- Dancing

If you are going to be the “DJ” and the “Host” for any of these events your job is more than playing songs and taking music requests. You need to run the party. You need to make sure your client can depend on you to take care of the details and make their event a success. This document will give you some of my thoughts on what you should do for them.

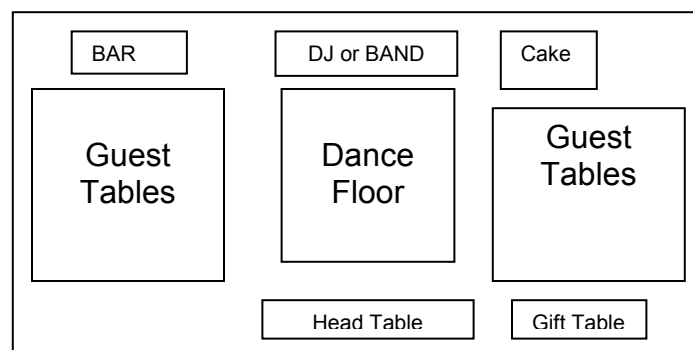
Wedding Receptions can include some special "traditions" that make the event meaningful to guests and fun for everyone attending. We are all familiar with "The Best Man's Toast", "Cutting the Cake", "Bridal Dance", "Bouquet Toss", and the famous "Garter Removal". There are a few more events and traditions that can make the reception more fun and memorable. When I talk with the bride and groom either at an initial meeting or the final planning meeting I tell them that they have three different roles at the reception. They are the guests of honor, they are also the host and hostess because they want everyone to have fun, and they are part of the entertainment being the focus of any formal dances, cake cutting, garter/bouquet toss, money dance, anniversary dance, and any other special moment you help create for them. I tell them that I will guide them through their roles so they don't need to worry.

My goal is to have everyone at a reception feel like they are part of the “wedding party” not just invited guests. I want everyone to feel like the bride and groom personally wanted them to be there. The key is to take every opportunity to involve people, invite them to have fun and tell them it's OK to enjoy themselves.

So, here goes.

The Reception Hall/Tent

I always suggest a rectangle with the following layout:



With guests on both sides of the dance floor guests can easily see the bouquet toss and garter removal. They can easily see the bridal dance. Any toasts made on the dance floor are easy to see, PLUS, during cocktails, toasts, and dinner you can point your speaker stacks towards each seating area. This allows the volume to be lower for music and also keeps feedback down when a microphone is being used on the dance floor from either the head table or from the DJ area. Oh yes, always run your system mono. Who needs stereo? We aren't in your living room listening to your super duper sound system. Mono lets each side of the room hear all of the music detail and creates better sound reinforcement on the dance floor. Always try to get this layout. But, sometimes you can't. Try to keep your speakers turned to each seating area until the meal ends. Also, keep your speakers on poles at least 5-6 ft. in the air. You want the sound to "float" above the guests heads as they dance. That way you can keep the volume in control and seated guests can still hear what is going on.

When I meet with a bride and groom I talk to them about what their guests will see when they arrive. Certain things should not be hidden. It should be easy to see the gift table, the cake, the head table and the dance floor. I always recommend the bar area be in the reception area, not in another room or foyer. If the bar is not in with the "party" you will find many of them just hanging out at the "watering hole". Since they are removed from the party they miss all the fun. Also, you might want to ask about their seating just to make sure they don't have older people sitting right next to the dance floor. This can be a disaster for you and the older guests.

Cocktail Hour

This is the time the guests get familiar with the surroundings, find their table, and have some snacks and a cocktail. Upbeat music, preferably cool jazz and nice 40s big band is what I use. You may want play some of the songs that the bride and groom pick that are not danceable. You may also want to play some of these songs during dinner. I always suggest to the bride and groom that food be served during cocktails even if it is just cheese and crackers. Alcohol needs to be tempered with food or the guests will get too intoxicated to really enjoy the evening. This is also true for a non-alcoholic event! If people are drinking punch, coffee, tea, and cola with cookies or other sweets before dinner they will have a "sugar crash" and even a meal won't get them back. Also, if cocktails are in a separate area or the guests need to take their seats you may need to make an announcement like this from the CENTER OF THE DANCE FLOOR ->

"Ladies, and, Gentlemen! Everyone please take your seats for the introduction of the Wedding Party, THANK YOU!" Or something like that. Write it down. Practice it. If they are coming into the ballroom from a different area I make sure that some real upbeat music is playing when the doors open. In the past I used "Celebration". You may even have a song that the bride and groom want. Just keep it fun!

