



So you wanna be a DJ?

The purpose of this guide is for general guidance only.

Advice and Tips For Booking a DJ For Your Wedding Reception Or Party – the client perspective

Because the time suggested for all the arrangements for a bespoke function can literally be anything from several months to even two years in planning, choosing the right entertainment should equally not be rushed or compromised. People don't generally book DJs everyday and are not familiar on the 'requirements' and obligations that DJs are increasingly required to meet, let alone what they should ask! I will outline some of the essential pointers to look for in booking DJ entertainment for your private function.

Is the DJ available for your date?

Initial contact with a DJ may be via email, indicating the date, time, and location of your event and a best price, however, every event is different, and it would be odd if a DJ could indicate prices based on such little information! Of course, emails are quick indicators of whether the DJ is unavailable and will save you a lot of time ringing around; however you could ask the DJ to recommend other DJ services and perhaps include website links and contact details. Although a phone call enquiry may be considered 'old hat', the best indicator by far is speaking to the DJ them selves, so where possible, give them a call or ask leave a message and get them to call you back. If they sound brash, uncooperative or rude, would you really want them to work for you on the night?

What sort of things should I ask or make note of during the call?

Although it might be essential to contact as many DJs as possible and compare notes to help you find the DJ which is right for you, you'll obviously need information to compare! An 'experienced' DJ may indicate how long they have been providing a DJ service, how many functions they have performed and may even talk about how much DJ equipment they have or music tracks they possess or who they are registered with - which is not really an indicator of whether they are any good as a DJ! Most importantly, a good experienced DJ will want to listen to your function requirements. They will be able to plan and smoothly guide your event from start to finish - so that you can relax and enjoy the event!

Why must a mobile DJ have Public Liability Insurance?

Many venues require a DJ / entertainer to have their own P.L.I. because they do not want their insurance claimed against in the event of a disco related accident such as a client or their guest tripping over a speaker cable or stands falling on a guest, etc. This indemnifies the venue in the event of an accident claim on the premises should it involve the disco equipment. Although venues can insist on the degree of P.L.I. required, the level of P.L.I. will vary from venue to venue. A typical hotel venue requirement may start P.L.I. from £2million, another may set a requirement of £5million+ Always check the venues requirements for entertainers P.L.I. cover before you book your entertainment.

What is a PAT Certificate?

Venues may ask for a copy of the DJs P.A.T. Certificate or 'Portable Appliance Test' certificate. The P.A.T. 'certificate' states that the electronic disco equipment used by the Mobile DJ is electrically safe and has been recorded as such with a competent P.A.T. tester. So before the DJ ventures on to the venue premises, it is important that he or she holds these requirements and can present or forward copies of as requested, otherwise, the DJ will not be allowed to set-up equipment on the premises!

The benefits of P.A.T.

In summary, the disco equipment is "less likely to fail", "less likely to electrocute anyone", "less likely to damage venue equipment on the same circuit" and perhaps just as importantly, it shows that the DJ is professional and committed to keeping their gear in tip-top condition with regular maintenance. However, in the event of an electrical fault, the paperwork will indicate if the apparent fault found was identified at time of appliance inspection by the P.A.T. inspector.

How do I know that the DJ who turns up on the night is the one I booked?

As in other sectors of industry, there will be those that accept an undertaking only to pass it on to another service, or pass on because a more lucrative booking comes along! At the 'wild' end of the scale, there are those that take a payment and don't even bother to turn up. Where possible, it is advisable to meet your DJ entertainer to discuss the requirements of the function. Informal meetings allow you to address so many things, from discussing the function requirements to enquiring what the DJ will be wearing on the night, especially if the function is a Wedding Reception because different events do 'command' different attire. Some DJs carry photo ID which is a positive step towards confirming that the DJ who turns up on the night is the one you booked. Confirm which organisations and bodies the DJ is registered with and always verify the DJs membership status in case they have brought the profession into disrepute and are actually black listed as a service! Do make sure you have done the research before you book.

How can I confirm a DJ is legit and will turn up after I've paid a deposit?

Firstly, web site rankings are no indication of the level of service or reputation of the DJs business, and it would be also fair to say that DJs are not all web designers! It seems that all too often these days, online information presented on one website may have been copied and pasted from another website, so it is best to be prudent. It's always a good idea when testimonials are available to read online to take time to read and verify that the DJ mentioned is the actual entertainer in discussion. So if you read a lot of scanned content which says "Thanks John for a great disco!", but the DJs name who you are dealing with is David, you'll have a good reason to be cautious! It can be difficult to 'prove' that the text you read online has not just been made-up. When you read many third party presented testimonial 'content', it will be obvious whether the wording is just rearranged sentences! If in doubt, seek further clarification before you book.

