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*The*

# WEDDING PLANNER



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## the reception planner

### wedding reception ideas for choosing reception halls

Selecting the ceremony site is one of the most important selections since, after all, the ceremony IS the wedding, right? Without the ceremony there is no reason for receptions. If you haven't selected the ceremony site, get that attended to and then move on to choosing the banquet facilities. Be sure to start shopping as early as possible to ensure you get the first choice of date and venue. One to one in a half year is typically suggested.

When in the market for perfect reception halls think about budget, of course, but also the personalities of the bride and groom. Some of the best wedding reception ideas come straight from the bride's imagination. Once you have an idea of the type of reception hall for you, locate a series of reception sites meeting your criteria and visit them. Here are some issues to ponder when interviewing prospective managers of banquet facilities in your area.

- ❑ **fees, please.** – Banquet facilities often have wedding packages with lots of options. Be sure to ask about what's included and get it all in a written contract.
- ❑ **save the date** – Be sure the reception hall has your wedding date and time available. Does the time open coordinate with the ending time of the ceremony? (Don't leave guests waiting for hours between events) Ask if your wedding will be the only wedding or if you'll be sharing the hall with other brides.
- ❑ **paper policy** – Again, ask about contracts. What is your refund policy and is it spelled out in the contract? Before you plunk down that hard earned deposit be sure this is 'your place'.
- ❑ **catering** – Will the reception hall provide catering/food? Seems like a no-brainer; however, some reception halls like local Elks' Club halls, for example, do not provide a kitchen staff. If an outside caterer will be employed, is there an additional charge to use the kitchen? And, speaking of food, will you expect formal, served meals, cocktail style service or banquet buffet? Will the wedding cake be provided?
- ❑ **capacity** – How many guests can the banquet hall seat? Do they have choices of rooms in various styles of décor and seating capacity?
- ❑ **beverages** – Open bar or semi-open bar with a limited variety of alcoholic and soft beverages? No cash bars, please! Never ask your guests to bring the party. Proper banquet facilities will steer you in the right direction by suggesting ways to cut the bar cost without being tacky.
- ❑ **bathrooms** – Visiting the facilities can be a terrific way to get an idea about reception hall and kitchen cleanliness. If you wouldn't use the bathroom, chances are you may not want to eat from the kitchen.
- ❑ **bridal suite** – Does the reception hall provide bridal suite for you and your bridesmaids? Is it big enough?
- ❑ **wedding garden** – Does the reception hall provide an outside garden for photography?
- ❑ **valet parking** – Do they have valet parking available for your guests?
- ❑ **closing time** – Be sure you know the policy for closing time. It would be sad to hire entertainment for possible overtime if the facility will not or cannot remain open.

Many banquet facilities and reception halls provide references but asking people you know will yield more personal responses. Obviously, one person's idea of a terrific reception hall could be another's nightmare. Your friends and family know your taste and will likely be able to tell you if they think the venue is right for you. If the hall provides regular dinner service or has public events where you can dine, be sure to try out the food and the service as a guest. Doing so will allow you to see a real event in action and not just a personal show for you at an off-hour.

❑ **final advice** – have fun selecting banquet facilities. Enjoy the planning of your wedding. The actual wedding day will fly by and, during the planning, you will get to see how well you and your partner really work together, make decisions and problem solve as a team.



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