After the guests are seated, fade down the music and make an announcement and tell them who you are. Here's an idea:

"Welcome! (pause slightly and look around the room with a smile) to the beautiful Lakewood Resort Golf Club for the Beekman/Williams wedding reception. What a beautiful day for a wedding! (clap so everyone will join in). My name is DJ Stan from Soundstream Entertainment. I am your DJ host and will be taking song

requests this evening so feel free to come up if you have a special song you would like to hear." Or something like this.

The important point is to complement the facility, if it deserves a complement, and then let everyone know who YOU are so they become familiar with you **AND your voice** and that they should listen to YOU. If you do this, people will follow your instructions as the reception continues. If you don't do something like this you will struggle to get the attention of the guests all night long.

Then, after you get the bridal party lined up for their introductions (and tell them exactly where to walk)to) I go back to the center of the dance floor and say.

"It's my privilege and pleasure to get this party started by introducing the Wedding Party!" or sometimes a more casual approach like, "Let's get this party started with the introduction of the Wedding Party so we can EAT!"

The order for these introductions is not set in cement. You start with grand parents, parents, then the wedding party, then maid(s) or matron of honor and best man followed by the bride and groom. The flower girl and ring bearer are difficult. If they are under 10 to 12 or so years old you might suggest they go directly to their parents. If they are very young you might want to introduce them with someone in the bridal party or a parent especially if at least one of the bridal party is their parent. Many times children will get overwhelmed with the guests (strangers to them) clapping and cheering so loud. The child just won't go in to a room like that unprotected so an adult must carry them.

I like to ask the bride and groom, if they want, to give me something about each person in the wedding party that tells the guests why they were picked to be in the wedding. Then I announce like this:

"Sister of the Bride Jamie Beekman escorted by the grooms college roommate Bill Smith."

Or

"The female who taught the bride how to chew tobacco Jamie Beekman escorted by the guy who introduced the bride and groom Bill Smith."

When I meet with the bride and groom I tell them that a brief introduction of each person is like them personally introducing the person to each guest.

Make sure you give a little more energy when introducing the Best Man and Maid or Matron of Honor. You want a build a little excitement right before the bride and groom.

When you organize the bridal party for the introductions you must take control. Get their attention even if it takes the bride and groom to give you some help here. Have the order of introductions ready to go with plenty of space around each name for corrections and additions. Always have "phonetic" pronunciations (what ever is best for you) NOT the real names! Etiquette says that a gentleman offers a lady is RIGHT arm. In medieval times a warrior carried his shield in his right arm and his sword in the left. A gentleman would offer a lady is right arm (the shield arm) as a symbol of protection to the lady. Also, when walking with a lady the man always took the outside to keep the lady from

the street. In England they drive on the wrong side of the road. On coming traffic is on the RIGHT which puts the man's LEFT side towards the traffic. The lady would go on his RIGHT to be furthest from the road. German military tradition has the sword worn on a soldier's Left so to keep a lady away from the sword she goes on his RIGHT.

I use the sword and shield story when arranging the wedding party.

Once everyone is in order and I have verified the pronunciations of their names I tell them to have fun! I tell them to come in the door, wave to the guests, do a little dance, or whatever they want. Well, unless the bride has given them specific marching orders!

I tell the bridal party to always HIDE (if possible) and then burst through the doorway when they hear their names and NOT stand in the doorway waiting to be announced. I tell them each night David Letterman and Jay Leno come out from behind a curtain. This adds a little excitement to each introduction. This is especially true for the Bride and Groom. If the doors can close and swing open for the B&G that is even better.

If possible I like to introduce the wedding party and have them line up, left to right, in front of the head table then introduce the bride and groom and have them come in and stand in front of the wedding party. That way the photographer has better full length shot of the bridal party instead of half bodies behind a table.

