

10 DJ Tips to Energize Your Wedding Reception

At a fun-filled, smooth-flowing wedding reception, there is a certain energy that develops and intensifies as your guests experience the facility you've selected, the menu you've planned and the entertainment you've chosen. Phoenix DJ Billy James offers ten tips to energize your wedding reception.

1. Dim the lights when it's time for dancing. Soft lighting during dinner creates a more comfortable atmosphere. Dimming the lights after dinner will motivate your guests to dance. Determine the desired lighting levels for dinner and dancing when you meet with your reception facility's coordinator. Consider light levels that will compliment any candles you plan to use. Ask that your lighting preferences be included in your contract with the facility.

2. Don't let photographs dominate your day. Select a photographer who has the professional skill to capture your special moments efficiently and unobtrusively. Don't be held hostage at your own reception by a photographer who will dominate your time with lengthy photo sessions while your guests become restless. Choose a video company willing to use comfortable lighting unless you want your guests to be squinting and covering their eyes throughout the reception.

3. Place your DJ next to the dance floor and avoid sharing facilities. Avoid seating guests between your DJ and the dance floor. Placing your DJ adjacent to the dance floor maximizes your DJ's ability to control the sound and interact with the dancers. Be wary of situations where the dance floor is in the next room or access is not convenient for your guests. Also, avoid facilities where you must share an area with restaurant diners or other parties. Such arrangements almost always generate requests to lower the volume, which will diminish the energy of your reception.

4. Make sure your DJ has a reception planning form. Traditional reception events such as the grand entrance, toast, special dances and the bouquet/garter toss must be carefully coordinated. A professional wedding DJ should have a comprehensive reception planning form with suggested music. If the DJ you're considering doesn't have one, find a DJ who does.

5. Invest quality time in planning your Grand Entrance. The Grand Entrance sets the tone and establishes the energy for the entire reception. Work closely with your DJ and Catering Director to stage a Grand Entrance that reflects your style and personality. Decide who will participate, where they will assemble and in what order, where they will go after being introduced. Clarify pronunciation of names, determine appropriate introductions for blended families and, of course, select the perfect music.

6. Do the formal toast immediately after the Grand Entrance. At no other time during the reception will your guests be more attentive and focused. Your DJ should provide a wireless microphone to allow the toast to be given by the best man directly from the head table. Decide if you want others, such as parents or friends, to propose additional toasts. Let your Catering Director know when you plan the toast to allow for timely pouring of the chosen beverage. Also, consider welcoming your guests following the toast. Your guests are still attentive and focused on you and the microphone is available. This is an excellent but often overlooked opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings and thank your guests for attending.

7. The First Dance - don't wait forever to do it and don't do it forever. One of the special moments of the reception is the bride and groom's first dance. Having your first dance after the grand entrance, or right after dinner, is a great way to start the party. Don't delay your first

dance to visit with your guests. Doing so will deflate the energy of your reception. You've selected your favorite ballad, but that five-minute song may seem like an eternity both to you and your guests. Have your DJ fade out the song at a designated time if it lasts more than a few minutes. All of this applies as well to the newlyweds' dances with their parents.

8. Don't try to select every song your DJ will play. Choose the song for your first dance and other songs for specific reception events. Tell your DJ what artists and styles of music to feature or avoid, but don't micro-manage your DJ's performance. A professional wedding DJ can 'read the crowd' and knows what to play and when to play it to keep the party going. More importantly, your DJ knows which requests clear the dance floor. You're paying for your DJ's knowledge and experience. Take advantage of it.

9. Consider using party props to entertain and motivate your guests. A few inflatable guitars or colorful maracas have an amazing way of energizing your guests. Doing the YMCA with all the right hats is always a crowd pleaser and provides for great photo opportunities. Professional DJ's can provide party props at reasonable expense.

10. Don't rule out the Macarena! Think twice before you reject those so-called 'cheesy' group dances like the Macarena, Chicken Dance and YMCA. These dances may be the only opportunity some of your guests will have to get on the dance floor and have some fun. You don't have to do the Hokey Pokey right after your first dance, but let your DJ keep all options open. These group dances are frequently requested by your guests and often create reception highlights and priceless photos.