

The Practical Guide to Coordinating Your Wedding

by Henry and Chris Baker

INTRODUCTION

This book has been written for people to help our clients in the planning for their wedding day. This book can also be of use to the professionals that you may hire.

I discuss a time line and a standard approach to scheduling and managing the activities of the wedding party. I also discuss many of the practical issues that will affect the Bride and Groom on their wedding day.

This book is also designed as a practical guide to DJ's, musicians and banquet coordinators. Our clients might enlist the help of friends in the videotaping of their wedding. Or they might hire a friend with limited experience to provide music for their day.

Having DJ'd for many years, I found it frustrating to be at a wedding as a photographer working with a DJ who was a friend of the couple but very inexperienced. This book was originally written as a training manual for DJ's and has been modified to serve as a practical guide for planning the activities of the day for both our couple and the people they might hire.

Most wedding books talk to the minutia of the day. Schedules tend to be micro managed and many of the tips and details covered miss the practical aspects of what will be happening. This book talks to the practical details of the day. Most of the details of the first few chapters are focused on the rolls of the individuals, the ceremony and points of etiquette. The remaining chapters are written to help our wedding professionals and are written to help our DJ or MC.

Who needs this and book?

This book is a resource to help anyone planning a wedding reception party or working in the role of a wedding coordinator. This book was designed as a supplement to a training video "The DJ's Guide to Running Weddings".

Where my expertise comes from:

The development of this book was the direct result of years of experience as a wedding DJ, wedding videographer and wedding photographer. The book was originally written by me, but is currently updated and maintained by my son, Chris Baker (www.djchrisbaker.com).

Chris is one of the better DJ's servicing eastern Massachusetts. He has worked in most of the night clubs in downtown Boston as well as for a number of Radio Stations. He had been DJ'ing weddings for over fifteen years.

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My interests (Henry Baker) are in wedding photography and I currently operate a professional portrait photography studio located in Walpole.

I have also personally photographed over a 100 weddings over the last ten years.

In the mid 90's, I brought all of my experience together to write this book and produce a professional training video for DJ's. In 1995 I rescripted, rewrote and reproduced this training video, making it the best training video in the market. This video is called the "DJ's Guide to Running Weddings". It is a complete training package, directed to the professional DJ. It has been marketed nationally since 1995. My combined experience gives me a unique understanding of the roles of the DJ, Videographer and Photographer in servicing our wedding clients. It is this combined experience that provided me with the depth of experience to write this book.

Table of Contents

1 Procedure, Protocol and Etiquette . . .3	17 Limo Services . . .21
2 Seating . . .5	18 Photography . . .22
3 Procession . . .7	19 Wedding at Reception Halls . . .25
4 Recession . . .9	20 Less Formal Events . . .28
5 Receiving Line . . .10	21 More Formal Hall Weddings . . .29
6 Seating at the Head Table . 10	22 Ethnic Weddings . . 31
7 Wedding Toasts . . .11	23 Outdoor Weddings . . .32
8 Wedding Cake . . 11	24 Activities - The Dollar Dance . . 34
9 The Bride and her day . . .12	25 Activities - The English Toast . . 36
10 Confirm Everything . . .12	26 DJs and Bands - Setting up . . .37
11 Professionally Orchestrated Weddings . . .12	27 DJs Instructions to Wedding Party . . .39
12 Catering Firms / Halls . . .14	28 Reception Lines . . 42
13 The Formal Photography Session . . 16	29 Blessings . . .42
14 Receiving Lines . . .17	30 Toasts . . .42
15 Introduction (The Wedding Party) . . .18	31 Cutting of the Cake . . .43
16 Cake-Cutting (Activity) . . .19	32 Parents Dances . . .44
	33 Garter and Bouquet . . 47
	34 Last Dance

1. Procedure, Protocol and Etiquette

Having an understanding of proper etiquette will help you follow proper procedure and help you answer any direct questions. As usual, consider not only what is proper along with what is traditional or common for your section of the country, but also what is most comfortable and desirable for the Bride and Groom.

The following information pertains to all weddings.

The Bride will have an **honor attendant** (maid, matron or maiden of honor). The **Matron of Honor** is a married woman, the **Maid of Honor** is a single woman and the maiden of honor is a young child. The Bride can have more than one Maid of Honor. The Maid of Honor will precede the Bride and her father during the processional. The Maid of Honor assists the Bride with her train and veil for the processional, during the ceremony, and the recessional. She might be called upon to hold the Bride's bouquet during the ceremony. She carries the Grooms wedding ring until needed. She will stand next to the Groom (on his right) in the receiving line and will sit on the left side of the Groom at the head table (if it's a seated reception). She and the Best Man will be announced to the reception guests before the Bride and Groom. She may dance with the Best Man after the Bride and Groom's first dance. At all times, she will provide assistance to the Bride, before, during and after the wedding.

The **Best Man** sees that the Groom is at the church on time. He also checks on details (i.e. bills for the flowers, payment for the minister). He might sign the marriage license as a witness with the Maid of Honor. He carries the Bride's wedding ring until needed. He oversees the ushers and may stand in the receiving line. He is announced with the Maid of Honor to the reception guests before the Bride and Groom. He may dance with the Maid of Honor after the Bride and Groom's first dance. He sits to the right of the Bride and proposes the first toast to the new couple. He ensures that the reception goes as planned and no practical jokes are played on the Bride and Groom. Also, he makes sure that the car is not overly decorated and the windshield is unobstructed. Lastly, he assists the Bride and Groom to the car and drives them to the airport, etc.

Bridesmaids walk first in the procession. They may or may not be escorted by ushers or Groomsman. They may welcome guests in the receiving line. They may be announced to the guests at the reception, before the Best Man and the Maid of Honor. They may dance with the ushers during the Bride and Groom's first dance. They may sit alternately with the ushers at the head table, if there is a head table.

Ushers seat the guests at the wedding ceremony. They assemble near the entrance and review any special seating requests. They offer their right arms to each woman as she arrives. The new trend though, is for ushers to just lead people to their seats when they greet them, saying, "Please follow me." They seat the oldest women first, if several guests arrive together. In Christian weddings, friends of the Bride are seated on the left and friends of the Groom are seated on the right. (If there are more guests for one side, the guests can be seated on both sides.) The ushers unroll the aisle runner, tie pew ribbons (if used), and participate in both the procession and recession. They (Ushers/Groomsmen) sit at the head table but do not stand in the receiving line (if there is one). They (Ushers/Groomsmen) may be announced to the reception guests before the Bride and Groom. They (Ushers/Groomsmen) may dance with the Bridesmaids during the Bride and Groom's first dance and may propose toasts to the Bride and Groom. They will usually decorate the car. There should be one designated head usher and his role is to understand any special seating arrangements.

Groomsmen are part of the wedding party and walked down the aisle with the Bridesmaids and stand at the altar with the groom. They can be considered to be the male alternative of the Bridesmaid.

It is common for couples to have the groomsmen also performing the role of the ushers and the men chosen are usually Usher/Groomsmen. This is often done to minimize the size of the wedding party.

If there are designated Ushers and Groomsmen, then the Groomsmen would be the Groom's brothers, close relatives, the Bride's brothers and other close friends. These are the men that would be standing with the Groom during the ceremony and who would escort Bridesmaids and sit at the head table.

The use of Ushers and Groomsmen would depend on the wishes of the Bride and Groom and family tradition.

Groomsmen sit at the head table but do not stand in the receiving line (if there is one). Groomsmen may be announced to the reception guests before the Bride and Groom. Groomsmen may dance with the Bridesmaids during the Bride and Groom's first dance and may propose toasts to the Bride and Groom. They will usually decorate the car.

The Flower Girl may walk alone, with the ring bearer, or with another flower girl. She immediately precedes the Bride. She usually scatters rose petals in

the Bride's path. She is not in the receiving line, nor does she sit at the head table. She may be announced to the guests with the ring bearer.

The Ring Bearer immediately precedes the flower girl or the Bride down the aisle.

The Mother of the Bride may accompany the Bride down the aisle (customary in Jewish weddings). She is the last to be seated and would be escorted by her son, or sons, or the head usher. She is the first guest to be ushered out. She serves as the official hostess. She is at the head of the receiving line and has a place of honor at the parents' table (usually there are two parents' tables). She and her husband (or escort) may join the newlyweds on their first dance.

Father of the Bride rides with the Bride in the limousine and escorts her into the ceremony site. He usually walks the Bride down the aisle, perhaps with the mother.* If the father is deceased, another male might escort the Bride or the Bride's mother, or the Bride might choose to walk alone. In any case, this person gives the Bride away. In some Protestant services, the father /escort remains at the altar with the Bride until asked, "Who gives this Bride to be married?" After the response, he will take his seat. He joins the Bride's mother in the first pew, and he may mingle with guests instead of standing in the reception line. He may dance with his wife, joining the Bride and Groom during the first dance. He may make a toast or welcoming speech after the best man, and the Groom (and Bride) have responded. At Jewish weddings, the Father of the Bride offers blessings over the wine and bread before the meal begins.

Parents of the Groom: The mother is escorted to her seat by the head usher (unless her son is in the wedding party), followed by her husband, just before the Mother of the Bride. In a traditional Jewish service, both parents might escort the Groom down the aisle. The Groom's mother stands second in the reception line. If the husband is in the reception line, he might be to the left of his wife (I would propose the parents be paired, i.e. mothers, then fathers). They may also join the newlyweds on their first dance.