IF the bridal party is "coach-able", and you are introducing them in couples, have them come into the reception, ladies on the gentleman's RIGHT arm and walk to the left corner of the head table. The gentleman stops and allows the lady to walk ahead of him to her spot where she turns and faces the guests. The groomsman then walks behind her and takes his place NOW on HER RIGHT so they end up lining up boy/girl, boy/girl.

Then the Bride and Groom: You need to use a slow deliberate excited voice,
"Ladies and Gentlemen. (pause) (very important to take a breath and pause)

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Williams!"

**Please...DON'T say, "AT THIS TIME" If you want to use this. Use it ONLY ONCE!
Stupid DJs say "At This Time" all night long! Don't be an amateur.**

Welcome Toast – or Welcome Speech – or Welcome comments

IF the father of the bride is outgoing and feels comfortable in giving a short speech have him give a welcome to the guests. I mean really, he is PAYING for this event! Be ready with a microphone. I do make it a point in the planning meeting to ask the bride about this and have her find out if Dad wants to do it or IF the Bride really wants Dad to do it. **Oh yes, be sure you ASK HIM about this ahead of time AND be sure you tell him how to hold the microphone. Tell him if it is close enough to bump his chin it's perfect. I have him come up and join the bride and groom in front of the wedding party to do this. It does not need to be a formal speech or a long dissertation. You can say something like this:

"A Toast (or welcome) to begin tonight's (or this afternoons) celebration from Maggie's father, Mr. James Beekman."

Or simply,

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. James Beekman.” (Really now, everyone should know he is the brides father...)

Blessing

Ask ahead of time who is going to do this and where the person is seated (so you can find them) then dad can give the microphone back to you and you announce the blessing and hand off the microphone. If Dad is comfortable have HIM introduce the person who is doing the blessing and hand off the microphone to them. Don't forget to also give this person giving the blessing a lesson on microphone technique during cocktails. **“Ladies and Gentlemen, The blessing by Reverend Deuteronomy Skaggs.” Or “The blessing by the grooms uncle”** Just mix it up so all your introductions don't all sound the same. Many DJ/MCs get in a rut and start everything, “Ladies and Gentlemen at this time...” IF the guests know who you are from your personal welcome at the beginning they know to listen to you, and quite frankly will!

Dinner

As soon as the blessing is complete I take the microphone and announce the meal. If it's a sit-down dinner I say, **“Ladies and Gentlemen please enjoy yourselves and have a wonderful time.”** And then start dinner music.

If this is a sit-down dinner as soon as people are part way into their salads AND champagne or something is on the table to toast with you can go to the toasts. I like to give toasts during salad because people are munching and not talking. It's also good to let the Best Man and Maid or Matron of Honor have a little drink and a bite to eat to calm down a little. Don't forget to coach them on how to hold the microphone!

If it is a buffet dinner I like to have the toasts right after the final table has gone through the buffet line. Again, people are eating not talking.

If it is a buffet you may need to announce that the head waiter or someone will release each table to the buffet line. The Bride and Groom go first followed by the wedding party, parents and then the guests. I tell the bride and groom to visit with their guests as soon as they are finished eating AND I tell the bridal party to all come back to the head table for the toasts. Here I do start this announcement “Ladies and Gentlemen” because I am talking directly to them not just getting their attention.

“Ladies and Gentlemen a member of the wait staff will invite you to the buffet. Please enjoy yourselves and have a wonderful evening.”

Or

“Ladies and Gentlemen please remain seated. A member of the wait staff will invite you to the buffet. Please enjoy yourselves and have a wonderful evening.”

Toasts

This will be the Best Man and the Maid or Matron of honor. I do NOT recommend having an "open mic" for toasts. Way too risky. You will want to announce:

"And now, the toast, of the Best Man, Mr. Norman Godfried."

"Melissa Watkins, the Maid of Honor."

I also coach the bride and groom so they tell the Best Man and Maid or Matron of Honor that these are congratulatory toasts NOT expose's of some seedy past experience. This is not a "roast" this is a toast for a happy and long marriage. I have the "Ten Commandments of Toasting" on my website. I give them this as part of my initial planning packet.

As Dinner Ends

Let the Bride and Groom know that it is close to cutting the cake. At least 10 to 15 minutes. I also tell the photographer to get ready. I also make sure that the cake cutting utensils are there, a plate is there AND a cloth napkin. The bride and groom should be walking around talking and visiting with their guests. At 5 min. tell them it is time to cut the cake. As they start towards the cake have the cake cutting music ready, drop it and announce:

"Ladies and Gentlemen! It's time for Jamie and Edward to CUT THE CAKE!"

oops...maybe I should not say Ladies and Gentlemen again...your call...

I coach the bride and groom on how to cut the cake at our final planning meeting. I tell them to BOTH hold the knife to cut the cake but once the piece is cut I tell the groom to let the bride put the slice on the plate and cut it in half. I also tell them to cut the bottom NOT the top and to make sure the bottom layer does not have a plastic support on top of it that can't be cut. I had a bride and groom break a crystal handled cake knife because no one told them that there was a solid plastic support under the icing. I also had a photographer tell the bride and groom to cut the TOP of the cake! Not good...that's why I make sure they know the cake protocol.

1. Walk to the cake.
2. Get a picture WITH the cake.
3. Get a picture kissing at the cake.
4. Get a picture holding the knife at the cake.
5. Get a picture cutting the cake.
6. Get a picture of them getting ready to feed each other.
7. Get a picture of them actually feeding each other
8. Get a picture of them with icing on their faces.
9. Get a picture of them kissing with icing on their faces.

It doesn't need to follow this exactly but this works well.

To keep from having a food fight: I give the bride and groom this option for feeding each other. Tell the groom to be a perfect gentleman and not get a crumb on his bride. The bride, on the other hand, takes the piece of cake and feeds her groom but at the last moment smears a little icing on his upper lip. The groom then grabs his bride and smears a little icing on her with a kiss. This satisfies the guests need for “cake in the face” and keeps the bride from spending 30 minutes fixing her makeup.

While they begin to cut the cake I say. “Ladies and Gentlemen there are two wonderful traditions with the cake cutting. (now, as the bride and groom cut the cake you say) The first symbolizes how the bride and groom will work together... with sharp utensils!” That will get a laugh. Then I say, “The second tradition is how the bride and groom will **take care of and FEED EACH OTHER FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES!!! Ladies and Gentlemen let’s cheer them ON!!!**”

Once they have done this I like for the bride and groom to take a moment and thank the people. The bride and groom are seen but not heard by the crowd through the wedding and reception. Yes, they do go table to table during dinner but they have not addressed everyone. At this moment they have everyone’s attention and by speaking to the crowd they now come alive. You must coach them on this ahead of time. Also, tell them how to hold the microphone. The groom can get a ton of points if you coach him on the following. Tell him to get the microphone first. Before he does anything he should turn and look at his new bride, then turn to the audience and say slow and deliberately, “Ladies and Gentlemen, Isn’t she BEAUTIFUL!” Then, after the sighs from the audience, have him turn to her and say, “Jennifer, thank you for saying yes.” This will impress all the friends and family and probably make the bride cry. Now the Bride and Groom need to say something like this either individually or together.

"We would like to thank everyone for being here. It means so much to us. Please enjoy yourselves and have a great time." They can also take this time to acknowledge and thank anyone else. A person who helped the bride but was not part of the wedding party or maybe relatives that have traveled a long distance might need some special thanks. It might also be the best place to thank their parents for everything.

Father Daughter / Mother Son / Bridal Dance

This is my baby. I put it on ProDJ. Probably shouldn't have.

Ask ahead of time if they are going to do both a Father Daughter and a Mother Son Dance. If so, suggest this.

After the cake cutting the father of the bride escorts his daughter to the dance floor. You announce:

"The Father Daughter Dance. Mr. James Beekman and his daughter Jamie." Play the song they selected. Tell them unless they want the entire song you will only play about 2 minutes because their guests have an attention span of about two minutes.

Then, have the groom get his mother and bring her to the dance floor. **"Jamie and her father will now be joined on the dance floor with William and his mother Eleanor Godfried.** Transition to the Mother Son song but be sure to tell the bride and her father to stay on the dance floor with her father. Also if you plan this ahead of time have the groom surprise his mom with a rose. You can tell them to get a rose, you can get it or someone else can. Just be sure that the groom goes and asks his mother to dance and gives her the rose. It's kind of nice for the mother of the groom to get a flower from her son.

