

29 Questions to ask your wedding entertainer

Too often choosing the entertainment is left to the end of your overwhelming “Wedding to Do List”—but it shouldn’t be. Not only does music set the appropriate mood, but a skilled Master or Mistress of Ceremonies will gracefully guide your guests from one spotlight moment to another. And practically speaking, the best performers are often booked well in advance—so shake your groove thing, or you may be stuck doing the chicken dance with Uncle Jack. To get you started, we’ve put together this list of questions that will help you evaluate a DJ, band, or other entertainer. Note that rather than interviewing a specific performer or DJ yourself, you might be dealing with an entertainment agency rep.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you have my date open?
2. Have you done events at my ceremony and/or reception location before? If not, are you familiar with them?
3. How long have you been in business? **NOTE: If you are interviewing a live band, you’ll want to ask how long the musicians have played together. However, if you work with a reputable agency, instead of booking a specific band you’ll most likely be getting seasoned professionals brought together for your event.**
4. How many weddings have you done? How many do you do in an average weekend?
5. What sets you apart from your competition?
6. Are there any other services that you provide, such as lighting design?
7. How far in advance do I need to secure your services?
8. What is your pricing? Does this include setup and breakdown between ceremony and reception locations?
9. How much is the deposit and when is it due? When is the final payment due?
10. If the event lasts longer than scheduled, what are the overtime charges?
11. What is the continuous music charge? **NOTE: For bands, bookings traditionally run for 4 hours divided into 4 sets, each lasting 45 minutes with a 15-minute break. If you want “continuous music,” i.e. with band members trading breaks, there is usually an additional charge.**
12. When can I expect to receive my contract from you?
13. Are there any additional fees that could accrue that I am not taking into account, like travel expenses or charges for special musical requests? (One performer was asked to prepare an entire set of songs from Phantom of the Opera! Yes, he charged extra.)
14. What is your refund policy if for some reason I need to cancel or alter my date?
15. Do you carry liability insurance? **NOTE: This usually only applies to production companies that also supply lighting, effects, etc.**
16. If I hire musicians for the ceremony and want them to play at the wedding rehearsal, what is the extra charge?
17. Do you have a DVD of your music or a video from a prior wedding where you performed?
18. How extensive is your music library or song list? What genres can you cover? Can I give you a specific list of songs I want or don’t want played?
19. Are we guaranteed to have the performer(s) of our choice at our event?
20. Can you assist me in choosing the music for my processional, recessional, father-daughter dance, etc.?
21. Do you charge an extra fee if I need you to stay throughout the ceremony to move arrangements to the reception site?
22. If the DJ or one of the band members scheduled for my event is unable to perform for some reason, do you have a backup replacement ready to go?
23. Can you provide wireless mics for the ceremony?
24. Does any of your equipment require special electrical outlets that I need to inform my wedding site about?
25. Do you bring backup equipment?
26. What kind of space or stage do you require for the DJ or band? If my site doesn’t provide what you need, will you make arrangements for the stage or am I responsible for renting it? **NOTE: A band will require a specific amount of square feet per band member.**
27. How much time will you need for setup, sound check and breakdown on the day of the event?
28. What music will be provided during the breaks? **NOTE: If you have a preference, make it known. If you want them to play your home-burned CD mix, be sure to test it on their equipment first because not all CDs will play on every system.**
29. How many people will you staff for my event?

