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Pre-Wedding Suggestions

The “Normal” Wedding

- Pre-Wedding Photos
 - Groom with guys/ parents
 - Bride with girls/parents
 - Wedding Photos
 - Processional
 - Ceremony
 - Recessional
 - Receiving Line
 - Bubbles
 - Drive car around block
 - Format Portraits
 - Both families
 - Wedding party
- allow time for above AND to get to reception (driving)
- Reception
 - Entrance
 - Invocation
 - Toast by by Best Man
 - Dinner
 - Cake Cutting
 - Bridal Dance
 - Father/Daughter Dance
 - Mother/Son Dance
 - Bouquet Toss
 - Garter Pull
 - Placing on the Catchers
 - Dollar Dance
 - Open Dancing

First of all, this suggestion list is provided ONLY to help you, as a bride, in planning your special day. It is your wedding so, of course, do as you want to. These are just a few suggestions for your planning purposes that we have noticed over time. Please don't misconstrue them as instructions; deviate as you desire to. The reason we provide this to you is quite simply because a mother once asked us what to do at a wedding and when we gave our standard answer of "It's your wedding, do as you please." Her response was that we do it every week, she does it once and we thought well ok, you're right. So here are some things for you to think about in planning your special day.

1. The pre-wedding shots are like preparation shots, getting ready, not formal at the altar.
2. Check with your clergy as many will not allow flash photography during the ceremony itself. If this happens, we are limited to a few timed exposures and have to re-create things after which adds more time to what is needed there.
3. Receiving line vs. bride/groom excusing the guests. Excusing them does take longer than a receiving line.
4. Driving car around the block: This is done so that other guests will leave for the reception with the exception of those family members that the mothers want in the family shot. They should stay.
5. Formal portraits AFTER: If everything goes smoothly and depending on the size of the wedding party, this "normally" takes 40 minutes approximately. SO PLAN THIS TIME. Additionally, the photographer needs 10 minutes to tear down his equipment, 10 minutes to set it up at the reception hall, and whatever driving time is needed to get from the church to the hall so PLAN FOR THIS ALSO. This is the time for driving around honking the horn, etc.
6. Also, many many hours of limo time are wasted normally (regularly) because couples have them show up at the same time the wedding starts. There's a good 1-1/2 hours there MINIMUM where they are just sitting doing nothing outside the church because of the ceremony and then the formals being taken. Think about this.
7. Arrival at the reception hall. The wedding couple/party should not arrive more than 15 minutes AT THE MOST prior to the food being served. You make your entrance, do the invocation, toast, and then eat. If you have more time allotted than this, then you're sitting around outside waiting to be introduced.

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8. Make sure your Best Man knows he's doing a toast and tell him it is to be brief. Too many want to take 10 minutes telling stories. It should only be a minute or two at the most. Remember most people are hungry.
9. The head table is fed first so your time to thank those guests for coming is after you have finished eating.
10. Your DJ: Make sure your DJ is a good one meaning he knows how to work the crowd. Also make sure he moves through the "program". some like to constantly put open dancing in between things like the cake cutting and the bridal dance. This is not good. The crowd gets bored. Move through the program and then have your open dancing. You'll lose many of the crowd — up to half — somewhere between the cake cutting and the bridal dance — and don't feel bad about this. These are the "non-partiers" or older folks that want to go home, or business associates, friends of the family, etc. that are putting in their "appearance" and then leave. Your partier's will stay and dance the night away.
11. The Dollar Dance: This is the responsibility of your Maid of Honor and Best Man to collect the money. It's nice if they have pitchers from the bar to put the money in but not "required". Holding the money in their hands is usually the other way but it can be dropped during the course of collecting it. Some dollar dances also include shots of, usually, a couple different types of schnapps or some other liquor. This runs about 50/50 doing the shots or not doing it. It's your choice.
12. Wanting everything perfect: Many brides and sometimes mothers too want to make sure every "i" is dotted and every "t" is crossed meaning everything to go absolutely perfect. This is only natural. The reality is that something is going to go wrong — just hope its minimal and above all, don't get upset about it. Relax and enjoy your special day!

Referrals

If you'd like referrals for DJ's, cake makers, halls, etc., please feel free to ask. There are many out there and getting the right one can help you greatly. We have DJ's we work well with and others we don't. We can "work" with anyone but it helps if there's a good working relationship established between DJ and photographer. We're not getting any "kickbacks" or anything, it's just a recommendation. The choice is still yours to make. Likewise with cake makers and halls. In any event, feel free to ask anything you want. We're here to help you make your day as special as possible.