2. Seating

Seating: Bride's family on the left and Groom's family on the right. If it is a large wedding party, the first row might be reserved for the Bridesmaids and ushers, with the second row being reserved for the parents. If there are no Bridesmaids or ushers, or the Bridesmaids and ushers are to remain standing during the service, then the first row might be reserved for the parents. The

grandparents and immediate family might be seated directly behind the parents.

For divorced parents who are estranged/ or who prefer to be seated separately, the mother would sit in the first pew with the father sitting one or two pews behind her. Seat guests from front to back and seat them as they arrive.

How you seat the guests will depend on the number of people expected to attend the service, the length of the aisle and the number of pews. You do want to seat the guests to the front of the church.

Many churches are designed where there is a main door to the church. As you enter the church there is a back hallway, which is separated from the main chapel area, and there might be a set of doors separating the main chapel area from the back hallway.

It is a good idea to seat guests as they arrive. You want to keep the back of the church from filling up with guests who might be milling around awaiting the arrival of the Bride. The more people in the back hallway, the more confusion there will be.

The moments immediately preceding the processional are sometimes confusing. Grandparents, Mothers of the Bride and Mothers of the Groom should remain in the back of the church or hall.

Grandparents and mothers are escorted to their seats immediately prior to the procession. This pre processional seating is usually to designated music and is a queue that the processional is starting. The photographer also wants to be in the aisle to photograph parents and grandparents as they are being escorted to their seats.

In Jewish weddings, it is customary for both mother and father to escort the Groom and the Bride down the aisle.

In catholic weddings, it also becoming common to see both parents escorting their children down the aisle. When both parents are in the processional, we would still want to identify the grandparents. The grandparents are the last people seated prior to the start of the processional.

Countdown: At the church or hall, you might find the bridal couple and parents mingling with the guests .

Ten minutes before the ceremony, the bridal party, attendants, and parents should be assembled in the hallway.

Minutes before the ceremony, Pre Wedding Processional, the grandparents and mothers would be escorted to their seats (usually on queue). Grandparents are seated first, followed by the mother and father of the Groom. The Mother of the Bride is seated last.

Two ushers walk in step to the front of the aisle to lay the aisle runner (optional) and/or unroll the pew ribbons (optional, used in Protestant weddings). You will seldom see pew ribbons. If they are being used, they will be unrolled before the processional.

Ceremony time: Traditional style (with the father escorting the Bride) - The minister or JP takes his/her place at the head of the aisle. The Groom and the Best Man might be with the JP or minister. Usually, the Groom is at the end of the aisle, on the right (as we look into the church). Standing to his right would be the best man.

As dad escorts the Bride to the end of the aisle, he will turn to the Bride, lift up her blusher (veil) and give her a kiss. He will then turn to the Groom, and shake his hand. The Bride will step forward to advance with the Groom. The Bride's father will step back and then cross the aisle to take his seat on the left side of the aisle (Christian weddings).

Dad should be careful to simply stand in place and let the Bride go forward before crossing the aisle. It is too easy to try to step over the train and step on it. If I am in the back of the church immediately before the procession, I would remind the Bride and her father not to step out into view until the aisle is clear, to hold her flowers low (most bouquets, not roses). I would remind dad that (1) they want to wait for the aisle to be clear before they step out into view. All of the attention should be on them. (2) He offers his arm to the Bride (Dad will be on the Bride's right). (3) He escorts the Bride to the end of the aisle then turns to the Bride, lifts her blusher, gives her a kiss, then turns to the Groom to shake his hand, then steps back allowing the Groom to escort the Bride forward to the celebrant. Dad does not want to step over the Bride's veil, but to stay in place and wait for the Bride's train to have passed.

3. Processional

Seating of Grandparents and Parents / Pre Processional: Prior to the processional, the grandparents might be escorted to their seats, followed by the mother of the Groom, followed by the Mother of the Bride. The usher escorting

the Mother of the Bride to her seat would then go directly to the aisle runner and unroll it.

The seating of parents can be thought of as part of the processional. The mothers are usually escorted to their seats on queue. The wedding coordinator in the back of the church would signal the organist. The organist usually plays a specific song. (In catholic weddings, this is usually "Ave. Maria".).

The Mother of the Bride is the last to be seated and would be escorted by her son, or sons, or the head usher.

The ushers and Bridesmaids may or may not be seated during the ceremony. Usually in a catholic mass (about a 45 minute service), they would be seated.

This means the first row would be occupied by the ushers and Bridesmaids. Otherwise, the parents of the Bride and Groom would be in the first row. Grandparents and/or siblings would be seated in the row directly behind the parents. If the parents are divorced, the father and his escort would be seated behind the mothers grandparents. Close friends, guests and elderly friends might be designated to sit directly behind the father (if divorced) or grandparents.

With a Jewish service, the parents might stand through the service with the Bridesmaids and ushers. This means grandparents and siblings would be seated in the first row. If the mother is divorced, her companion might be in the second row. If the father is divorced, his companion might be in the following row.

Seating List:

Row 1 - If Bridesmaids and ushers are seated, they sit in first row

Row 2 - Parents of the Bride or Groom, or Mother and escort (if divorced)

Row 3 - Grandparents and siblings

Row 4 - Father and escort if divorced

Row 5 - Fathers parents and family (if divorced)

Row 6 - Special guests and elderly family members

Processional: There are many styles of processions and the style of processional is usually dependent on the officiant. If the wedding is being held at a four star hotel, the banquet coordinator might coordinate the service and direct everyone.

In catholic services, I have seen a number of different approaches to the processional. It is not uncommon for the Groom and Best Man to be with the

priest or pastor in the front of the church near the alter. Just before the service, the ushers might file down the side aisles and join the priest, Groom and best man. At the time of the processional, two designated ushers might unroll the aisle runner and then return to the Grooms side by returning down the side aisle.

In many services, the ushers and Groomsmen would be the first to come down the aisle. The order is usually based on height. This could be single or double file. Next would be the Bridesmaids, junior Bridesmaids, Maid of Honor, ring bearer (could walk with flower girl) flower girl and Bride with her father or escort.

In catholic services, I am seeing a style of processional, where the priest would lead the wedding party down the aisle. The ushers would usually be paired followed by the Groom and his parents, the Bridesmaids, junior Bridesmaids, Maid of Honor, ring bearer, flower girl and Bride with her parents.

The biggest problem with this style of processional is that the people are always too close to each other. Men, when left to their own inclinations will walk too close to each other and too fast. A good rule of thumb is to keep a distance of 10 rows between individuals or sets. The aisle should be clear of everyone when the Bride and her parents step out into the aisle,

One observation is that most people tend to walk too fast during both the processional and recessional. You should walk in measured steps and be walking slow enough to be able to look at and recognize your friends as you walk down the aisle.

Processional Order:

Catholic

Ushers (optional)
 Bridesmaids (single file)
 Junior Bridesmaids
 Maid of Honor
 Ring Bearer
 Flower Girl
 Bride, Father

Alternate

Ushers (by height)
 Mother, Groom, Father
 Bridesmaids
 Junior Bridesmaids
 Maid of Honor
 Ring Bearer
 Flower Girl
 Mother, Bride, Father

Jewish

Bride's grandparents
 Grooms grandparents
 Ushers
 Father, Groom, Mother
 Bridesmaids
 Honor Attendant
 Ring Bearer
 Flower Girl
 Father, Bride, Mother

An Informal Procession: At a small wedding, the Bride is preceded by one or more attendants and escorted into the room by her father. There might not be a procession - only the Bride and Groom standing before the minister/JP.

They might even have the guests stand in a circle around them (usually a very small gathering).

4. Recession

Recession: The newlyweds will lead the recession of the wedding party, in their first walk as husband and wife. The rest of the wedding party will leave in the reverse order of the procession. Usually the recession will be double file even if the procession was single file.

The order will usually be the newlyweds, followed by the wedding party, parents of the Bride, parents of the Groom and family members.

Tips on the Recessional: As the Bride and Groom turn to face their guests, they are usually quite nervous. They will usually be stepping down and will be looking to the floor for the first step. Before the couple steps down from the aisle, they should look into the aisle, is the photographer there. If not, was the photographer caught off guard by the end of the wedding? Is he coming to the end of the aisle? Wait for the photographer. Noticing the photographer is in position, if the couple were to pause, look into each others eyes, and then follow that with a kiss, what a great image for the photographer, the parents, the guests and anyone else with a camera.

Sometimes the Groom will take the Bride's arm. The Groom should be sure to offer his arm to the Bride. The Bride, taking the Grooms arm will create a great image and generate a sense of comfort.

Many times you will see the Bride and Groom walk very quickly down the aisle. Sometimes they are almost running. This is a very normal response to the nervousness they might be experiencing.

The weddings that have always impressed me the most were those in which the couple might stop at their parents pew and embrace them. Then casually walk back down the aisle. They are walking slow enough to establish eye contact with their guests and to enjoy the moment.

5. Receiving Line

The Receiving Line: Should form after the ceremony but before the reception. If you are taking wedding photographs at the church, then you might want the receiving line at the reception site. The hostess of the reception party should be the first person in line. This is usually the Mother of the Bride.

Many times the Bride and Groom will be paying for the wedding and reception party. In this case the Mother of the Bride would still be the first person in the receiving line. The Mother of the Bride would be accompanied by her husband. The Mother of the Groom and her husband would follow. Then the Bride and Groom. It is optional for honor attendants and other attendants to be in the receiving line.

According to the rules of etiquette, fathers were not required to be in the receiving line. While not required by etiquette, it is so common to see fathers in receiving lines that it seems unusual when the fathers are not there.

