



40 Questions to Chose From
for Easily Hiring the Perfect
Wedding DJ!

Questions to Ask a Wedding DJ

These are the 40 most important questions to ask any professional disc jockey you are considering for your wedding, and will help you accurately gauge the professionalism, reliability, and honesty of any wedding DJ you are considering. This list of questions will certainly help you once you reach the DJ interview process, but doing some research beforehand will help you determine whether certain wedding DJs are even worth interviewing. Good luck in your search!

1. Do you offer a written contract?

All of the wedding disc jockeys you interview may not have the same standards of professionalism. A written, legal contract is one of the first indicators of whether a DJ is professional and reliable. Furthermore, a contract establishes the DJ's obligation to the client and outlines what is required for the DJ's success, by outlining his setup requirements and other factors related to his performance. For this reason, a written contract is absolutely essential and any DJ not using a written contract should not, in our opinion, be considered for a wedding reception.

2. Will you be the DJ at our wedding?

Often, the person you speak with is not the person who will be your DJ on your wedding day. This is a very common practice among large agencies. It is absolutely paramount that you have an opportunity to interview the specific DJ that you will be working with and determine whether you feel comfortable with them. You should also expect that the individual DJ's name is specified on your contract – it is the only way you can be guaranteed his or her services at your wedding.

3. May we meet our DJ before we sign a contract?

Many DJ companies will try to get clients to sign a contract without speaking with their DJ first, asking couples to simply trust that whoever the company sends to perform their wedding will be a good fit. In our experience, this is a terrible idea. The only way you'll actually know whether the DJ you'll have at your wedding is to interview them before you sign a contract. Your "gut" feeling is very important in selecting the right disc jockey, and you'll be in a tough spot if you finally speak to your DJ a week before your wedding and realize they aren't going to be a good match.

4. How long will you hold our date for us?

When you contact a professional disc jockey, they should be willing to hold your date for you for a reasonable amount of time in order to give you a chance to meet with them. They should also give you ample time after your meeting to make a decision and give you time to interview other DJs. Some DJs will use pressure sales tactics to "hard close" you at your meeting, offering a special sale that ends that day, or claiming that another couple is meeting with them for the same date – attempting to pressure you to make a decision on the spot. Any DJ that uses these types of tactics is unprofessional and is most likely doing so in order to keep you from meeting other DJs (whom they know you'll like more than you like them). One week is a reasonable amount of time to expect your date to be held for you following an initial meeting.

5. Do you work exclusively for this company?

Most large agencies use independent DJ subcontractors to perform their events. Often, these DJs work for several agencies and also accept bookings directly. A disc jockey, or the agency through whom he is booked, should be able to explain the DJ's obligation to that agency and what will happen if he leaves that agency. Often, there is nothing more than a verbal confirmation between the independent DJ and the agency for each booking — a frequent cause of problems. If you choose a DJ who subcontracts for several agencies and books his own events, you need to be clear on what will happen if he is accidentally double-booked for your wedding date, or what would happen to your event if you contract the DJ through an agency and he decides to skip out on your event to book something else for a higher price. To find out whether your DJ is available independently or through numerous agencies, try performing a web search for their name and the word “DJ”.

6. How long have you been a DJ and how many weddings have you done?

A wedding is such an important occasion, and you don't want your DJ's first wedding to be your own. The number of years someone has been a DJ will give you some indication of their experience level, but some DJs only perform for a few events (and fewer weddings) each year. A DJ with half as many years in the industry may have many times as many weddings under his belt, so you should also ask how many weddings the DJ has done. Also be sure to ask if the DJ has any formal training, either from a DJ company or a DJ school.

7. How many weddings do you do each year?

Just like any other profession, performing for weddings requires one's skills to be in top form. If a DJ performs for only a few weddings per year, they may not be “at the top of their game” by the time your wedding date arrives. Asking how many weddings they do per year will give you an indication of their level of commitment to your type of event.