The booking stage

Although the internet is a great communication medium, it is best to either meet the DJ service in person or contact them via telephone. You'll be able to discuss the finer details of your function and address any issues or concerns. Once you have confirmed the DJs availability, you will need to secure the booking. There is no set rule but merely accepted practices when DJs are retained for a date. A reservation fee (booking fee) secures the services of your DJ and can be in sums of either 10%, 15% 20% or 25% of the whole fee, or up to 50% retainer of the whole fee. Some DJ services actually offer incentives to those wishing to complete bookings and payments in advance of function dates which is accepted practice in other related sectors, such as in the Wedding Service industry.

The contract

Written agreements are a way to offer protection between the parties involved and demonstrate commitment on the part of the service. If there's no written agreement, then there's nothing to bind the DJ to your event! It's accepted practice that DJs will offer a contract and request a form of reservation fee to secure their service (deposit). Your DJ entertainer should provide a written confirmation of the booking, either in letter or client contract which outlines their 'Terms and Conditions of hire'. The booking form should include payments made (deposit), balance outstanding and accepted methods of payment, the nature (type) of function, the date, the times required and contact details for the client and the venue - all agreed to by you in your return confirmation (signature) and requested reservation enclosure (deposit). Always read the Terms and Conditions of the entertainers hire contract including any additional terms, and question anything you do not understand; read all terms and conditions of hire before committing to any agreement!

Confirmation

It's a good idea to confirm your booking within the services requested time-frame to guarantee booking, so always reply by their deadline, as reputable DJ services are indeed popular! It's accepted practice for the DJ to confirm that a payment has been received by simple acknowledgement which can be either a quick phone call or email.

Music

Of course music is important at any party or Wedding Reception function, and if the DJ does not have the music library you require for the night, usually this is an indicator that the DJ is not ideal for you! So, do not hesitate to discuss essentially what is one of the most important aspects of any party; after all, it is your function! It's true, DJs are usually dedicated to their work and committed to ensuring you have a good time. But great DJs are dedicated and committed to ensuring everyone has a great time! Nobody really likes being left out of a party, and if your DJ is flexible and concentrating on seated as well as dancing guests with a broad selection of music, rest assured, the event will be memorable. Your DJ should take an interest in the music you require for the night and indicate if they can meet all your music criteria. Bearing in mind that only 'X' amount of tracks can be played an hour, if you are happy for your guests to request tracks, your DJ will slot these in with your personal choices. It's a good idea to indicate which tracks are not acceptable to be played if you allow guest requests, as the wrong track played could upset the flow of enjoyment or worse still, seriously upset someone.

How important is the DJs disco equipment?

When you hire a service, you expect just that - a service! So you'll expect not only a degree of quality, but the assurance that the disco equipment will be appropriate for the occasion, and of course, not blow up! Experienced DJs will reinvest in reliable DJ equipment because they are their tools of the trade used week in, week out, but of course, electrical equipment of any brand name can develop faults, so it's a good idea to enquire if the DJ has back-up equipment in the event of an emergency! DJ equipment brand names mean very little to the clients but there will be an obvious difference if the equipment is hi-fi home stereo grade, and not professional. There is no rule that DJ equipment has to be flight cased, but if the DJ has taken the time, trouble and investment to look after his or hers gear, then it will most certainly look good and last a long time, which is reflected in the difference between the committed services to amateur ones.

DJ Pricing

One would assume that the experienced, committed, dedicated DJ service will tend to charge more than the amateur. This is not always the case. Whilst hobbyists have a real passion for their past time and may invest a great deal into their chosen interest which gives them great pleasure, services tend to gain pleasure from both providing the service and payment, focusing on their clients, building a good business reputation and concentrating on developing their service as a career, be it part-time or full-time. Of course both 'types' will charge varying fees for their time, and it would be unfair to say that a committed hobbyist charges less than the dedicated service. What is essential to appreciate is that an event can be ruined with the wrong entertainment. Booking an amateur or 'hobbyist' who is cheap for the most lavish or

one-off event could be a big disaster, especially a Wedding Reception. By saving a few pounds, you are taking a gamble and placing the success of your event at risk, so a good rule of thumb is to consider how important the success of your function is going to be and allocate a percentage of your budget towards professional DJ entertainment, as you would for other services. When you look at the time and money you've already committed to your event, the impact the Wedding DJ has on how everything turns out is quite important! Based on a budget of £5,000 for a wedding, by allocating only 10% towards your Reception entertainment is only £500.00! Wedding Service professionals, from the beautician to the function manager work to ensure your wedding day is successful, so if you consider the success of your Reception important, avoid the amateurs!

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