In cases of divorce, it is the parents of the Bride and Groom that should be in the receiving line. Spouses of the divorced parent could stand behind their counterpart.

I have found that in cases of divorce, if you pair the mothers and then pair the fathers, makes for a more comfortable situation. The parents can introduce their friends to each other.

6. Seating at the Head Table

Seating: At the head table the seating would be the Groom on the Bride's left, Best Man on the Bride's right. The Maid of Honor would be on the Grooms left and the Bridesmaids and ushers seated alternately. Children would sit with their parents.

You will sometimes see head tables where all of the women are on the left and all the men are on the right. You might also see the Best Man seated to the left of the Groom and the Maid of Honor seated to the right of the Bride. Seating the men and women as couples is always preferable.

Instead of a head table with the wedding party, it is common to see a smaller table at which the Bride and Groom are seated. You might also see a round table at which the Bride and Groom and Best Man and Maid of Honor and selected guests are seated.

Wedding Toasts: The Best Man makes the first reception toast to the Bride and Groom. It is sometimes customary for the Maid of Honor to propose a toast. This can be followed by the Groom toasting his Bride and her parents. The Bride might rise (not very often) followed by parents (not very often).

It is traditional, and almost a requirement, that the Best Man toast the wedding couple. It is also becoming more common for the Maid of Honor to toast the couple. You will very rarely see the Bride or Groom toasting their spouses and in-laws.

The Wedding Cake: The Bride and Groom feed each other cake to symbolize their union. After they feed each other, the Bride and Groom might serve their new in-laws their pieces, although this is not very common.

The Bride will feed the Groom and then the Groom will feed the Bride. The wedding couple should refrain from any playfulness at this time. Playfulness always seems to start with the Bride teasing the Groom. The Groom will usually respond and it doesn't take much to make this an unpleasant situation for the Bride.

If the couple uses forks, it will make for a great picture and minimize the possibility of playfulness.

9. The Bride and Her Special Day

It's essential to understand the importance of this day to the Bride. It might seem frivolous to make that obvious statement, however, most men don't understand the emotions involved and the sensitivity you have to exercise when working with the Bride to make this day perfect for her.

This is her special day, a day of magic in which everything and everyone-DJs, Bands, Caterers, and Photographers contribute to this perfection. These are the people the Bride has chosen to make the dreams of her wedding become the reality of the day.

10. Confirm Everything. In planning for the day, you must confirm the day with everyone that you have hired. Be sure to make these confirmation calls. Limo drivers should be called at least three days in advance of your wedding day. Make sure they have a map and the schedule of activities has been identified. Limo drivers will often want to leave the church immediately after the wedding and they don't like to make stops on the way to the reception hall. Photographers and videographers should be called a week prior to your wedding day.

When confirming the details of the day with the cateror, be sure to review your schedule with them. Allow time to get from the church to the hall. Be sure to schedule time for the family portrait session (at least ½ an hour) and then the announcement into the hall and first dance will take at least 15 minutes.

After identifying these activities, you can establish a realistic time for the meals to be served. Don't let the banquet coordinator rush the photography session because they did not schedule the activities of the day.

11. Professionally Orchestrated Weddings

Some weddings are special because the catering/hotel staff is much more involved in the coordination of the reception. The DJ/band and photographer will usually find the room captain approaching them with a written agenda of the day's events. The scheduling and timing will be much more closely watched and there will be a very visible presence of the staff and room captain. The schedule of events will be strictly coordinated by the Banquet Coordinator or Room Captain.

These receptions are often more discrete and less pretentious. The Bride might not want an announcement of the wedding party to her guests. She might prefer entering the room with the Groom and proceeding to meet and greet guests. You might also hear your Bride say she does not want ceremonial

dances announced, i.e. the dance with her father. The dance will still take place, but the Bride might simply tell the band to play a song for her dance with her father. This will usually be coordinated by the room captain or the DJ/Band.

This “No Fanfare” approach is most common with the cake-cutting. Music will be played, but it might be simply an instrumental and not your typical cake-cutting music, i.e. “Songbird” by Kenny G.

For this style of wedding the bouquet may be thrown, but it’s unlikely that there will be a tossing of the garter.

The Bride will usually be clear on what she wants and how she wants these events handled. The Room Captain will usually be providing direction on every event.

The DJ or band should be aware of the style that is desired for the reception. For this type of reception, discretion should be practiced. Recognizing this desire for discretion, you should be careful to talk with the Bride about the style of the introduction as well as the other activities you will be announcing.

DJ’s usually have a style of pumping up the guests and getting a strong reaction when introducing the wedding party. With upscale weddings, the DJ might want to project a more formal appearance.

The Bride and Groom need to discuss the style of announcement that they are expecting from their announcer or DJ.

12. Catering Firms and Halls

The following is a list of activities that halls and catering firms will perform to make the wedding reception so special:

Greeting the Bride and Groom on their Arrival

These halls and caterers always have a member of the staff at the door waiting to greet the Bride and Groom and usher them into the building. Whenever possible, you should make a point of having someone at the door to personally greet the Bride and Groom on their arrival.

Work with the Photographer

These halls are also careful to greet the photographer on his/her arrival and to determine if the formal photography session has been completed. If the formal photography sessions (posed photography) have not yet taken place, then these halls would check with the photographer to see how much time is required and remind them of the schedule that has been pre-arranged.

Often the hall or caterer will have a printed agenda form with the schedule carefully outlined. It is important that the Bride and the catering firm have discussed the schedule for the day. By identifying the start of the wedding ceremony, the duration of the ceremony, the time needed for the receiving line (possibly at the church), the amount of time necessary to commute to the hall, and then allowing approximately an extra hour for the photography session, the caterer can prepare and work with agenda/schedule that is realistic with the interests of the client in mind.

If the catering firm has only allowed a half hour for photography and it is a large wedding party, this is being unrealistic. If the wedding party consists of only the Bride and Groom, best man, Maid of Honor and a limited number of relatives, then a half-hour might be more appropriate.

To avoid confusion, a copy of the schedule should be provided to the Bride and Groom after your consultation and well before the wedding day. The couple can then show this schedule to their photographer and DJ/Band.

Many times the hall will attempt to push the photographer to complete the family photography session in as short a period of time as possible. The photographer should work quickly, but he/she must have completed all of the family photography before the wedding party is announced into the hall. I have seen many weddings where the banquet hall coordinator did not schedule time for photography and then tried to minimize the impact by trying to skip the

photography session or minimize the session. It is more important to complete the family photography than serve the meal according to the kitchen schedule.

MAKING YOUR CUSTOMERS NEEDS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY

Too often catering firms seem to only focus on the meal. When the photographer arrives at the hall, he/she will sometimes find themselves in a situation which feels unfriendly. The catering firm (or hall) is focused on the serving of the meal as their first priority. They might want to cut short the photography session or dictate the program to the DJ/Band.

The DJ is impacted by the hall or caterer when they direct the DJ not to have the first dance until after the meal has been served.

A good DJ will always try to play music which will make people want to dance throughout the evening, even during the meal. The sooner the DJ gets people dancing, the more the guests will join together to participate in the celebration, making the party a more memorable experience for the Bride and Groom.

The DJ should try to schedule the first dance as soon as possible. After the first dance and during the meal, the DJ might play music which people would want to dance to.

(Protocol dictates that no one should dance until after the Bride and Groom have their first dance. Many older guests know of this unwritten rule and will not go onto the dance floor until after the Bride and Groom have their first dance.)

The one overriding issue is that this is the Bride's day. All of the people working for the Bride should understand the importance of each event. If the DJ or photographer experience difficulties working with the banquet coordinator, these difficulties should not be obvious to our wedding party.

It is important that the caterer or hall talk with the Bride about the schedule for the day. If it is a large wedding party, an hour might be allocated for the formal photography. A schedule should be provided to the Bride, which she can make available to the photographer. If the photographer has any concerns with the schedule, he will be able to make them known to the Bride so that these issues will have been worked out before the wedding day.

The DJ should also review the schedule of the day with his clients. The DJ needs to know when the guests will be arriving at the hall and when he might expect to be announcing the wedding party into the hall. The DJ also needs to know if the receiving line was at the church or if he will be coordinating a receiving line at the hall.

I remember one situation at a small hall where there was little room and the exterior provided nothing of particular interest for photographs. However, the

caterer was there to greet the wedding party on arrival. When she learned that the formal photography had not taken place on route to the hall, she suggested a location that was near. The caterer then sent staff members off-site with food and beverage for the wedding party (during this session); this support was unexpected and much appreciated. The caterer clearly understood her business and was able to contribute in a very positive way.

The family photographs must be completed before the Bride and Groom are introduced into the hall and the meal is served. The wedding party should never be introduced into the hall until after all of the family photography is completed.

After the Bride and Groom are announced into the hall, the party has begun and no one will want to step out to a side room for photographs.

13. The Formal Photography Session at the Hall

If the wedding is at the hall or at an estate, recommend that the formal photography be done earlier in the day, before the ceremony. This will make the day much more relaxed and it will allow the Bride and Groom the opportunity of spending more time with their guests.

If the service is held off site, the first thing you must do is determine if the formal photography has been completed. This will impact your schedule for serving the guests. It might be helpful to talk through the schedule with the couple prior to their wedding day and help them understand the importance of allowing adequate time.

If the photography is to take place on site, talk with the photographer and inform him of the schedule you are using. Listen to the photographer and work with him to make sure everyone is satisfied with the arrangements.

