

The Classic Reception



5 p.m.



6 p.m.

6:10 p.m.

6:20 p.m.



6:30 p.m.

Cocktail Hour

Cocktail hour is just that, one hour. You can take pictures during this time, mingle with guests, or just enjoy a little time to yourselves! Most people use this time to take formal photographs. To keep the momentum going, don't go over an hour and fifteen minutes. Be sure your musicians strike up the band with a varied repertoire to get the party started and entertain the guests while they sample some great food and cocktails.

Reception Begins

The wait staff should now let your guests know it is time to enter the reception room. By now table assignments have been picked up by the guests, but in case there is some confusion, have someone with an alphabetical list and seating plan ready to assist. When the doors open to the reception, all the candles should be glowing, the band will be playing and your guests will be awed at how pretty everything is.

The Bridal Party and then the Bride and Groom are announced

It's time for the bride and groom to make their grand entrance. Your coordinator should make sure guests are seated before the mc makes the announcement. This is a good time to introduce both sets of parents and the wedding party. Then comes the announcement of the couple for the first time as husband and wife. You may choose to begin your first dance as you step out onto the floor and into the spotlight after being announced. If this is the case, take this opportunity while eyes are upon you to thank everyone for taking part in your wedding.

The Welcome Toast

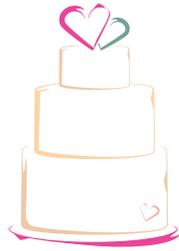
Toasting signifies a transition in the course of an event. So, when you need to go from one activity to the next, schedule a toast.

Typically, now is the time the bride's father welcomes everyone to the wedding reception and thanks them for coming. Some couples choose to make their toasts now, others wait until later in the wedding reception. If you wish to say a blessing over the meal, this is the time.

Dinner is served

The bride and groom need to take their seats and eat! For a seated meal, the band should be playing subdued, conversation-friendly background music while the waitstaff serves. If you're having a buffet, your coordinator should call each table when it's time for them to go to the buffet line. Shortly after the first course is served, the best man makes his toast. If the maid of honor is making a toast, she follows. After the main course is served, other family members or members of the bridal party should make their toasts.

Timeline



7:30 p.m.

8:30 p.m.

9:30 p.m.

10:00 p.m.

10:15 p.m.

The First Dance

The Master of Ceremonies announces the couple. This will be the first time the bride and groom will dance as husband and wife. After that the bride dances with her father. The groom and his mother may join them on the floor or choose a song of their own. You can surprise your parents and in-laws by playing their first-dance songs after your own first dance. Announce the songs and their significance, and invite the wedding party to dance, and finally all the guests can join in.

The Cake Cutting

The band should be wrapping up their first set. The caterer should have the cake table prepared with the cake knife and two glasses of champagne or paired wine. Now is the time for the bride and groom to make their toasts. All guests should have a glass of champagne or wine pairing. Although it is not required, it is very nice for the couple to say thank you to everyone, and especially to their parents. Some older guests will leave after cake is served, so be sure that you've had a chance to visit with them beforehand.

Bouquet Toss and/or Garter Toss

Throughout the evening, the music will stop for any special activities you've dreamt up. The bouquet toss, the garter toss, the centerpiece giveaways, and anything else you have planned. If you do choose to toss the bouquet and garter, typically the people who caught them then dance together. (Make sure to get a throwaway from the florist so you can keep your original bouquet as a memento.)

Last Dance

End your wedding on a high note. Have the MC invite everyone to the floor for a last dance together. Choose a fun and upbeat song so that will make a lasting impression.

Bride and Groom Depart

Some couples choose to simply leave with their guests, but planning something creative makes your exit much more memorable. Consider giving guests sparklers, candles or bells. Think about arranging a special getaway vehicle; a unique car or boat is sure to wow your guests.

After-Party

This is a great way to keep the celebration going after the reception. It is best to limit the party to one and a half to two hours. You can estimate that 30-40% of your guests will continue on to the after-party.