After two minutes or so of this second song announce:

"And now, as the parents bring these two together for their first dance as husband and wife may I present to you, Jamie and William Godfried."

The parents bring the two together, place their hands together and step off the dance floor as you begin playing the bridal song.

The next slow song will be the wedding party or a combination of the wedding party and all the friends and relatives. OR

The slow song, starts with the wedding party and the second half of the song will be for all the friends and family to join. I like to use an entire slow song for the friends and family. I also tell the bride and groom that the ENTIRE wedding party must stay on the dance floor. I tell them this at the planning meeting. You need to reinforce this by coaching the bridal party during dinner so they are aware that as soon as the cake cutting is done the dances will begin. Also, tell the groomsmen during dinner they will need to wear their jackets ONE LAST TIME for this dance.

Now, this is when the guests are made to feel like they are part of the wedding party. While this song is playing I am cruising through the dance floor telling the couples to stay there and make a big circle around the dance floor when the song is done because we are all going to sing to the bride and groom. I touch the guests to get their attention and say, "Stay on the dance floor. We are going to make a big circle and sing to the bride and groom after this song.", or something similar. I also tell the bride and groom to stay in the center of the dance floor for one more dance.

First Fast Song

"We Are Family" Sister Sledge - Get everyone clapping and you PUT the bride and groom in the middle. Tell the B&G or just the groom to "Show me your MOVES!" Tell everyone to "SING ALONG!" Then, have everyone give the B&G a "GIANT HUG!" then move back out the another "GIANT HUG". Then tell them to stay dancing as close to the B&G as they can. The more you bump into the B&G the more good luck it is for them!

Next Songs

Here's where you keep them going. Like Come On Eileen, Grease Megamix, Big Band or Swing. If there are older people there be sure to have a 40s Glen Miller like String of Pearls and Moonlight Serenade. Then go for some more fun dance music. Electric Slide? After about 30 min. you should get ready for the Bouquet and Garter.

Bouquet and Garter

Kid Toss

If there will be young children at the reception you might consider doing a "Kids Toss" before the Bouquet toss. Have the bride and groom, or you, go to the Dollar Store or Dollar Tree Store and buy some \$1 stuffed animals. Do the kid toss first. Play "I'm A Believer" by Smashmouth and get the little kids on the dance floor. Have the bride and groom face the kids and toss them each a stuffed animal. The kids love it. Sometimes they are too shy and the B&G will need to take it to the child or toss it to their parents. NEVER toss something hard or give something hard to kids to play with. Little boys will always throw anything you give them.

By doing a kids toss you will have the children off the dance floor when you do the Bouquet and Garter. It is better not to have an 8 year old boy looking up the brides dress as the groom takes off the garter...not a Kodak moment...

Bouquet Toss - Music, "It's Raining Men", "Pretty Woman" or "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" are good choices. Be sure that during dinner that you know where the toss bouquet is and get it. Keep it with your DJ equipment so you know exactly where it is or make sure it is on the head table where the bride and groom sit. Here you work with the photographer ahead of time. (talk to him during dinner) Find out which way he wants the bride to toss the bouquet across the dance floor and where he wants the single girls to stand. Also ask him if he wants a "fake" throw. Tell him you will get everyone to count to three for the fake toss, (if he wants one) and for the real toss.

Grab the toss bouquet, put the music on, and go to where the single girls should stand and announce: **"I want all the single ladies on the dance floor with me! All the single ladies! It's time for Jamie to toss the bouquet!"** Hold the toss bouquet up in the air. As they start to come onto the dance floor give the toss bouquet to the bride. Go back to the group of girls and announce again. Tell them where to stand. Once they are there ask the bride if there are any others then announce them by name. This is fun... Once everyone is in place then announce to the to the crowd. "Ladies, are you ready? I need everyone to help and count with me. On the count of THREE, Jamie is going to toss the bouquet!" **HERE WE GO!! ONE,,,TWO,,,THREE!!!** If it is a fake throw walk over to the girls and say, "PSYCH!!!" then go back and do the tree count again for the real toss. Picture with the bride and bouquet catcher might happen.