Note that breakout rooms for photography should be draped from ceiling to floor, and the ceilings should be ten feet or higher-without lights extending down into the scene. Any kind of broken background will be distracting and not look professional in the finished photographs. Rooms with fireplaces will work, but a business conference room complete with low hung lights, paintings, and mounted white boards, just won't be appropriate. As a matter of fact, this can affect the halls or hotels ability to book weddings and will certainly be noticed by Bridesmaids and other guests as they think about their own nuptial plans.

If the hall does not have an area for the formal photography session and the weather does not permit outside photography, the photographer might be

forced to use an area inside the main hall. This is difficult because guests will be interacting with the wedding party and members of the wedding party might find themselves wandering off as they engage with these guests. The guests with their instamatic cameras will be all over the photographer as he sets up appealing group photographs. The photographer will also have difficulty positioning people to control the impact of the background scenes on the photographs.

The formal wedding photographs are a major event in the day. If there is no break out room for photography, then the people helping to coordinate the event should provide assistance in helping the photographer clear an area of the room that can be used for the formals. (Formals are the posed photographs of the Bride and Groom with their families and with the wedding party.)

14. Receiving Lines

During the consultation, you would stress the merits of having a receiving line at the church. If there is no receiving line at the church, then you will have to have one at the hall. This formality should be attended to as soon as possible. It is normally scheduled right after the photography session.

If the guests are having cocktails in another area of the building, then I would suggest positioning the wedding party at the entrance to the main room, so the guests will be going through the receiving line as they enter that room.

However, if the guests are already having cocktails in the main room, then your only recourse is to announce the wedding party to the guests and direct them to form a receiving line. You would then have the DJ or band call the guests, by table, to go through the receiving line.

If you are at a small hall and the number of guests is limited, then you may be able to dispense with the receiving line, but the Bride and Groom should then make a point of visiting every table to welcome their guests. Visiting the tables should happen as soon as possible, right after the blessing and the toast.

When setting up a receiving line, try to minimize the number of people in the line. The only people that are required are the parents, the Bride and Groom, and the Best Man and Maid of Honor. (You could exclude fathers if either couple is divorced and the fathers do not object. Otherwise, you may wish to have the mothers stand together and the fathers stand together in the receiving line.)

Staff members of the catering firm or hall should be present and visible at all times. The room captain should be in the immediate area.

Be Ready With the Toast

Usually in larger function facilities, waiters and waitresses will be at their stations as the guests enter the room. They should commence the pouring of champagne once half the guests have entered the room. This would be done prior to the entrance of the wedding party, and then the toast will be offered early in the program. There are usually two options: One can introduce the couple to their guests and directly announce their first dance followed by the blessing and the toast, or after introducing the Bride and Groom, you can bring them directly to the head table for the blessing and the toast.

15. Introduction (the Wedding Party)

The DJ or MC should have already met with the room captain and identified his/her role. If the DJ will be announcing the wedding party to the guests and the DJ appears to be capable, then both the room captain and the DJ should introduce themselves (and head waitress) to the wedding party prior to announcing the wedding party to their guests.

The DJ might handle the line-up of the wedding party and review the pronunciation of names. However, the final address to the party should be made by the Room Captain, identifying where people will go as they enter the room.

A practice that is becoming more common is for the room captain to announce the wedding party to the guests. This method personalizes the role of the hall staff as hosts of the event and adds to the perceived professional value of the services being provided by the hotel. It usually appears that the Banquet Coordinator does not do as good a job as an experienced DJ. As a DJ, you should work with the Bride to make sure that she makes her wishes known to the Hotel. The Bride and Groom can dictate their interests to the Hotel staff, but this should be worked out well before their wedding day.

If the Bride and Groom are going directly into their first dance, members of the catering staff should be prepared to take the Bride's bouquet and place it on the head table. If catering staff are not available, then the DJ or room captain should instruct the Maid of Honor to proceed to the corner of the dance floor and wait for the introduction of the Bride. As the Bride and Groom are announced to their guests and walk out onto the dance floor for their first dance, the Maid of Honor can come out and take the Bride's bouquet.

Many hotels will strictly coordinate the timing of events and will specify the timing of these activities to the DJ or Band. The DJ or Band will usually receive a written agenda of the day's activities, which makes his/her job easier.

Dressing of Scenes

Whenever possible, you want to include flowers in scenes which are prominent or are to be photographed. On the Bride and Groom's introduction into the room, a member of the catering service should be there to take the Bride's and Bridesmaid's flowers and place them on the head table. Then when the Bride is ready to cut the cake, the Bride's flowers should be placed on the table with the cake.

Drink glasses and clutter should be cleared from the head table through the meal and before photographs are taken. You want the focus clearly on the subjects themselves.

If you are coordinating the cake cutting ceremony, put the Bride's flower on the table with the cake. You want to add color to the scene. You always want to position the Bride so we see her gown. The Groom would be positioned to the right of the Bride and behind (usually it is a small circular table that the cake is on). The couple should have inside arms around each other and the knife should be handed to the Groom (his open right hand). You then place the Bride's left hand on top of the Grooms right hand. This way we get a nice symmetrical image of the couple (heart shaped) and we see the diamond on her ring finger. The Bride should place her left hand on his knife hand.

As a DJ working with an inexperienced photographer, you are going to stun the Bride, with your attention to detail. If you're the photographer, the couple will be pleased.

16. Cake-Cutting Activity

You really want to work with the DJ or Band to control this situation, so that decorum is maintained. After all, this is a formal event. Some hotels make a rule of providing forks and a plate for this activity. By setting a plate behind the cake, with forks, you can talk to the Bride and Groom about using the forks to give their photographs a classier look. The use of forks looks good and avoids the problem of inappropriate gestures during this ceremony.

You always want to avoid any smashing when coordinating this event. By making sure that the photographer and video person are ready and on que there will be no delay. If your couple is standing behind the cake waiting for the photographer, you might hear a lot of taunting and encouragement for the Groom to smash the Bride.

When talking with the couple, you might also want to say something to them to encourage good behavior. Another technique is to set up a plate behind the cake with forks and a napkin. Tell the couple to use the forks to feed each other. It will present a great image to the photographer.

I have been at weddings where the cake cutting has gotten out of hand. And it usually started when the Bride mischievously brushed some icing on the Grooms nose.

SERVING WEDDING CAKE FOR DESSERT

If the wedding cake is to be served as dessert, you will want to consider the amount of time that the catering staff will have for preparing and serving it. The caterer might request the DJ to schedule the cake cutting as soon as possible. You might then consider introducing the bridal couple, then announce the cake cutting, followed by the first dance, blessing, and toast.

If the cake is not being served for dessert, then you might be scheduling the cake cutting somewhere between the first and third course. This would usually be followed by the parents dances.

Many catering firms will set up a dessert table, decorated by flowers, and have someone cut and serve the cake to guests during the meal.

17. Limo Services

It is quite common to have problems with the delivery of limo services. The Bride and Groom should have confirmed the date, time, and location at least two weeks in advance of the date. You should also make a point of delivering a map to the limo service, so that there is no confusion about the route or destination.

The Bride should also confirm all of the details of the limo service two days before the wedding. If they misplaced the booking, they need time to schedule a limo and get a driver.

The limo service should arrive at the Bride's house one-half hour before departure time. This will allow time for photographs, put the Bride at ease, and make your job easier.

As the Bride leaves the limo to go into the church, she should have a photograph of her father or escort helping her out of the limo. The limo driver should know if the Bride hired a professional videographer and photographer so he can arrive at the church fifteen minutes before the ceremony is scheduled to start. Then the driver should keep the Bride in the car until both the photographer and videographer are prepared to capture the Bride's entrance into the church.

In many instances the drivers will assist the Bride into the church by carrying the Bride's train. A good photographer, will include the Bride's father in these duties and ask the limo driver to stand out.

As the Bride and her dad walk up to the church, this makes for a great set of photographs. If the limo driver is in the scene the photographs lose their impact.

Once in the church, the driver will assist the Bride in moving off to the side or into a side room (if available). The driver should then stay in the back of the church and remain as unobtrusive as possible. At the time of the processional, the driver can assist in securing and anchoring the runner.

The photographer and people associated with the church, should be in the back of the church to provide some last minute direction prior to the procession. This is not the role of the limo driver.

When the processional starts, it will be the job of the driver to assist the Bride in assuring that her train is fully extended and spread as she prepares to walk down the aisle. If the wedding is being videotaped, it might be helpful for the driver to close the doors to the church to minimize background lighting

problems for the videographer. The videographer might talk to the driver about this duty.

After the service, there might be a reception line at the church. At this point, the Maid of Honor should be providing assistance to the Bride, i.e. carrying her train. There will usually be two glasses and a bottle of champagne in the limo. The toast can be held outside or inside the car, depending on the photographer and videographer. If the wedding is during the hotter summer months, the Bride should make arrangements for some cold non-alcoholic drinks to be available in the limo. The Bride and Groom might both find themselves being terribly uncomfortable because of the hot weather and require non-alcoholic refreshments as well

If it is a beautiful day and the grounds of the church are colorful, the photographer might want to get photographs both in the church and on the church grounds. This could be all of the formal poses. As a rule, it is best if the photographer gets the formal photos as soon as possible. The limo service should schedule with this in mind.

Many photographers like to take the Bride and Groom back into the church for photographs of the Bride and Groom in a religious setting. If this session only involves the Bride and Groom, it should be scheduled into the days activities. These activities shouldn't require more than 20 minutes.

These activities should have been discussed with the Bride and the schedule should allow for them.

