



What Is Your Perfect Wedding Timeline...

Your entire wedding (once guests arrive) normally lasts only 4-5 hours including your ceremony and reception, and there are a lot of “moments” to fit in during that time. What timeline works best for you that also keeps your guests engaged and the party moving? Check out some of the most popular options below. Then print out our worksheet to fill out your own. This is a great tool to give to all your vendors to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Things to Consider...

How long do you have the venue rented for? What time are you and your vendors allowed to arrive, what time do you have to be out by? Make sure you allow yourself plenty of time for cleaning and packing your items up.

Guests Arrive: Normally guests start arriving 30 minutes prior to the ceremony.

(TIP: Make sure your guests know exactly where to go upon arrival. Some immediately start looking for the bride and groom while they're trying to get ready, and others head straight to the reception area to find their seat and put their personal belongings down. If you don't want your guests in a certain area make sure the staff are aware, and lock the doors.)

Wedding Ceremony: Normally lasts between 15 & 30 minutes total unless there are religious elements and traditions included such as communion.

(TIP: Guests are inevitably going to arrive late. Whether it's bad planning on their part, unexpected traffic, or parking issues, be prepared to start a little late to make sure everyone is seated BEFORE you head down the aisle.)

What Happens After Your Ceremony?

Once you're married, YAY!! You'll most likely start the process of taking several photos. This usually lasts an hour or longer unless you had some taken before the ceremony such as your bridal party photos. While you're taking photos make sure you have something to keep your guests occupied and engaged.

Cocktail Hour: If you're taking pictures directly after the ceremony, having a cocktail hour before your dinner is served is a great option. Consider serving some food, open the bar and provide plenty of ways for your guests to stay occupied.

(TIP: Depending on your venue, consider setting up lawn games, pictures for your guests to look at, toys or coloring books for the kids, a photo booth, etc. to keep them entertained while you're posing for the perfect pics.)



Your Reception Begins...

The reception normally starts about an hour after the ceremony ends and lasts 3-4 hours. This will include dinner (if you're having a meal), the traditional dances, cake cutting, bouquet toss, garter, and much more. Check out the different options below for how to schedule everything within that time frame.

Listed below are the most traditional elements of a wedding. Feel free to add in your personal traditions, or eliminate what you're not interested in.

OPTION 1 - Start Time 4:00 PM start time, five (5) hour event time (example)

- 4:00 PM - Wedding ceremony begins
- 4:30 PM - Cocktail Hour
- 5:30 PM - Grand Entrance - Introduction of wedding party and the Bride & Groom
- 5:35 PM - Welcome Speech or Prayer - Father of the Bride, Minister, other Honored Guest, or Bride & Groom
- 5:40 PM - Dinner is served
- 6:40 PM - Toasts
- 6:50 PM - First Dance
- 6:55 PM - Father & Daughter Dance
- 7:00 PM - Mother & Son Dance
- 7:05 PM - Open the Dance Floor - Time to Wobble Baby!
- 7:50 PM - Cut the Cake
- 7:55 PM - Bouquet Toss
- 8:00 PM - Garter Toss
- 8:05 PM - Open the Dance Floor
- 9:00 PM - Last Dance/Exit
- 9:05 PM - Clean up

This is my favorite timeline as it spreads out all the traditional elements and keeps your guests engaged and at the venue. If you do everything right at the beginning, oftentimes guests begin to leave if they feel they won't "miss" anything.



OPTION 2 - Start Time 4:00 PM start time, five (5) hour event time (example)

- 4:00 PM - Wedding ceremony begins
- 4:30 PM - Cocktail Hour
- 5:30 PM - Grand Entrance - Introduction of wedding party and the Bride & Groom
- 5:35 PM - Welcome Speech or Prayer - Father of the Bride, Minister, other Honored Guest, or Bride & Groom
- 5:40 PM - First Dance
- 5:45 PM - Father & Daughter Dance
- 5:50 PM - Mother & Son Dance
- 5:55 PM - Dinner is Served
- 6:40 PM - Toasts
- 6:50 PM - Cut the Cake
- 6:55 PM - Open the Dance Floor - Time to Wobble Baby!
- 7:55 PM - Bouquet Toss
- 8:00 PM - Garter Toss
- 8:05 PM - Open the Dance Floor
- 9:00 PM - Last Dance

Some venues allow more than 5 hours of “event” time so feel free to add things in accordingly. *(TIP: Remember that everything will not run exactly on time, but it will be fluid. Let your vendors know if you want them to run your schedule exactly as provided to them, or if you’d rather they check with you to make sure you’re “ready” before announcing dances, cake cutting, etc.)*



Timeline Worksheet

Guest Arrival	Time:	
Ceremony	Time:	
	<i>Wedding Party Processional</i>	<i>Music Selection:</i>
	<i>Bridal Processional</i>	<i>Music Selection:</i>
	<i>Alter Ceremony</i>	<i>Music Selection:</i>
	<i>Recessional</i>	<i>Music Selection:</i>
Cocktail Hour	Time:	
Grand Entrance	Time:	Music Selection:
Bride & Groom:	Time:	Music Selection:
Welcome/Prayer	Time:	Speaker:
Dinner Served Time		
Toasts	Time:	Speakers:
First Dance	Time:	Music Selection:
Father/Bride Dance	Time:	Music Selection:
Mother/SonDance	Time:	Music Selection:
Open Dance Floor	Time:	
Cake Cutting	Time:	Music Selection:
Bouquet Toss	Time:	Music Selection:
Garter Toss	Time:	Music Selection:
Open Dance Floor	Time:	
Last Dance/Exit	Time:	Music Selection:



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Cocktail Hour	Time:	
Grand Entrance	Time:	Music Selection:
Bride & Groom Entrance	Time:	Music Selection:
First Dance	Time:	Music Selection:
Father/Bride Dance	Time:	Music Selection:
Mother/Son Dance	Time:	Music Selection:
Welcome/Prayer	Time:	Speaker:
Dinner Served	Time:	
Toasts	Time:	Speakers:
Cake Cutting	Time:	Music Selection:
Open Dance Floor	Time:	
Bouquet Toss	Time:	Music Selection:
Garter Toss	Time:	Music Selection:
Open Dance Floor	Time:	
Last Dance/Exit	Time:	Music Selection: