

IGGY ✨ WEDDING DJ



HOW TO CHOOSE A WEDDING DJ

Hi. Hopefully you're excited and enjoying your wedding planning so far. But, I do understand it can be a bit daunting at times making all these expensive decisions! As it's probably the first time you've had to book a DJ I thought I'd put together this free guide to help make your task a bit easier.

WHEN SHOULD I START LOOKING FOR EVENING ENTERTAINMENT?

As soon as you've booked the venue. This applies to all wedding suppliers. The best wedding suppliers are booked well in advance, especially on prime dates. I'm often booked about 2 years in advance for Saturdays in June and July.

DECIDE WHAT TYPE OF ENTERTAINMENT YOU NEED

You and your guests are going to need some entertainment for the evening reception. This is the fun bit and, if it's good, it's the part of the day your guests will remember the most. There are a few options, and I'll go through the pros and cons of each.

DJ

Presumably by reading this you're already leaning towards booking a DJ. And you probably know that not all DJ's are the same, some specialise in weddings whereas others will treat your wedding the same as a birthday party. Some DJ's (like myself) even offer a full day service - music during the ceremony, wedding breakfast and evening reception.

BAND

Having live music at your wedding can be amazing and a real treat for your guests, but there are a few things to consider. Some bands will be watched rather than danced to. Even a small band can take up a lot of floor space. A band will only be able to play the few songs they've learnt and rehearsed. They will stop in between songs, sometimes for quite a long time. They will need to stop for a break as well. Typically the night will consist of two 45 minute sets with a half hour break in between. My advice: If you're going to book a band choose one with a lot of wedding experience, and book a DJ to play before, during the break and afterwards.

BAND & DJ

I've worked alongside live bands many times. I sometimes share my PA to save space which also makes the venue look less cluttered. My PA system is top quality and very powerful and therefore the band are usually more than happy to plug into my system and not have to set up so much kit. I will get to know them, find out which songs they plan on playing so that I don't play them myself. I'll give them a massive introduction; there's nothing a band like better than starting the first song to a huge cheer from the crowd. I'll find out the last song so I know when to be ready to take over.

IPOD & SPEAKERS

You'll need to hire some speakers (and possibly some lights). Someone will need to drive to pick them up and drop them back the next day. You'll need to set them up yourself, (and learn how to set it up). You'll be liable if there's any accident (see PLI below). You won't have backup if the equipment goes wrong (unless you hire a second set, doubling the cost). You'll need to create a playlist from your own music. If you don't have someone looking after the iPod people will stop a song and play their choice (same song for the fifth time!?). There will be gaps between songs. You can sometimes hire a budget DJ (see Budget DJ description below) who will bring his own kit for less than the cost of hiring it yourself!

YOUR BUDGET

You may have a budget in mind already but deciding on a DJ based on price alone could end up being a mistake. A specialist wedding DJ will be charging more for good reason. Personally I put in a lot of time meeting, planning and preparing. Below are some examples of what you might expect to pay. Obviously, I am generalising here. The prices are based on average cost in the UK 2018 and may well be different in your area. You may come across a DJ who is exceptionally good and offers a lot of value in a lower price bracket (or vice-versa). At the moment there are no official regulations for wedding DJs. So, below are the minimum requirements for a DJ (in my opinion).

BALL-PARK COSTS FOR AN EVENING EVENT

These costs are based on an evening of music, typically 7pm until midnight, without the addition costs of any optional extras.

BUDGET DJs £100-250

You can expect a low-cost DJ to attend your function with a basic sound rig, often just a couple of entry-level speakers to provide sound for the dance floor, and a small selection of cheap lighting effects. You can expect very limited interaction with your DJ prior to the party. Most will accept some music requests on the night but will be working with a fairly limited music collection. All Budget DJs are part-time operators working to supplement other income.

MID-RANGE DJs £250-500

A mid-range DJ will usually offer a consultation in advance and be skilled enough to hold the function together on the night, continually thinking and planning ahead to make the event go smoothly. You can expect smart dress, good levels of presentation and some microphone skill. Many mid-range DJs will hold Public Liability Insurance, have regularly safety tests undertaken on their electrical equipment ("PAT"), and will issue contracts for bookings. But DJ-ing will normally be a part-time activity and they will have less time to devote to planning and preparation than a professional DJ.

PREMIUM DJs £500 - 1000+

A premium DJ will work with you in advance to plan all aspects of the event, from high quality sound equipment and offering you a choice elegant lighting through to music preferences, announcements, key timings and the structure of the event. They will be willing to work with other entertainment providers and the venue management to avoid any unnecessary surprises. They possess the experience and skills to ensure meticulous planning and preparation and will be smartly presented on the day. They will own an extensive music library and will have knowledge and experience playing many different music genres. In some cases they will be proficient at mixing the music and knowing what songs will work together. The perfect choice for an important event such as a wedding reception premium DJs will be able to confidently lead your celebration. Generally run as full-time businesses, Premium DJs are most likely to offer an impeccable feedback record demonstrating their commitment to great customer service. This is usually the only option if you're looking at booking a DJ for the whole day, in which case, the price will often be around double the evening-only fee.

HOW TO FIND A WEDDING DJ

You might've seen a DJ at a friend's or relative's wedding. It's possible they might be regretting not booking a different DJ they came across. (According to a survey 72% of brides wish they'd spent more on the entertainment).

Ask your venue manager for recommendations. They should be able to recommend a choice and they won't want to risk their reputation by recommending dodgy DJs'. But be wary of venues that include a DJ in the package or take a cut from the DJ fee for the recommendation.

Ask suppliers you've already booked. Particularly photographers who have had first-hand experience and seen DJs in action.

Read reviews by other wedding suppliers on my website

Search wedding directories such as Bridebook and Hitched. They'll have supplier reviews from previous couples. As a bride or groom you can create a profile for free. For wedding suppliers the basic directory listings are also free, but suppliers can pay to have their advert or listing appear either highlighted or at the top.



Obviously, there's always Google. Read reviews on Google, Facebook and their own website. If you want the best wedding suppliers then check The Wedding Industry Awards (TWIA) website to see who are the award-winning suppliers in your area.

In 2019 I won TWIA Best Wedding DJ in Southwest region,
(Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Wiltshire & Gloucestershire).

If you're looking at booking a premium DJ don't disregard a particular DJ just because you think they are too far away. If you're the type of client that fits their own musical tastes or they happen to like the venue you've chosen they may be happy to travel long distances or even stay overnight nearby (albeit at your expense). Some DJs cover international weddings and are happy to travel abroad and organise the logistics of the wedding day at your destination. Just to let you know; my passport is up-to-date.

To check if I'm available you can use my online availability checker here:

<https://www.iggyweddingdj.com/availability-checker/>

CONTACTING DJS

Make sure you're ready to take notes. I find a lot of people don't know what to ask and so their first and only question is "How much do you charge?" It's a reasonable question, and if you refer back to the 'BALL PARK COSTS' section it will be an indication of which type of DJ you're talking to. But, you now have to check if they can deliver exactly what you have in mind.

So as well as the obvious "Are you available on...?", "How much do you charge?" and "Do you take requests?", you could ask "Why do you DJ?" or "What's the best thing you've seen/done at a wedding?"

"Do you DJ yourself?" Some companies will send out DJs you've never met. If this is the case check the credentials of their DJs. You don't want a trainee who doesn't even know your names!

"Is it your full-time job?" This might be important if you want to meet up with your DJ or you want a DJ for the whole day. Also, this will give you a possible indication to the level of commitment they have to your day.

If you're having a large wedding reception, in a large venue, ask if the DJ has a sound system that will cope. Most DJs love talking about their kit, especially if they've spent a fortune on it. But if a DJ cranks up their low quality sound system, instead of everyone flocking to the dance floor it can drive your guests out of the room.

Then, after all that, you could just check that they reach my suggested minimum spec:

PLI (PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE)

PLI is designed to protect you, your guests and your venue in the event of an accident involving the DJ or the DJ's equipment. Many venues now insist on a minimum level of PLI before granting access to the venue.

PAT CERTIFICATE

PAT is a testing regime which inspects and tests portable electrical appliances to ensure they are safe to use in a public setting.

CONTRACT

Any service provider worth dealing with will issue you with terms and conditions governing the agreement which you have made with them in respect of services to be provided. If a DJ provides a contract make sure you read it and query anything you're not sure about or don't like.

THEIR OWN SOUND SYSTEM AND BASIC LIGHTING

Seems obvious but worth checking.

THEIR OWN MUSIC LIBRARY

Check they're not relying on a WiFi connection and a music streaming service.

BACK UP

Also, they should have back up equipment and a contingency plan in case of emergency.

As well as these basics I'd like to see that the DJ has membership to a professional trade organisation such as National Association of Disc Jockeys (NADJ). To see if a DJ is a NADJ member click here: <https://nadj.org.uk/find-a-dj/>

When you're comparing DJ's make sure comparing like with like. Ask if there are any hidden costs in the fee quoted, such as travel. Ask about any extras they offer (such as mood lighting, sometimes called up-lighting, same thing) and how much they charge. Do they charge for songs you want but they don't have?

Myself, and currently only a handful of other professional DJs in the country, offer a money-back guarantee. So if you're in any doubt as to the ability of your DJ to deliver what you expect surely this will banish those worries entirely. See last page.

In my opinion the best way to contact them initially is by phone. Then you'll get a first impression from their telephone manner. Do they answer quickly? If they don't answer, do they get back to you quickly?

As a full time DJ I'm available to take your call and we can have a chat pretty much anytime.

AT THE MEETING

So after you've contacted a few DJs you like the sound of and narrowed the initial list down to two or three DJ's. In my opinion meeting your DJ is essential as you need to get on well with them. Sometimes the meeting will be in person but I'm finding Skype/Zoom calls are becoming more and more popular.

Perhaps choose one DJ who is priced a little over your planned budget and find out if they offer something you hadn't thought of which makes them worth the extra money. At the meeting try to imagine this person playing an important role at one of the most important days of your life. Also, bear in mind that they may be trying to decide if they want to DJ for you. They should be asking you lots of questions in order to, a) find out exactly how you imagine your day will go, and b) find out if they are the most suitable DJ for you. They may know of a niche or specialist DJ if they're not knowledgeable with your musical tastes.

I offer free unlimited meetings and to make it super easy I have a scheduler on my website which links directly into my diary. You can see at a glance when I'm available and click to book a meeting there and then. <https://www.iggyweddingdj.com/meeting-scheduler/>

QUESTIONS TO ASK A MEETING

- Have you worked at my venue? If not, will you visit? If so, do you know the staff?
- What music do you like?
- Have you done any relevant training?
- What would you do if no-one was dancing?
- What's the difference between a wedding and a birthday party?
- What's the most memorable wedding you've worked at?
- Ask them to recommend other suppliers, and then later on, check their recommendations. Do these look like good suppliers?

Save your favourite DJ until the last meeting and then come to the meeting prepared to make the booking. As I mentioned previously, good DJs get booked up fast. But it's an important decision and essential you both agree so take some time to consult your partner. Don't worry about asking the DJ to give you some privacy to discuss the decision together.

If, by the end of the meeting, you're interested in booking that DJ ask about payment terms and deposit. If these don't suit you this is the time to offer your own payment terms. But I would suggest that you don't try and negotiate a discount there and then unless you can come up with a very good reason for them lowering the price.

QUESTIONS A DJ MIGHT ASK YOU

Where are you having the reception?

Does the venue have a sound limiter? These dreaded things can ruin a party. It's a small box installed on the wall of a venue usually after noise complaints from neighbours. A DJ will have to plug into a particular socket which is connected to the sound limiter. Once the sound reaches a set limit the electric is cut! No sound and no lights for two minutes. Sometimes they are set so low that even singing, cheering and clapping can set them off, but usually people will assume it's the DJ's fault and for that reason I know some DJ's who refuse to work at venues with them fitted. The venue is usually forced to fit these devices as a requirement of their license. Most venues won't tell couples about them, so if you want loud music and haven't booked your venue already then first make sure they don't have one.

If they haven't asked already then they'll need to know what time you want to start and finish. Times outside the normal 7 til midnight may incur extra charges, so check. Also, double check with the venue that you are actually allowed to have music during those times.

What is the access to the room like? If there are stairs or lift it may add to the set up time.

Is there a room turn-around? If you're eating in the same room as the evening function then the room turn-around time and the time the DJ needs to set up will need to be taken into account, and may require the help of a 'roadie'.

How many guests? This sometimes determines the amount of equipment needed. 250 people in a big hall will require a bigger sound system than 50 guests in a typical function room. A good quality 1K system is, in my opinion, the minimum needed for an average wedding. I always bring the right tools for the job at no extra cost. I personally use a 2K system (turned down) for smaller rooms, and have a 4.5K system for larger venues.

FINALLY

A word of caution, don't pay any money without a written contract in place. If you need more time to make the decision ask the DJ to hold the date; 24 hours is a reasonable amount of time. Also, when you do book your DJ the please let any DJs you met know you've chosen someone else.

The client area on my website has an automatic payment system so you can pay off whatever you want whenever you want using credit card, Paypal or bank transfer. You'll get a receipt emailed to you and you can easily see how much you've paid at anytime

Hopefully, you've learnt something new from this guide and it's given you the information and confidence to choose the right DJ for your wedding. If you have any questions or feedback relating to this guide (even if it's a typo) or any ideas for improving it I'd love to hear from you.

If you'd like to receive a quote from me you can first check my availability via my website:
<https://www.iggyweddingdj.com/availability-checker/>

Above all I hope you have a wonderful wedding! All the best, Iggy



MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

"If you're unhappy with any aspect of my service please let me know as soon as possible during the event and I will do my very best to put it right at once. If at the end of the event (or within the next few days), you feel that I haven't delivered the level of service you expected just let me know why, and how I could've improved, and I will refund you as much money as **you** think is appropriate. Simple as that."

Iggy Davis

Photo: Libra Photographic

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