In ten consecutive weddings, where Bride's were photographed on location at the church, the drivers approached me as well as the parents of the Bride. Most drivers do not like these sessions and will try to cut them short. They will remind you of the schedule, they will tell you that they have another wedding and must leave soon. They will approach the Father of the Bride and tell him their is a scheduling concern.

If the Bride wants the option of being photographed at the church or on the way to the reception hall, maybe at a park, then she must work this into the schedule and discuss the schedule with the limo company. The Father of the Bride must be familiar with these details.

If the Bride would like to be photographed in the church after the service or on church grounds, then she should have discussed this with the clergy. Many clergy want to be able to leave immediately after the service and the last guest has walked out the doors.

If there is another event scheduled at the church within thirty minutes of the end of her wedding, then she should not plan on photographs after the service.

18. Photography

It is customary for the photographer to start at the Bride's house. The photographer usually budgets an hour for this activity and tries to be at the church at least fifteen minutes before the service to photograph the ushers, Groom, Best Man and the Groom's parents.

At the Bride's house, the photographer will usually want to focus on candid; full length, three-quarters and full portrait photographs of the Bride. These might include something in the bedroom, i.e. putting on the garter, getting ready in front of a mirror, being attended to by mother or Maid of Honor. Additional photographs should show the Bride with mother and father; Bride with mother; Bride with father; mother; father; Bride with Maid of Honor (posed); Bride with Bridesmaids; and Bride with family (brothers and sisters). Two Photographs: Bride leaving the house with her father holding the door, and the Bride being assisted into the car by dad can be set up and taken before the photographer leaves. At the church, there will be a variety of candid, specifically of ushers; Groom and best man; Groom and his family.

If the photographer starts at the Bride's house and is not local to the area, it might be a good idea if the photographer follows the limo to the church. Traffic patterns in urban areas can be unpredictable and local drivers know all the shortcuts. If you do find yourself in traffic, it isn't that bad if you arrive late with the Bride.

The photographer will need to talk with the mothers and check on the presence of grandparents. He should queue the mothers and grandmothers to wait for him so that he can get a photograph of them being escorted to their seats. The photographer should also check with the ushers to see who will be notifying the organist to start the processional. The processional actually starts with the seating of the mothers, so the photographer should request that this person notify him when the processional is about to start.

The photographer should know the style of the processional (single or double file and if the Bride will be escorted by Dad or Dad and Mother. He should also know who the family members are in the processional, so that he can be sure to photograph them. The photographer will also need to check with the priest or minister to see if there are any restrictions. Likewise, the Bride needs to be aware of these restrictions well before her wedding day.

Just before the processional, the photographer will want to remind the Bridesmaids of how they should carry their flowers and the importance of spacing (ten rows minimum). The photographer should also remind the Bride

and her dad that she should wait until the aisle is clear before she starts down the aisle.

The photographer will want to photograph the processional, the exchange of rings, the kiss, and the recessional. For the recessional, the photographer might pose the couple at the door, and then assist the wedding party in setting up and organizing the receiving line.

The photographer needs to know the duration of the service, where the Bride and Groom will be standing during the service and if they will be facing the guests during the exchange of vows and exchange of rings. The photographer also needs to know if there will be a lighting of a candle or any other activities of importance during the service.

The photography session after the wedding might include a photograph in the church. Some ministers and priests restrict this to an actual re-enactment of the service and will not allow you to pose the Bride and Groom in the aisle.

The formal photographs, if possible, should be posed taking advantage of a variety of settings-outside, if possible. These photographs should consist of the Bride and Groom with ushers and Bridesmaids; Groom with ushers; Bride with ushers; Groom with Bridesmaids; Bride and Groom with the Best Man and Maid of Honor. At this point, the ushers and Bridesmaids are through. The Groom and Bride can now be photographed with each set of parents. Now the Groom can be photographed with his parents and his parents can be photographed separately. Now take some photographs of special family members, including Grandparents, and finally some of the Bride and Groom.

If at all possible, you might like to get the entire wedding party together at the Bride's house before the wedding. All of the formal photography can be completed before the service, so that after the service you can proceed straight to the reception. Many Brides do not like this option because they do not want the Groom to see them before the service, but in some instances, this practice makes the day's schedule easier for everyone.

For all of the posed photographs it is important that the Bride be positioned such that she is photographed at an angle and turning at the waist into the camera. This will have a thinning effect and give an angle to the upper body which will add energy to the photographs. The women should have their flowers for every posed photograph. The bouquets should be smaller and have pastel colors. The bouquets should be held low (at the waist) and care should be taken with each person's stance. The back foot should be at a 45 degree angle to the front foot and the weight should be on the back foot. If the women are seated, their legs should always be crossed (at the ankles). Men should

always have the front hand in their pants pocket and be turned into the camera at an angle to show some of their shirt. These tips will enhance every photograph.

During the reception the photographer will be taking candid pictures. These will be of the dances, the toast, the cake-cutting activity, scenes of the party, and then going-away scenes. Both the photographer and videographer will be working hard through out the day. By the time the DJ introduces the wedding party, the photographer will have already worked almost four hours. For that reason, a carefully arranged schedule that has been agreed upon by the Bridal Party is crucial for assuring that all the special memories of the day are preserved on film.

19. Weddings at Reception Halls

Before the day of the wedding, the DJ (Coordinator) should know:

1. The size of the wedding party
2. The number of ushers and Bridesmaids
3. The number of children in the wedding party (ring bearers/flower girls, sometimes referred to as little Bride's (in Spanish weddings) or junior Bridesmaids).
4. The arrival time of the Bride and bridal party. Will they be on site or will they be arriving at the hall just before the procession.
5. Issues regarding divorced parents. (You should know if both sets of parents are still married.)
6. The name (and correct pronunciation) of the celebrant. Is this person a Justice of the Peace, Minister, Priest, or Rabbi?
7. The time of the wedding rehearsal, if there is one.
8. The style of the processional.
9. The time that will be required for the wedding ceremony.
10. The music for the ceremony. Is there any special music that the Bride would like for the ceremony?
11. Is the ceremony going to be held in the same room as the wedding reception or will it be in a separate room?

Weddings at reception halls can vary dramatically. At a function hall which specializes in weddings, you might find the room captain (function hall coordinator, banquet facility manager) well organized and coordinating the entire affair. Then, your main concern will be to move your equipment in and set up. If the ceremony is going to be in a room separate from the main room, then you might have to be prepared to provide music for the ceremony that will require a separate sound system (possibly a powered speaker and portable tape player or a large boom box i.e. BOSE Soundwave System). Since musical tastes vary widely, the couple might have hired a two-or three-piece classical group to provide background music for the ceremony.

You will need to determine your role in assisting with the ceremony, particularly if the person in charge has not arranged all the details. Always check with the room captain to review the format for the procession. Will it be just the Maid of Honor preceding the Bride, or will there be ushers, Bridesmaids, ring bearers and flower girls? If it is a full processional with ushers and flower girls, will the processional be single file or double file?

In a formal wedding, the mothers are the last ones to be seated. This is usually on cue to a specific song. The bridal party would dispatch one of the ushers to notify the organist, or the DJ, that the processional is about to start. The processional actually begins with that one introductory song, which is the cue for seating the mothers and extending the runner.

When a pre-chosen song is played, the mother of the Groom would then be escorted to her seat by her son (if he is in the wedding party) or the head usher, with her husband following. The Mother of the Bride would be escorted to her seat immediately before the processional starts.

Once the mothers are seated, the runner would be extended. Usually, two ushers have been designated for this job, and after the runner is extended, the processional will start. The procession might require two songs: One song would be for the Bridesmaids and the other would be for the Bride and her father. As a courtesy, you should talk with the Justice of the Peace or clergyman to let him/her know what you will be playing. You should also review your understanding of the order of the processional, i.e. mothers seated, runner extended, music for the procession, type of procession (single file).

The processional at a formal church service would include the seating of the mothers, extension of a runner, and procession of ushers and Bridesmaids. At a hall, you might not have any of this. Instead the Groom and Best Man might wait in a designated area where the ceremony is to be performed, and the Bride would be escorted to that location by her father.

JPs usually conduct short ceremonies and provide less direction. On the other hand, ministers or clergy are usually actively involved in defining the procedure. Therefore, you need to check with the Minister/JP to determine the approximate length of the service and to inform him/her of the music selection. Ask for a signal to let you know when the service is coming to an end.

Even in a full function facility, you might run into situations where the room captain is inexperienced, so that you will need to become much more involved. Be ready to handle this task. This would mean that you might have to give the Groom instructions on procedure and where he should be standing for the processional (usually handled by a minister). Be prepared to give the ushers instructions on seating the guests, as well as on their other duties. You might also have to go back to where the wedding party is assembled to deliver last minute instructions for the bridal party just before the processional.

Last minute instructions are normally delivered by the room captain. You might also find the photographer taking an active role in setting up for the processional. Meet with all of these people as soon as you can and determine the extent of your involvement. If their plans are already made, then do not override them, but be available to help. For weddings at halls, assistance might be delivered by an experienced staff member of the catering service. Everybody has his own idea as to how to organize and manage things, so talk with these people and try to determine their preferences.

20. Weddings at halls and legion posts: Less formal events.

At halls and legion posts, it is common to be in a situation with seating at round tables (with no special seating for the ceremony). This is a less formal affair, usually for weddings with no Bridesmaids or ushers. In these cases, the Bride and Groom might both be at the hall, in the main room, waiting for the commencement of the ceremony. Also, there might not be a procession where the Bride and Groom stand before the Minister/JP. With these smaller, less formal weddings, you might have the guests stand in a circle around the Bride and Groom.