Garter Removal You will need a song like "Mission Impossible, "Keep Your Hands To Yourself" or "Oh Yeah" to get the single men to the dance floor. Get a chair in position (you may want to have a chair at your DJ booth ready for this). Here's an important one **Hold the Chair as the Bride Sits Down!** The poofy bridal dress can sometimes push the chair back and the bride ends up on the floor! Then announce all the single men to the dance floor. Have the single men crowd around the back and to the side of the bride so the photographer can get a good picture. Have them lean over the bride as they are getting a final peek up her dress...This makes for a good photo. When the groom is in place, start the removal song. A good song is something like "Let's Get It ON" by Marvin Gaye.

Tell the groom ahead of time to "Take His TIME" getting the garter off. Also, tell the groom that the garter won't shoot like a rubber band. He must wad it up and throw it

over his shoulder. You can't do a fake throw here. Usually it's the real thing on three. Following this the photographer might want a picture of the B&G with the two who caught the bouquet and garter. Ask the photographer ahead of time about this picture.

Dance Music Time to get them going.

Money Dance or Dollar Dance

This is a tuff one. It might be best to do this right after the bouquet and garter. You might do it after the Bridal Dance to get more of the older guests to participate. The Bride and Groom must have two "ruthless people" to be the bagmen and release people. 15 to 30 seconds for each dancer at most. Have the Bride get two cloth bags like cloth wine gift bags to collect the money. Baskets do not work. Paper bags do not work. I have seen white satin bags at David's Bridal that are about \$10 each. Also, tell the Bride that there must be a designated person that the money bags go to after the dollar dance. Oh yea, have a bunch of slow songs ready. Remember, if you have a 3 min slow song and each person dances 30 seconds you will only get 12 people to dance. It will take at least 20 min to get 60 people to dance, or longer.

Anniversary Dance

Invite all the married couples to the dance floor for a dance. Then have the couple who has been married less than xxx hours (you do the math here) to come up to the front. Then couples who have been married 6 months, then a year, then 2 years, etc. What you are looking for is the couple who has been married the least time. Get them next to the bride and groom. Then go 5 years, 10 years 20 years or until you get down to just a few. Then go year by year until you are left with the longest married couple on the dance floor. I then bring the bride and groom and the shortest other married couple to the dance floor. I ask the couple that has been married the shortest (other than the bride and groom) what they each feel is important to a long and happy marriage. THEN I ask longest married couple about the key to a long and happy marriage. You can get some funny stuff from this.

End of the Party B&G Dance

Have a second Bridal Dance at the end of the night. Have them pick a song or just do their bridal dance song again. Invite everyone to make a big circle around the Bride and Groom. Halfway, invite them to dance with the B&G. Be sure you announce the couple. I usually say something like, "Mr. and Mrs....Husband and wife....John and Cindy Cummings" Sometimes the people want a "sing a long" like "Piano Man" . I do this after I have the B&G do their second bridal dance.

End of Reception Play something like Rivera Paradise Stevie Ray Vaughn. Tell them "What a GREAT PARTY!" who you are like at the beginning and say drive safe and goodnight.

Take a Group Picture If you have a camera or if the photographer is still there take a group picture of the remaining "party animals". People love this. Since people are accustomed to taking directions from you it will be much easier for you to get the group together. If you want them to smile tell them to say "Fuzzy Pickles"

Another little tip for you. If there is a formal bar leave 10 of your business cards on each bar in groups of 5 fanned out on each corner. Many people won't come up and ask for a card but will take it from the bar. You might need to ask the venue if it is OK or just ask the bartender. Maybe give the bartender a tip. Go pick up the cards at the end of the night to see how many have been taken...Business cards don't do you any good in your pocket.

Interactive Dancing

During the night I do some interactive dancing to the following songs: If you can't dance take some line dance classes and learn these.

I teach these dances

Electric Slide
Cha Cha Slide
Booty Call
Cupid Shuffle
Cowboy Shuffle

I have skits that go along with these dances. If you want to know how these work just let me know and I will tell you.

I Will Survive
Copacabana
Stayin' Alive
YMCA
Chicken Dance

That's a good start. There is always more. Practice! Good Luck!