

# TIMINGS AND HOW TO RUN AN EVENT



# HOW TO PLAN A TIMINGS FOR A WEDDING OR EVENT

As a wedding planner, or supplier, the timings of the event or wedding are one of the most crucial aspects of making sure it runs smoothly.

The attention to the timings of the day must be exact, this is one of the most important tasks you will have on the day.

It is your job as a planner to make sure everything is running according to schedule and if you are a supplier to ensure you are also working to the overall timings sheet sent to you by the organiser of the event.

To start planning a wedding or event make notes of all the different events happening throughout the day.

For a wedding this will be the ceremony start time, for a party, dinner party or other event it will be the same, you work with a starting time and an end time.

## SET UP AND BREAK DOWN TIMINGS

First check with all the suppliers how much time they need to prepare, set up and get ready and start to build this into your timings for the day.

They will let you know how long they need and what spaces they require to set up and you will manage the logistics.

For larger events a set up could start the day before or even earlier, therefore, you must make sure the venue will allow access to your team. Often they may charge if it is an extra day to set up as they cannot take on another booking.

Also bear in mind if the break down is going to include an extra day after the event, again there may be an additional charge from the venue.

It is important when planning a set up and break down that no suppliers are in each others way and they have easy access to the venue so always check the parking and loading unloading facilities.

As examples there is no point asking the florist to arrive if the catering or furniture rentals company haven't delivered the tables and set them up. If the florist needs time to create elaborate displays then the catering or furniture hire need to be told what time set up must be done by.

If lighting and staging is to be installed this should be done before the rest of the event furniture is set up as they will be on ladders, scaffolding, etc.

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If you have linen hire do make sure the catering are aware and it is delivered to them or the venue beforehand, likewise if you have table runners, charger plates, etc. There is nothing worse breaking down a table as someone forgot the runner.

## PLANNING THE ACTUAL DAY

There are many elements to planning a wedding and various timings that you can work by. Much depends on the location, cultural aspects and if it is a church or location lead ceremony.

As an example, planning a destination wedding, we always look at the sunset times as this is when ideally the guests should be seated and having dinner.

The lighting comes into its own and the couple are whisked away shortly after they have eaten for ten minutes of 'golden light' photos.

Southern European weddings start much later than Northern European weddings mainly due to the climate and cultures.

A Northern European wedding might be a lunchtime ceremony with an afternoon reception whereas a summer Mediterranean wedding will start later in the afternoon or evening and go on through the night.

Often you will need time and facilities to take coats off guests in colder climates when they arrive to an event so factor this into the timings.

Do communicate with the photographer and video, they are trying to capture the day and their main aim is to get great photos.

Be aware they can hijack a couple so it is important to build in time for them to get the great shots and liaise with them beforehand they are happy with the timings.

If they want to take the couple off into town or to the beach for more images then they do need to communicate this with you or this can be done at another time.

Likewise if you want your fabulous decor photographed before everything starts do also tell the photo team this and plan this into their timings.

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## TIPS FOR PLANNING TIMINGS

Make a note of all the important elements of the day.

Ceremony times, often with cultural weddings the ceremonies can last up to two hours.

Sunset time, important if an outdoor wedding and you need enough light to eat, you may require more lighting outside too if you plan on the guests eating once it gets dark.

Getting ready timings, once you know the ceremony times you plan backwards to make sure there is enough time for suppliers to arrive, photographs to be done and hair and make up completed.

Do always allow extra time in case suppliers are stuck in traffic, late, etc, never leave such a tight timeline that it becomes stressful. Always over estimate rather than underestimate.



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Do cross check everything and I cannot reiterate this enough.

If the wedding cake is due to be delivered make sure there is either a space to store the cake if it cannot be bought out until later or a cake table set up ready.

Check and cross check, is there a cake knife, how will the cake be served to the guests and at what time? Often couples ask for this to be served as the dessert or later for a 'midnight snack'. Check with the caterer they are happy to do this.

What time should the flowers arrive, you must make sure they are there ready for pre ceremony photos.

Set a time that all the suppliers can sit down and eat, often this is during the dinner service but photographers will have to jump up if a speech is happening or something impromptu.

Make sure you also look after the suppliers during the day, they have access to drinks and for those working more than 6 hours something to eat.

Build this into your clients budget and let them know beforehand either on your contract or in an email that suppliers meals are to be provided.

This builds great relationships with your suppliers if they know you are looking out for them too.

## ON THE DAY TIMINGS

Your day will be spent working with your timings sheet making sure everything runs like clock work so the more details you can build into your timings sheet the better.

All events over run and a key skill for anyone planning an event is to bring the timings back to the original plan. You will be making decisions and orchestrating all the suppliers involved.

As an example if the ceremony over runs by 10 minutes, you inform the musicians, entertainers, and catering. You will be in charge of making the decisions so in this instance you will scale back the cocktail hour by 10 minutes so it finishes at the time on your sheet. Then you are back on track.

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## WHAT ARE THE COMMON PROBLEMS IF TIMINGS GO WRONG AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM

Here are just some of the most common problems you may encounter during an event or wedding.

**The bride is late to the ceremony**, 10 minutes is acceptable providing guests are not sitting in extreme heat, in which case you tell your client they have to be on time. If a bride is late then scale back the time in the cocktail hour.

Make sure the photographer and video have enough time to do the family line ups, this is usually after the ceremony during the cocktail hour.

**Getting guests seated**, this can take some time, often they will want to visit the bathrooms so start telling guests a good 10 minutes before that it is time to be seated ready for speeches, etc.

If you are in wedding world we refer to this as like trying to herd cats!

**Speeches often over run**, it is a lovely part of any event so do make time for these, but be firm with the clients beforehand and explain everything has to be timed. If speeches over run then the catering will struggle to serve the food.

It is a good idea to present them with a speeches timings so they can ask the guests who are doing the speeches to time themselves and add this to their timings for the day. Then if anything goes wrong you have this document with the details on it and your timings were based on this.

As an example I have had one wedding where the best man went on for well over an hour despite me trying to signal for him to stop, hTe couple lost an hour of open bar and DJ. There was nothing we could do to change timings after this, we just lost the hour! Thankfully the venue didn't charge them for that hour but many would as it was in the contract.

The key to managing any wedding or event is to communicate effectively with all the suppliers and make sure the right arm knows what the left arm is doing.

It is also a good idea to keep the couple or client up to date. They are just enjoying their day so do pop up to them occasionally, when appropriate, and let them know for example the cutting of the cake will be in 15 minutes, do they want to freshen up, etc.

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HAPPY PLANNING!

The most stressful part of a wedding or event are the preparations and making sure everything is ready on time.

Again over estimate and give you and the team plenty of time to set up.

Don't put pressure on yourself to do much in the set up as your clients will want you around too so get used to delegating and having a team with you who can carry on in the background if your clients need your time.

Do remember they are nervous and your support is crucial, they don't want you to vanish into thin air as you are setting up their table seating plan and placecards.

Always communicate at all times with all the suppliers.

If you keep to the timings you will have achieved a very successful event so take time to give yourself a huge pat on the back!

