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## A Guide to What Happens During a Wedding Reception

You've done the hard work, now it is time to party! Here's a guide to what typically happens at wedding receptions, including seated dinners, cocktails only, and brunches.

### A 4 hour wedding reception with cocktail hour and seated dinner

**Cocktail Hour** You can take pictures during this time, mingle with the guests, or just enjoy a little time to yourselves! Most people use this time to take formal photographs.

**Dinner** An announcement should be made that dinner is starting. Guests move to the room where dinner will be served and are seated.

#### **Bridal Party Announced**

#### **Couple Announced**

**Welcome** Typically the bride's father welcomes everyone to the wedding reception and thanks them for coming.

**First Dance** DJ announces the couple. They can dance the entire song by themselves, or have the DJ invite the rest of the bridal party up for the second half of the song.

**Dancing Begins** for all the guests

**Cake Cutting** Cake served with coffee and/or champagne

**Bride and Groom Thanks** Although not required, it is very nice for the couple to say thank you to everyone, and especially to their parents.

**Toast by the Best Man** Although not required, it is very nice for the Best Man to give a toast to the Bride & Groom.

#### **Father/Daughter and Mother/Son Dances**

**Optional: Couples Dance Honoring years of marriage. 5 or less, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, 25 years, 30 years 40, 50, ect.**

**Dancing Continues** Some older guests will leave after cake is served so be sure that you've had a chance to visit with them beforehand.

**Bouquet Toss and/or Garter Toss.** You do both, typically the people who caught them dance together

**Last Dance** The DJ invites everyone to the floor for a last dance together. Choose a fun and upbeat song so that everything ends on a high note.

**Farewell** Have the DJ ask everyone to the front steps so they can send you off in style!

## 1. Guests Arrive at the Reception

As guests arrive to the reception site after the ceremony, arrange to have the bar opened so that they can have cocktails and other refreshments as they wait for the wedding party to arrive. If you will be taking many pictures after the ceremony consider having hors d'oeuvres for the guests to munch on until dinner is served. Also you may want to have some soft music playing in the background to help set the mood.

## 2. Announcement of Wedding Party

After the wedding party arrives to the reception site the DJ or emcee will announce them as they make their entrance into the room. The wedding party should line up in order outside of the entrance to the reception room. Traditional order is the groom's parents, bride's parents, flower girl and ring bearer, bridesmaids escorted by ushers, maid of honor escorted by best man, and finally the bride & groom.

## 3. Champagne Toasts

Make sure that the toasting is done at a time when your guests are at their seats. If you are serving champagne for the toasts, allow time for servers to pass out the champagne before the toast. The first toast is proposed by the best man and may be followed by toasts from the maid of honor, other relatives, friends or the bride and/or groom. The DJ or emcee should get the guests attention and introduce the best man when it is time for the first toast. For more information about toasting at the reception, [click here](#).

## 4. The Blessing

Before dinner is to be served the DJ or emcee can announce that everyone should take their seats for dinner. Then he should introduce the officiant or other designated person who will say the blessing.

## 5. Dinner is Served

The bride, groom and wedding party are the first people served for dinner. In the case of a buffet, arrange to have someone dismiss the guest tables one by one to avoid long lines and general disorder.

## 6. Cut & Serve the Cake

After dinner, the bride and groom cut their wedding cake together hand over hand and feed each other the first piece. (Play nice please, don't smash the cake into each other's face!) Then the rest of the cake is cut and served to the guests.

## 7. The Bride and Groom's First Dance

The first dance at the reception is always reserved for the newlyweds, to mark their first dance as husband and wife. Some couples choose to have this dance immediately after their arrival and announcement to the reception, while others choose to dance after dinner. The timing of the dance is not as important as the sentiment! Choose a song that has lots of meaning for the both of you and this will be one dance you will never forget!

## 8. Other Special Dances

After the newlywed's first dance many couples choose to honor their parents, grandparents, and wedding party with special spotlight dances. Traditionally these special dances are kicked off with the bride dancing with her father, followed by the groom with his mother and then a dance with the bride & groom, parents, grandparents, and the entire wedding party announced one by one. Of course these dances are all optional and can be adjusted according to personal preference. For example, you may have the bride dance with her stepfather or delete the wedding party dance if you have too many attendants. After the completion of these special dances, the party begins and guests are invited to join the wedding party on the dance floor.

## 9. Bouquet & Garter Toss

The bouquet and garter toss are fun to do after the guests have danced for a few songs, the crowd is loose and the party is starting to heat up. The bride tosses her bouquet to a group of single women and the groom removes the bride's garter and tosses it to a group of single men. Then it is said that the person who catches the bouquet or garter will be the next bride or groom. The bouquet and garter tosses are completely optional and nowadays many couples are choosing to drop them from their reception. Nonetheless the tradition is still very popular and always provides lots of entertainment and laughs for all.

## 10. Bride & Groom's Last Dance

If the bride and groom will be leaving before the end of the reception then this can be spotlight dance, otherwise the bride, groom and all the remaining guests can boogie down together to the last song of the night.

Remember, this is just a suggested sequence of events and you can choose to customize your own wedding day anyway you like. The way that everyone else does it is not necessarily what's best for your reception.

Work with your caterer, DJ and reception site manager to determine the best order of events, create a schedule, and iron out all of the details. You may also want to print out itineraries for your parents and wedding party to make sure that everyone knows where they need to be for dances, pictures, special announcements, etc.