

# Questions to Ask When Interviewing DJs or Live Entertainment

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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 Edgar.

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.

## The Basics

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 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. Even though all the band members may not have played together before, they’re professional musicians who are able to work together and sound fantastic anyway. The key is to make sure you book the specific singer and/or bandleader that you liked in the demo. The players will take their cue from them.*
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. Can you provide me with 3-4 recent brides that I can contact for references?
11. If the event lasts longer than scheduled, what are the overtime charges?
12. 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.*
13. When can I expect to receive my contract from you?
14. 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.)
15. What is your refund policy if for some reason I need to cancel or alter my date?
16. Do you carry liability insurance? *Note: This usually only applies to production companies that also supply lighting, effects, etc.*
17. If I hire musicians for the ceremony and want them to play at the wedding rehearsal, what is the extra charge?

## Pricing and Other Business Details

9. What is your pricing? Does this include setup and breakdown between ceremony and reception locations?
10. How much is the deposit and when is it due? When is the final payment due?
18. Do you have a DVD of your music or a video from a prior wedding where you performed?
19. Can you assist me in choosing the music for my processional, recessional, Father-Daughter Dance, etc.?
20. 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?

21. Are we guaranteed to have the performer(s) of our choice at our event? *SEE NUMBER 3 ABOVE. As mentioned, many bands hired by an agency are made up of members who may not play together regularly. Even set bands often have substitute players. If there are specific performers (singer, harpist, guitarist, etc.) that you want, make sure that your contract includes them. Of course, illness or circumstances beyond their control may still preclude their being able to perform at your event.*
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 us with 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?

## Useful Tips:

- Be sure you discuss with your site manager any restrictions that might affect your event, like noise limits, a music curfew and availability/load of electrical circuits. Also check with your facility and caterer about where and what to feed the performers.
- All professional entertainers have access to formalwear (if they don't, that's your first clue they're not professionals!) However, it is YOUR responsibility to be specific about how you expect your performers to be dressed. Any extraordinary requests (period costumes, all-white tuxes, etc.) are normally paid for by the client.
- Make notes of your general music preferences before you meet with your DJ, bandleader, etc. For example: "Classical for the ceremony, Rat Pack-era for the cocktail hour and a set of Motown during the reception." Not only will this help you determine which entertainment professionals are a good match for you, it will guide them in preparing your set list.

Can't decide between a DJ or live music? Check out our expert advice under Articles & Ideas, "Brides Want to Know."

For more information on hiring a DJ or other professional, see our article, "Hiring Professionals Pays Off."