8. How many other types of events do you do per year?

Different DJs focus on different types of events – some consider themselves a “jack of all trades” and claim expertise in all types of events, and others are specialists. The ratio between the number of weddings a DJ performs for and the amount of other, non-wedding events they do will tell you where their focus lies. If you are looking for a “low-key” wedding DJ and someone you meet with does mostly school dances or Bar Mitzvahs, they may not be very focused on the type of sophisticated presentation you want for your wedding.

9. Do you perform for more than one event in a day?

Some DJs will do as many events as they possibly can, and often try to pack their weekends with all types of DJ work. If a disc jockey has already done an event in the afternoon before your wedding, they will likely be physically exhausted by the latter half of your wedding, which is exactly when they need to be the most alert and active. This is most common at large agencies, where “weekend warriors” may perform at four to six events over a three-day period. It is hard to believe that any DJ could give that many couples an adequate amount of attention leading up to, and on, their wedding day.

10. What makes you different from your competitors?

Any professional wedding disc jockey will take pride in their work, and be able to answer this question honestly and communicate the things that make their services unique. Some DJs, however, will take this opportunity to “bash” their competition and say negative things about specific DJs or agencies. We consider this type of behavior unprofessional, and is a poor reflection on them. In fact, you may want to consider making it a point to meet any DJ that they say something bad about – DJs that engage in this type of thing will often target the DJs they’re afraid you’ll book instead of them, and they’re probably right!

11. Have you played at our reception site before?

Wedding experience is important, and so is familiarity with your reception site. Every site poses different challenges – different load-in and security procedures, different room sizes and configurations, different acoustics, even antiquated electrical outlets that need to be grounded manually. Hiring a DJ that is familiar with your site will give you peace of mind that you won’t have any surprises on your wedding day. Obviously, even the best DJs can’t have performed at every site in the area (since there are hundreds available in any area), but if he hasn’t been to yours, he should be willing to adequately prepare himself prior to your event by visiting the venue and/or speaking with the site contact and studying a floor plan.

12. Do you act as the “emcee” and make all of the announcements?

Any professional wedding disc jockey should be comfortable with making announcements and serving as the emcee for the wedding, it is a standard part of the job. Some DJs, however, are not comfortable with this and prefer to pass these duties on to someone else, such as a site manager, who may not have a professional voice or experience speaking on a microphone.

13. How would you define your “style” when making announcements?

This is an extremely important question to ask because it will tell you whether or not the DJ is the right match for your guests and the atmosphere you’re trying to create. If you are planning an elegant, understated wedding, then utilizing the services of a “party motivator” or “entertainer DJ” may not be what you are looking for. If you know your guests will need a lot of encouragement to dance, then hiring someone who flatly refuses to make announcements probably isn’t the best idea either.

14. What do you do to motivate the crowd if nobody is dancing?

Different wedding disc jockeys handle this situation in very different ways – some opt to use the microphone to try to “energize” your guests and motivate them to dance. Others would never do something like this and prefer to use careful song selection to ensure dance floor success. You need to know what the DJ would do in this situation, and determine if that is the way you would like the situation handled.

15. What if something happens to you and you can't make it to the wedding?

Despite meticulous planning and preparation, accidents do happen. If the DJ is injured or otherwise unable to perform on your wedding day, what is the backup plan? Most responsible professionals have some sort of backup strategy should this situation ever arise, but others do not. Often, DJs will be members of a local DJ association, and network with other DJs who could possibly provide backup services for them in the event of an emergency. Others take this planning more seriously and reserve a specific DJ for every date, ensuring that backup is both available and prepared in case of an emergency. You need to feel comfortable that you will still have a qualified, prepared DJ on your wedding day, regardless of the circumstances, so the answer to this question is very important.

16. Will we meet again before the wedding?

Some DJs will claim that all they need to do is show up at your wedding in order to be successful, this isn't very realistic. A professional DJ will want to make sure they understand exactly what is supposed to happen and when, and what music you want to be played, and will want to speak with you at least briefly to go over the game plan. If a DJ tells you otherwise, you should probably be concerned.

17. Can we visit you at a performance?

Hopefully the answer to this question is "no." We're sure that you wouldn't appreciate the DJ inviting prospective clients to your wedding to see him in action. A professional DJ should be willing to take a stand for his clients' privacy and not offer this as a possibility. Professional wedding DJs never allow this.