Usually, there is a processional. The Bride would be preceded by one attendant and escorted into the room by her father. The MC or DJ will meet with all the parties to let them know the procedure you will be following. The Bride and her party need to know where they will make their entrance when you play the processional music.

The Groom and the Best Man will have to know where they will be standing. On cue, usually with a nod from the JP, you will ask people to take their seats:

For the DJ or MC:

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time I would like to introduce our justice of the peace, the honorable _____. He/she will be conducting the wedding ceremony. At this time, could I ask everyone to please take their seats; the wedding ceremony is about to commence. (Please take your seat.)

This also could be done much less obtrusively, by simply walking up to people or groups of people, asking them to take their seats and telling them that the ceremony is about to start.

You should have the father, or a male escort, accompany the Bride to the area set up for the ceremony. Also someone should have explained the procedure to the Groom and Best Man, as well as to the Maid of Honor, the Bride, and her escort.

For these informal weddings in an open room with seating at tables, it is common to **not** have the seating of the mothers just before the ceremony.

You will need to check with the photographer to decide if he/she will be escorting the wedding party out of the hall after the service and to decide how much time they will need before you announce the Bride and Groom's return to the hall. When the Bride and Groom are ready, you will announce their re-entrance, followed by the announcement of the first dance.

If it is a smaller hall, you might announce the Best Man and Maid of Honor, and then the Bride and Groom. They might then go into a receiving line (preferred) or directly into the first dance. If they do not go into a receiving line, then the Bride and Groom should make a point of visiting all the tables to welcome their guests. This should be done during the meal.

For this style of weddings you have to know the logistics. Is there only one main room or are there several attached rooms? Where will the ceremony be held? Where will the guests be eating? Will there be a meal or is it simply hors d'oeuvres? If a meal, will it be buffet style or will it be served family style (plates of food are put on the table and people serve themselves)?

How will the seating be arranged for the ceremony? Will it be auditorium style or will people be seated at round tables?

After the service, will the Bride and Groom go to another area for photographs?

If the seating is auditorium style and the ceremony and reception are in the same room, you will have to know who will be rearranging the seating after the ceremony and the DJ or hall staff will have to usher the guests to another area of the hall so that the seating can be re-arranged.

This could be accomplished by announcing to the guests that there will be a rearrangement of the seating. Ask them to move to the area of the bar for refreshments while the seating is being rearranged.

At these halls, you will usually find yourself in one main room and there will be some confusion if you do not talk to the Bride and Groom about what will be happening and when. This discussion should take place well before the wedding day.

21. More Formal Hall Weddings:

With hall weddings there are usually fewer people in the wedding party. If there are no ushers or Bridesmaids, you can expect the hall staff to be involved with the seating of guests.

At the more exclusive halls, the room captain (banquet coordinator) is usually well organized and has a very specific program. You will want to meet with this person well in advance. For that reason, you need to know and understand the

program he/she will be using. Don't be afraid to offer suggestions and to talk with whomever is in charge about the proposed program.

The DJ should be early; you have to be on site, talk with the room captain (banquet coordinator) and set up at least half an hour before the guests start arriving. When you are discussing the introduction of the wedding party, talk about the way you would like to handle this activity. Have your agenda, your wedding protocol sheet and your script for the announcements available.

Tips on assisting the wedding party prior to the ceremony:

The men should be wearing boutonnieres that were provided for them, and these should be pinned on as soon as the flowers arrive.

If the wedding is at the hall, the Bride and Maid of Honor might arrive carrying their flowers and bouquets. If the flowers are long stemmed roses, they might have the plastic vials still attached to the stalks, and these vials should be removed. Let them know that this should be done, as it will make for better photographs. Since these vials are filled with water, a towel will be needed to dry the stalks.

For wedding ceremonies where there is a more formal seating arrangement (auditorium style), you want to seat the guests on their arrival, which helps to minimize the number of people wandering around. Sometimes the Bride will become very emotional just prior to the processional and the fewer people wandering around and the less activity will help her maintain her composure. It will also minimize any confusion, generate a more formal atmosphere, and help everyone associated with the wedding do his job better.

22. Ethnic Weddings

During the consultation you should have determined the ethnicity of your couple. This may be an important ingredient in helping you to service your guests at the reception party. I list some music standards for various ethnic groups. If you are dealing with Syrians, Armenians or an ethnicity you are not familiar with, do not worry. The reason why the Bride and Groom hired you is because they want a strong American flavor to the music being played at their wedding. If they really wanted a very ethnic wedding they would have hired a Greek or Syrian DJ and their guests would only hear Greek or Syrian music all night. For ethnic weddings that your not familiar with, simply ask the Bride and Groom to bring CD's or Tapes and to identify the songs they would like you to play. You only have to play a few of these songs through the evening and you might only play them on request with someone telling you when you should play a specific song.

If you are playing off of an ethnic band then you don't want to play any ethnic music. The band will cover the ethnic music, you cover the standards and top 40.

Jewish - Look at the Bobby Morganstern Jewish CD.
Italian - Tarantella, Lazy Mary - Lou Monte, Always You - Lou Monte
Irish - When Irish Eyes are Smiling - Charlie Taylor CD
The Irish Wedding Song (A great song) - Nole Henry
One Day at a Time - Richie O'Shay
Greek - Never On Sunday
Zorba
Spanish - Salsa, Meringue's

You will find complete lists of music and links to wedding resources on my website at www.djchrisbaker.com.

23. Outdoor Weddings and Receptions

Outdoor weddings pose special problems, so it is important to understand what is going to be happening, where it will be happening, and the timing of these events. You should also know if there will be shade or shelter for the wedding. Will music be required? Will there be the extension of a runner? (Note: runners pose special problems when used outside. They will lift up with the slightest breeze. If there is any photography to be taken on the runner, the creases will “jump out” in the photographs.) Only when you understand the setting, will you be able to identify the issues you must confront.

If there is seating for an outside ceremony, are there enough seats for everyone. Be sure to reserve the front row of seats for parents and elderly family members. When announcing the start of the ceremony, you might want to announce that the front row is reserved for family members. If seating is limited, ask the younger people to stand.

If the wedding is unpretentious-no music, no formal processional, and simply an exchange of vows-then there will not be as many details to attend to. However, if there are a number of guests, formal seating, and music with a formal processional, then your role will dictate your increased involvement, such as music for the DJ or musicians.

For any outdoor wedding, you need a tent, tarp, or sheltered area for the DJ and you have to be careful to ascertain if extension chords are needed, as well as the length of these chords. If there is music, you should also consider a dance floor, **which has to be set up on level ground.**

For outdoor weddings which are catered and for which there are a hundred or more guests, you will usually find help from the caterer, and possibly from the DJ or Band. It is helpful for the DJ and band to know what is expected of them and what will be the role of the caterer. The reception might start with a procession of the wedding party and family from the house to the tent (which is on the grounds) and you should know this.

If the event is at a hall or country club with an attached tent, you will have to get a feel for the logistics. Where is the dance floor? Where will the DJ or Band be situated? Where will the guests be seated to enjoy their meal?

If it is a hot day and the band is situated in the hall, you might find all the guests congregating outside, under the tent. You might find that it is not practical to try to herd the guests into a hot hall for the announcements of the wedding party. Given this situation, skip the announcement and simply have the wedding party go outside and greet groups of people individually and

informally (without fanfare). Then the toast could come earlier in the day, probably before the buffet line is started. The ceremonial dances might be held later in the day, during or after the meal when it is more comfortable to direct your guests into the building where the band or DJ is located.

Wooden dance floors are a must if you expect the guests to dance. If you are trying to use a deck off of the house as the dance floor, then think about the possibility of setting your equipment up offside the deck. Most decks will really bounce when the dancing starts. If you have to set up on the deck, the only other solution is to block off an area near the DJ equipment to isolate and minimize the bounce. If your working with a smaller deck, this will not be an option. Have the customer set up a tent alongside the deck and set up alongside the deck. You can always use a wireless mike and stand on the deck when you have to make announcements.

24. Activities - The Dollar Dance

I have received a number of inquiries concerning the Dollar Dance. I would bring the Bride and Groom out onto the dance floor. I would then announce to our guests that this is a dollar dance and invite the men to form a circle on the dance floor.

The dance would be started with the Bride and Groom together but I would quickly bring her father, brothers, uncles, etc., out onto the floor to dance with her. The change-ups would come quickly, about every 10 to 15 seconds, and we would try to arrange a situation where the Bride dances with all of the men in the circle.

As I call for a change-up, the person dancing with the Bride would go back to the circle. Then I might announce that the person to the right of this person should come out onto the floor.

The key to handling this event is in the announcing. I might say something like this,

“At this time I would like to give all of our men in the audience the opportunity of dancing with our most beautiful Bride. I would like to call our Bride and Groom onto the dance floor, and I would like all of our men to form a circle around them.

Gentlemen, this is a Dollar Dance. This is your one opportunity to dance with our Bride. We will also be asking our Best Man to help us with this event. Yes, If you would like to dance with (Bride’s name) _____, you will have to see our best man, (best man’s name) _____.”

Another option is to include the Groom, so I might invite all the guests to form a circle on the dance floor. I would start by putting the focus on the Bride by calling her Father, Uncle’s, Grandfather, Brothers up to dance with the Bride. Then I might bring the Groom back out with his mother and invite the women to dance with the Groom. Both the Bride and the Groom would be in the same circle, the Bride dancing with the men and the Groom dancing with the women.

One variation of the dollar dance is to simply bring the Bride and Groom onto the floor, announce the dance, and then the men and women get up to dance with the Bride and Groom. Usually a line forms as the guests wait their turn to dance with either the Bride or Groom.

You want to make sure that enough time is allotted to this dance so that everyone who is interested will be able to dance with the Bride or Groom. This might mean playing a second song.

The dollar dance is a great way of personalizing the wedding. This dance is ethnic in origin and is well known to Italian Americans. If the Bride or Groom is Italian, you should mention it during your consultation. However, some Bride's object to the requirement of a dollar to dance with them. One way to avoid this is to make the Best Man part of the event by announcing that anyone who would like to dance with our Bride, must first see our best man.

When you bring the Groom onto the floor you can also ask the Maid of Honor to participate in the same way as the best man. The Maid of Honor can then collect the dollars for a dance with the Groom.

Another option to this dance is to call all the women out onto the floor with the Bride and Groom. You then announce that the Groom will be dancing with all the women. Every 15 seconds you would call another woman to dance with the Groom; this can also be done with the Bride.

The dollar dance is a great activity. I like to use it whenever requested.

I show this in the video; you will notice that it was a fast dance. Using discretion and knowing your couple, you do have the option of playing slow or fast music.

25. Activities - English Toast

It is a British custom for traditional toasts to be done just after finishing the meal. The Best Man leads the first toast and hands off, first to the father of the Groom, then to the Father of the Bride, and so on, until everyone in attendance who chooses has had an opportunity to toast the newlyweds. While this may sound like the perfect recipe for a boring reception, it can liven up a the dinner hour with humorous and tearful memories. The response can be phenomenal and the toasting can last almost 30 minutes.

Will it work in America? When trying this with typical American wedding clients, you must explain how it works in your pre-planning meeting. Then the couple must inform their family and friends about this “new custom,” so everyone comes prepared.

Just as the Bride and Groom are finishing their meal, but before all the guests are done, we briefly explain the procedure, asking the guests to stand and relate a touching or funny memory of the Bride or Groom, or simply offer best wishes. Even if the Best Man has already made the traditional toast, we have him start off. You could also ask the Maid of Honor to begin. Using a wireless microphone, the DJ or MC moves through the room to each person who wants to say a few words, until all have had an opportunity to toast the Bride and Groom. Tips: Certain things will help move this along. Have the Best Man take the microphone through the crowd to help break the ice. If it appears there are fewer people interested in speaking, wrap it up with everyone standing and toasting the bridal couple once more with raised glasses. Now move on with the program.

Information provided by Bob Kramarik of Bobby K Entertainment, Elmira, NY.

26. DJ's and Bands - Setting UP

Upon your arrival at the reception, identify the location for setting up your equipment and immediately get your equipment operational. Upon entry to the building, you might be meeting the room captain. It would be polite and professional to introduce yourself. At any rate, you should check with the room captain about the setup of your sound system and where you should plug in. Hold off on reviewing the agenda until you have your sound system and equipment set up first.

Conversation with the room captain or hall staff:

My name is (DJ) _____ . I am the DJ and Master of Ceremonies for the Smith Wedding.

Stick out your hand, shake hands, and give him/her a business card. He/she will introduce himself/herself. Don't be afraid to repeat the name again. Make a note of that name and address him/her by name for the rest of the day.

(room captain's name) _____ , I am scheduled to be playing at (time) _____ . I understand the reception for the Smith wedding is being held in (the room name) _____. Do you have a location where you would like me to set up?

If you are bumping or running a fogger machine, in addition to your sound system, you might have to be careful about plugging into one circuit box.

I would like to set up my equipment, which will take approximately _____ minutes. I would then like to meet with you to review the agenda for the party. Where will I be able to find you?

You want to use a written agenda. If you appear to be organized and experienced, you will gain the confidence and respect of the staff, and be given free rein to run the program your way.

If the room captain is less experienced, he (or the staff) may immediately defer to the program you are proposing. If you are dealing with an older person who appears to be set in his ways; don't be afraid to tell him how you would like to run the program, but most importantly, do not be challenging-be polite. You might have a chance of winning him over if you are pleasant while being persuasive.

Remember! If you run into any problems they are your problems. Do not bring any problems to the Bride and Groom. You have to resolve all issues so

that the Bride and Groom are never made aware of any problems, especially problems that you might be experiencing with other people. No matter what happens, act as if things are great, everything is wonderful; it is a beautiful day.

It would be OK to let the Bride and Groom know that there has been a change of format. You might say to the Bride and Groom, **“At the request of the room captain, this will be the order of events”**. Then simply run through the new agenda with the couple. If there are any issues regarding the schedule given by the room captain, simply explain that this is the schedule that the room captain has given you. Next, very politely call the room captain over, and, explain that the Bride and Groom would like to review the schedule for the reception. Don't be confrontational or make any negative remarks about the room captain or anyone else. Always be pleasant, polite, and courteous; never show anger, abruptness or displeasure. You will win most arguments with a smile and a pleasant manner.

27. DJ's - Instructions to the Wedding Party for Their Introduction Into the Hall

Setup:

Review Agenda with Room Captain (sometimes referred to as **Banquet Coordinator**)

Review the format for the presentation to the wedding party with the Room Captain. Get his approval. Identify **when** and **where** the members of the wedding party will be assembled prior to their introduction into the room.

Check on the Blessing

Meet with the person who is to deliver the blessing. Make sure he/she is aware that he/she is saying the blessing. Where will this take place? (at the head table, from the DJ's booth, etc.)

Check with Best Man on the Toast

Meet with the Best Man. Make sure that he knows he is going to be giving a toast. Be prepared to offer some suggestions i.e. *(Groom)_____ , I am honored that you have asked me to be your best man. (Bride)_____ , I think (Groom)_____ is the luckiest man in the world to have you as his wife. I want to wish both of you the best that life has to offer and may your love for each other grow as you grow.*

Line Up Music

Have your music lined up, preferably two songs for the introduction, plus the cake-cutting, plus the music for the first dance (If you are going right into the cake-cutting after the introduction. If you are bringing the Bride and Groom into a reception line first, then you want a lively tune playing. This will motivate the crowd to proceed through the reception line more quickly. I would recommend a big band's medley or a long version of "Caribbean Queen."

Paperwork in Order

Have your **Wedding Protocol Sheet** and the **AGENDA** ready and placed on your clipboard. Also put the **Wedding Introduction Form** under these two forms.

A copy of this form can be obtained by visiting www.DjChrisBaker.com A version is available on this website.

28. Reception Lines

The Reception Line is a formality that should not be skipped, and one that is best held sooner rather than later. In many instances the reception line is held at the church.

For large wedding parties, you want to minimize the number of people in the reception line so as to reduce delay. Therefore, the line can be as few people as the mothers of the Bride and Groom, the Bride and Groom, the Maid of Honor and the best man. Usually, though, you will see both parents in the reception line. Only when the parents are divorced do the fathers usually choose to mingle with the guests instead. Sometimes when the reception lines are held at the churches and there is a problem with space, you might only see the Bride and Groom with the Maid of Honor and the best man.

As people come through the reception line, they will often hand the Best Man an envelope with a wedding gift.

If the reception line is at the hall and the guests are having cocktails in a room which is detached from the main room, then you might see the reception line in the hall itself, so that people will go through the line on their way to the main function room.

You also have the option of having the wedding party at the main entrance to the function room. As people come into the room, they will go through the reception line first.

The last option is when guests are already assembled in the main function room, in which case you might have to introduce the wedding party to the assembled guests and directly into a reception line. You, as the DJ or the Band, would find yourself calling guests, by tables, to go through the reception line. After the reception line, you would then have the following options: cake-cutting next, then the first dance, followed by the blessing and the toast.

During this time while people are going through the reception line, the Bridesmaids and ushers might be sitting at the head table. Once everyone has gone through the reception line, you would then make any announcements, i.e. introducing grandparents or people who might have traveled some distance to get to the wedding.

Those announcements might go like this: "*Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to call your attention to a very special person who is with us today, Mrs. Evelyn*

Moses, our Bride's grandmother. Evelyn is ninety-years-young and a great dancer. On the behalf of the Bride and Groom and all of our families, we want to tell you how happy we are to have you with us today. Eveyln, could you please stand? Folks, let's have a big hand for a great lady!"

You might then have the wedding party come out to stand in front of the head table while you introduce the Bride and Groom for the first dance. Half way through the dance, you can then invite the wedding party and the parents to join them on the dance floor. It creates a better appearance if you call the wedding party out by name, as couples, but be careful to pace the announcing of the couples to give the photographer a chance to photograph each couple as they come onto the floor.

Order for the Reception Line:

You will usually see the receiving line set up in the following order:

- Parents of the Bride (Whoever is hosting the party should be first.)
- Parents of the Groom
- Bride and Groom
- Maid of Honor and Best Man
- Bridesmaids and Ushers (Etiquette indicates the ushers should not be in the receiving line.)

It would be more comfortable to have the order of the receiving line as follows:

- Mother of the Bride, Mother of the Groom
- Father of the Bride, Father of the Groom
- Bride and Groom
- Maid of Honor and Best Man

Etiquette would dictate the following order: mother of the Bride, her husband, father of the Groom, mother of the Groom, Bride, Groom, etc.. By pairing the mothers together and fathers together, the parents can introduce their friends to each other, and it makes for a friendlier situation.

Using a remote mike you will be announcing the wedding party to the guests and the reception line. You will need to stay by your console to take care of the music. After you have introduced everyone, you can arrange the parents so that both mothers and fathers are standing together.