18. May we speak to your references?

Speaking to a wedding DJ's former clients is a great way to get a feel for what it is like to work with them, and any DJ should be ready and willing to allow you to speak with their references. He should also be willing to contact several of these references in advance of providing you with their information, so that they have his permission and so you feel comfortable calling them.

19. How do you keep your music collection up-to-date?

The majority of professional DJs subscribe to at least one of the major music update services in order to keep their collections up-to-date. These services provide the DJ with new, radio edited music, often before it is even playing on the radio. Ask the DJ if they subscribe to any of these. The most common are Promo Only, TM Century Prime Cuts, RPM Top Hits Monthly, and ERG NuTraxx.

20. How involved can we be in selecting music for our event?

This is an important question to ask, because some DJs prefer to control the majority of the playlist and supplement their choices with a small handful of your specific requests. Other disc jockeys prefer to let the client choose the majority of the music, and then use their expertise to make it all work. The DJ should be accommodating of your music tastes, and you should feel comfortable with the DJ's approach and the amount of involvement you'll be able to have in choosing the music.

21. When do we need to submit our music requests and event details?

Most professional DJs will give you a printed song list and planning worksheet with which to communicate the details of your event; others will give you access to an online planning system that will guide you throughout the entire process. You should be given ample time to make decisions regarding your music choices and event timeline, but the DJ should also require this information far enough in advance so that he can adequately prepare for your event. A DJ who doesn't ask for your requests at least a couple of weeks before your wedding may not be able to fulfill them. In addition, the DJ should be willing to accommodate any later changes or additions whenever possible, rather than locking you into a first dance song that you later regret or refusing to alter the order of your toasts.

22. Do you take requests from our guests?

Most DJs are happy to do so, but you should also feel reasonably assured that any request they chose to play would not be something you didn't like.

23. Can we submit a "Do Not Play" list?

Any professional DJ should be willing to honor your requests, including your request for certain songs and genres to not be used. Submitting a "Do Not Play" list will give a DJ a clear idea of your limits and your expectations for their song selection at your wedding.

24. When do you arrive to set up for our wedding?

When dealing with sub-standard DJs, there are often issues with them being punctual and set up well in advance of your guests' arrival. Professional DJs will always arrive at least a full hour before their scheduled start time in order to have adequate time to set up and get organized before the wedding. MyDeejay's policy is to arrive at least an hour and a half before our scheduled start time.

25. What will you wear to our wedding?

This is more important than you might think – some DJs prefer a classic, understated look and others wear tuxedos with flashy, shimmering or patterned vests and matching bowties. It is important that the DJ's "look" meets your expectations. The standard MyDeejay "uniform" is a dark business suit and tie – we want to blend in to the background of your wedding photos, not stick out like a sore thumb.

26. What will you wear when you set up and break down your equipment?

This is something that is often overlooked, but can make a big difference. If your guests arrive early for the reception or stay afterward, will they see the DJ in a sweaty undershirt and gym shorts? Professional disc jockeys maintain acceptable appearance standards regardless of the situation, including setting up and breaking down their equipment.

27. How much of a deposit is required to secure our date?

Almost every DJ will require some sort of deposit or retainer in order to secure your date. This is for their protection and yours. The industry standard for deposits is 50%. Some DJs require far less, but this is not always a good idea. If the contract language doesn't stipulate a specific guarantee of services and clearly outline a cancellation policy, the DJ may only legally be responsible for returning your deposit (sometimes as little as \$25) in order to back out of doing your wedding. While it would certainly be considered unprofessional, there certainly isn't any financial incentive for the DJ if he's only forced to pay a small fee for backing out on you.

28. What is included in the cost of my event?

DJs use vastly different systems when pricing their services. Most DJs price their services a la carte, charging an hourly rate and adding charges for any additional equipment needed. Others choose to use a flat-rate pricing system and make their packages all-inclusive. You need to be clear about what a DJ is offering for the price they've quoted you, so you can compare their package to those of the other DJs you are interviewing.

29. How much would you charge for overtime?

Hopefully your DJ will do such a wonderful job at your wedding that you'd like to keep dancing! Be sure that the DJ's contract outlines a specific rate for additional time at the end of the night, whether it is a set price or a pro-rated amount based on the original price.

30. What do you require from us?

Every DJ will require a few things that you'll need to provide them in order to be successful. The most common are adequate shelter, electricity, and a table for their equipment. Make sure that you understand exactly what the DJ needs from you so you can communicate those needs to your reception site and caterer.

31. Do you require a meal?

Some DJs require that they receive a meal at the wedding, and some even demand that they be fed the same food as your guests. Others do not require a meal at all, or simply accept one if you happen to offer. Again, be sure you know what the DJ's requirements are so you can plan accordingly.

32. Are you insured?

It is absolutely essential that any DJ you consider carries a full liability insurance policy. They are fairly inexpensive (less than \$250 per year in some cases), so being uninsured is inexcusable. Some reception sites have even taken the step of requiring all vendors working at their facility to provide proof of insurance before the wedding. Liability insurance protects you and the reception site in the unlikely event that your DJ injures one of your guests or burns your reception site to the ground.

33. Do you take any breaks?

One of the major advantages to using a DJ instead of a band is that a DJ does not need to take breaks, outside of using the restroom and possibly eating a meal quickly in another room (if this is what your site contact or caterer requires). In any case, the DJ should assure you that there will be no break in the music at any point during the reception.

34. What is your policy on alcohol or smoking during the wedding?

A professional DJ will never consume alcohol or take cigarette breaks during your wedding. If you interview a DJ and he tells you he needs a few drinks to “loosen up” while working, you should probably look for a DJ with higher standards of professionalism.

35. What kind of equipment do you use?

Any DJ you consider should be proud of his sound system, and should be using professional-grade equipment. Most DJs understand that you are very unlikely to have a working knowledge of professional DJ equipment, but he should be able to describe his sound system to you. You should not hear very many “home audio” brands in what he describes – the top brands for DJ equipment are Pioneer, Denon, PCDJ, Traktor, Serato, Electro-Voice (EV), JBL, Bose, Mackie, RANE, QSC, and Shure.

36. Do you bring backup equipment with you to the wedding?

Even the very best and most well-maintained equipment will malfunction at some point. Your DJ needs to be prepared in case this happens at your wedding. The only way you will not suffer a setback on your special day is if the DJ brings a full second sound system with them to each and every wedding. Having backup equipment in a warehouse 50 miles from your reception site won't do much good if there is no music at your wedding for an hour.

37. Do you have a wireless microphone?

Every professional wedding DJ should offer a wireless microphone to be used for your guests' toasts, blessing, and any other speeches that need to be made. The industry standard for wireless microphones is Shure, and most professional DJs use Shure wireless technology.

38. Do you have a “light show”?

Some DJs also offer “party lights,” either as part of their package or as an additional service they can provide. You should find out whether the DJ plans on setting up lights for the dance floor, and whether this matches your preferences. Also, if you do desire a light show, you may want to ask how this will affect the aesthetics of your reception (in other words, how bulky/cumbersome the setup is) and the quality of your photographs or video. In our experience, most weddings do not need (and practically none of our clients even ask for) a light show.

39. Do you set up a sign or banner with your equipment?

Shameless self-promotion sometimes rears its ugly head at wedding receptions in the form of a sign or banner advertising the DJ’s company name and contact information. These items inevitably find their way into your wedding pictures and video, and ruin what is an otherwise commercial-free event. This practice is repulsive and completely unprofessional, and we believe that any DJ that does this should never be hired for a wedding.

40. Do you belong to any professional associations or trade groups?

If a DJ is serious about his craft and interested in becoming a better performer, they will often join a local DJ association or trade group. These are opportunities for DJs to interact with one another, share ideas, and network with other DJs who might be able to help them should they ever have an emergency. While membership in one of these organizations is not a guarantee of that DJ’s talent level, it does at least show a willingness to grow and improve and become a better DJ.



Follow Elegante Entertainment

► Submit email → thedj@ahoustontexasdj.com