You might handle this by saying the following, (addressing the parents of the Bride and Groom):

A more comfortable order for the receiving line would be for the Mother of the Bride and mother of the Groom to be first, and fathers of the Bride and Groom second; this way it will be easier for you to introduce your friends and family to each other. Would you like to use this line-up, or would you prefer to be paired off with your spouses?

Now call the guests by tables.

29. Blessings

The blessing is an important event and should not be arbitrarily skipped. If you have clergy at the reception, then out of courtesy they should be invited to say the blessing. However, you should have checked with the Bride and Groom before the day of their wedding, and you should know if you will be saying the blessing. If they have someone designated to say the blessing you should know who that person is. Before the announcement into the hall, you should have checked with the designated person to make sure they know they will be saying the blessing and to determine where they will be saying the blessing.

30. Toast

A toast should always be delivered after the blessing and before the meal. It is traditional, it sets a mood, and it should always be done.

You want to check with both the Best Man and the Maid of Honor before you introduce the Wedding Party into the hall. Check with the Best Man to make sure that he knows that he will be delivering the toast. You want to let him know that he will be introduced right after the blessing and that he should deliver the toast standing directly behind and to the left of the Groom (if you have a remote microphone).

You should also check with the maid/matron of honor to see if she will be delivering a toast. You want to do this even if you were told that she would not be delivering a toast. Sometimes the Maid of Honor will decide at the last minute to give a toast and, it is better if you know that in advance. I would not be as concerned about the positioning of the Maid of Honor for the delivery, but let her know that you will give her the microphone right after the Best Man delivers his toast.

If you are coordinating a small wedding with a limited number of guests, and it is a small gathering with the Bride and Groom being an older couple-i.e. 30's, 40's, 50's. The Best Man(Groom's son) is very young, then having the Groom's son say the toast would be unrealistic. In this case you may have talked with the Groom and he has told you that there will be no toast, because of the best man's age. Should you end it there? No!!! Look at the people in the hall, introduce yourself to them, and you will spot parents, uncles and aunts. It would be appropriate to talk with the mother of the Groom or an aunt and tell them you would like to have an older male offer a toast. Ask if there is someone she would recommend. She might mention a favorite uncle or a good friend of the Groom's, who has been invited. Discreetly talk with this person and ask if he would like to offer a toast. Right after the blessing make the announcement and have this person offer the toast. It will be appropriate, and everyone will appreciate the fact that you did it.

I was asked by a DJ (who bought my video) about a situation where he was told that the toast was delivered at the wedding rehearsal dinner. Therefore, there did not have to be any toast at the wedding. Absolutely not! The toast should always be offered at the reception. It is fine to deliver a toast at the rehearsal party, but the toast should absolutely be delivered at the reception as well.

When you are introducing the best man, it is always a good idea to interject some humor to relax the speaker. Don't be afraid to say that the Best Man has been practicing all week.

When you announce the Best Man use a leading statement like, ***"I have the pleasure of introducing our best man _____ . Please direct your attention to _____ as he leads us in a toast to our Bride and Groom.***

31. CUTTING OF THE CAKE

There is usually a cutting-of-the-cake at the reception, but sometimes this is done with little or no fanfare. In that case, it often happens during the meal, with no notice or attention being focused on the Bride and Groom. The music in the background is usually soft. This no-fanfare approach to the cake-cutting activity is more common at your very formal weddings and is always coordinated with the DJ or band

However, if this activity is to be done ceremoniously (with fanfare), then you want to do everything possible to avoid a messy scene and not encourage the possibility of an inappropriate response (like smashing).

You can set up the cake with a plate, a knife, two forks, and a napkin. When you are ready to bring the Bride and Groom to the site for the cake-cutting, you should mention to them that they should use the forks, as it makes for a great picture. (You can't smash someone if your feeding them with a fork.)

Tips:

1. You want to make sure that a knife, napkin, and plate are behind the cake (forks are a good idea).
2. You want to talk with the Bride and Groom before you start. Let them know that they will cut the cake, feed each other, give each other a kiss, and that the Bride will always go first.
3. If you are playing a lyrical version of the "Bride Cuts the Cake," then you should let the Bride and Groom know that the lyrics will move quickly.
4. Just before this activity, you may want to make sure that the flowers of the **Bride** and **Maid of Honor** are placed on the table, in front of the cake to dress up the scene.
5. The Groom will be inclined to step forward with the Bride standing behind him, but you really want the Bride to be standing in front of the Groom. The importance should be on photographing the bridal **gown** rather than the Groom's **tuxedo**.

32. Parents' Dances

The Father of the Bride and mother of the Groom are usually looking forward to these dances. However, the Bride and Groom might be a little nervous and ask you to shorten their dances or you might be requested to combine the dances into one song.

Remember who is hosting this affair. It's not a bad idea to let Dad know that the Bride requested that you cut the dance short. If he has any objection, ask him how he would like you to handle this and pay attention to the father's response. If it appears that he would like to have a full dance with his daughter, then consider the possibility of allowing him to do so.

If the Bride does not have a father, you might want to think about having the Bride dance with a Grandfather and /or brothers and /or uncles. Preferably all of them; it will make for a great scene.

It is also appropriate to have a single dance for both the Bride and her father, along with the Groom and his mother. The Bride and her father would be announced first. Approximately, half-way through the dance, the Groom and his mother would be announced, so that both couples would share the floor. “Unforgettable” by Nat or Natalie (King) Cole or “Through the Years” by Kenny Rogers are good songs for this occasion.

The DJ should let the photographer and videographer know what the schedule is for the day, and to give them some advance notice for preparation before the next event.

The tips that I have given you concerning the dressing of scenes (i.e. putting flowers in front of the cake for the cake-cutting), are tips that might be especially helpful at a lower budget wedding, in a smaller reception hall. Professional photographers should know and be aware of these tips.

Garter and Bouquet

Setup:

1. The DJ should check with the photographer and videographer to make sure they are ready.
2. Check with the Bride and Groom. (Make sure their parents are also consulted.)
3. Talk to the ushers to make sure they are prepared and understand their duties.
4. Get your music ready. (There are a lot of transitions.)

The routine is:

- 1. Call the single women to the dance floor.**
- 2. Have the Bride throw the bouquet to the single women.**
- 3. Have the Groom remove the garter from the Bride’s leg.**
- 4. Bring the single men onto the dance floor.**
- 5. Have the Groom throw the garter to the men on the floor.**
- 6. Bring the couple together for a photograph and for the start of the next dance.**

34. Last Dance

The Bride and Groom should be sent to change, at approximately 45 minutes before the end of the night. The last dance will take about three minutes, but the Bride and Groom’s “good-byes” to their families and friends will easily take at least ten minutes. Try to complete this scene about five to ten minutes before the end of the night.

To do this, the DJ should call the guests to form a big circle on the dance floor. Then the DJ will announce the Bride and Groom. They will go directly into the circle while the DJ plays the song they had selected for their last dance. At the end of this song, the DJ will segue into an upbeat song “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now,” McFadden & Whitehead, while calling for the Bride and Groom to say “good-bye” to everyone.

Introduce Couple Into the Hall (by the DJ)

“I would like to introduce _____ and _____, for their last dance of the evening. Let’s give them a big hand!”

This is a song they selected for their going-away. It’s called (title of song) _____ and it was selected by (first names) _____ and _____ for their last dance.

Break-Off on the Dance Floor and Say “Good-bye” to Friends

At the end of the song it would work to simply do a sign off, so that the Bride and Groom will naturally move to say “good-bye” to all their friends, but this format is weaker than what I would propose.

Call to the Bride and Groom!

“At this time, we would like to have our Bride and Groom break off and go around the circle, thanking their friends and relatives for being with them on their wedding day, helping to make this the special day that it is.

At this time I would play, **“Ain’t No Stopping Us Now,” by McFadden and Whitehead.**

If you think the situation calls for a send-off (where the bridal couple leaves the circle and exits the building,) then I would play something with punch:

“Ladies and Gentlemen, let’s give our Bride and Groom a big send off.”
Now call for applause while playing “YMCA.”

Sign Off

On the behalf of _____ and _____, (your name), thank you all for making their wedding reception one that they will always cherish. It’s been a great day, you are a super group, take care and drive safely!

Toast

Setup for the DJ:

You should have checked with the Best Man to make sure he knows he will be delivering a toast. This should have happened prior to the introduction of the wedding party to the guests. You should have also checked with the maid/matron of honor prior to the announcements to see if she would be offering a toast to the couple.

You will have everyone stand with the Bride and Groom sitting.

If we could all raise our toast glasses and join our Best Man in a toast to our Bride and Groom. I would now like to introduce our Best Man (name)_____ who will lead us in a toast to our Bride and Groom.

It is always good to give the Best Man an example of a toast. This would have been done at an earlier time. Here is one you could offer:

(Groom)_____, I am honored that you have asked me to be your best man. (Bride)_____, I think (Groom)_____ is the luckiest man in the world to have you for his wife. I want to wish both of you the best that life has to offer, and may your love for each other grow as you grow.

With all toasts, remember the three S's. Be Short, Be Sweet, Be Seated.

I would always recommend that the best man start by thanking the Groom for the Honor of being the Best Man. Always then congratulate him on his choice of a wife and then offer a simple toast.

Recommendations for Music

Can be obtained by visiting www.DjChrisBaker.com web site.

If you are new to the business as a DJ, Videographer or Photographer, you might want to consider the purchase of the complete package, "The DJ's Guide to Running Weddings". The cost is \$95 and can be obtained by contacting Chris Baker.