

Bride's Guide, Pick the Perfect DJ | #1 tool for picking the Perfect Wedding DJ

Bride's Idea:	Solution:	Bride's To Do List:	DJ Mark's Flex:
I've got a list of 5-10 DJ's, how can I create some obvious separation?	Before making direct calls and asking questions cut your efforts by doing 15-minutes of basic research (If only a top-level DJ would guide me)	This easy spreadsheet is like speed-reading 20 'Find the Perfect Wedding DJ' blogs. This top part is Research, which refines your list. The bottom part is making calls and asking questions. Do Not Get Out Of Order.	Hi, I'm DJ Mark of With Class Weddings, Chattanooga, TN. Google-people in Chattanooga, Cleveland and Dalton say I'm the best Wedding DJ for 10+ years running. It's nice to meet you. withclassllc.com
Get the best possible outcome for my Wedding	Hire someone the public loves with a track record of success.	Check public reviews on Google and Facebook. Be skeptical of Facebook post comments: these can be wife-bots / BFF-bots / referral-fee-bots. Internalize that you're hiring a class-act Wedding DJ, not a girls-gone-wild Club DJ.	I've been the highest Google-rated DJ for the last 10+ years, consecutively.
Study DJ's 'Talent Proof'	Be skeptical: Postings are carefully edited presentations, dig deeper	Understand: You're basically attempting to hire a Master of Digital things AND of Presentation. If they haven't mastered showing you hundreds of great 'Talent Proof' videos end the conversation. Check their social media timeline for loads of 'Talent Proof.' Yes, Talent Proof does involve people having the time of their lives, but a Wedding lasts 5+ hrs. Don't hire someone off a 10 second clip of people doing the Cha Cha Slide.	I've documented every single Wedding for 15 yrs, have thousands of hours of dance floor footage, and, yes, I have links to every vid clip, listed succinctly on my website. I have a standing bet: there is not a single ChatTown vendor who has more digital talent proof available to clients.
Lower the noise to make the right decision	Don't take advice from people who haven't done Weddings full time for a 5-yr period (10,000 hours rule).	Do not listen to the following people: 1) yourself (just because you were at a Wedding that was fun doesn't mean it translates into your Wedding being epic (keep reading this file): every DJ has the Cupid Shuffle), 2) <5yrs coordinator / venue owner (this person legitimately believes they know everything about the Wedding business. It's simply Not True... An epic DJ is playing Chess at your Wedding, not checkers; the epic DJ's nuance and maneuvering will completely fly over the low-skilled, inattentive coordinator who has zero idea that the sweetest lemonade was just made, flipping the entire outcome), 3) your BFF who's been the bridesmaid in 10 weddings (again, every DJ has the Wobble).	I was once a <5yrs DJ, I too thought I was the cat's meow. (note: some venue owners +5yrs don't actually know what's going on at the venue... don't jump to their referrals!)
Cut my long DJ list in half... and then in half again, all in a few seconds	Entities without a Google Business profile and/or a business website are out.	Check Google to see if they've ever cared enough to set up a business profile (very, very easy to set up) or have a healthy (non-stale) business website. If Yes: now's a good time to compare Google Reviews and site health: remember, you're basically hiring a computer guru... if they don't know how to create and maintain a website or a social media page why in heaven would you hire them to DJ for you?	I've had a Google Business profile and website from the beginning. Why would a DJ not have a G-profile set up? Well, you can't 1-star rate a non-entity: nobody can discover your mess.
Cut DJ list in half AGAIN	Not having Business Insurance is literally an exercise in nonsense.	Discover: Does the DJ have Business Insurance? This is a line in the sand. It should be proudly listed on their website with details, but if not add it to your list of questions. You will not believe the result. (Yes, things are beginning to come into full focus.)	Not only do I have business insurance I can add your day and venue as 'additionally insured,' complete w/ PDF proof for your records. I've literally begged venues to demand this of their vendors but most refuse. Sadly I believe it's because there is so much pushback from the low-country mom and pop home run businesses here in the south.
Time for direct questions	Now that you've narrowed down the list, don't be shy: it's time to start asking questions.	Don't get out of order: Firstly narrow your search via the basic research above this line . What's below is only meant for the few vendors who've made it through your initial investigation.	Only ask questions via a phone call / vid chat in-person. Creating a list of questions and sending several copy / paste emails will get you the following: "I'm so very sorry but I'm already booked that day."
What makes a good DJ?	Gig Preparation Skills	Discover: Does the DJ actually want to tailor-make your Wedding or do are they waiting on you to load them with tasks, hoping it will be minimal? What questions does he/she plan on asking you to get down to your fine details? How will you get all the information from your vision into the mind of your DJ? Without the proper tools this is a TALL order! Also, what kind of prep does he/she do, or is set up and last-minute questions happen mostly on the day-of?	I took it upon myself to create the necessary DJ tools (the physical and Digital DJ Planners) so as to not only become the tri-state area's top DJ via Google but also maintain the #1 title, now 10+ years running. All prep and finalization happens well before the day-of. The DJ Planners lead the Bride w/ relevant questions. I Finalize w/ Bride on week-of. All music folders are prepped: Ceremony iPod, DJ PC 'Main Reception,' 'Cocktail Hr,' 'Dinner,' and 'Fast/Slow.' I finally print out 6-8 pages to execute the plans.
	Emcee / Talking Skills	Discover: Does the DJ talk well on the mic and know how to effectively control a crowd, with pizzazz and control? Where's the proof of this? Talking with them on the phone / video chat / in-person perfectly solves this question.	I share my Emcee skills via my daily IG Story anniversary call-outs. I actually subscribe to ECamm, a video platform that allows me to privately vid chat with my clients in a professional manner. Just before a scheduled chat I text / email the link. Some might say this is over-the-top 'extra.' However, I don't see giving you my best effort 'extra.'
	Song Selection	Discover: How does the DJ retrieve their songs? Not having an active subscription should truly be a conversation ending line.	I use a DJ service called PromoOnly.com -- I also download indie vids / songs from YouTube and strip their audio. It's sometimes a rigorous process picking a solid audio track.
	Sound Equipment	Discover: Does the DJ use top-tier stuff and is it used frequently? (good if it's used a lot: this means they know it works and trust the hardware) -- Discover stuff's brand names: Reception Speakers, Ceremony Speakers, Officiant mics (a handheld for the officiant is a game-over scenario), DJ Controller model number, DJ program used. If the DJ is offended by answering these questions move on.	I use Bose Ceremony and Reception speakers, an 18" subwoofer, Sennheiser Lapel and handheld mics, DDJ-1000 controller, Dell w/ i7 processor, and 'Virtual DJ,' the world's #1 DJ software.
	Digital Equipment	Discover: Is your DJ computer used for other online tasks? (this should be a conversation-ending line: the DJ's computer should only be used for DJing and nothing else). What's the processing speed of the DJ computer? (i7 minimum, PC)	My i7 processor DJ computer was updated once at purchase, never touches the internet, and is only used for DJing at gigs. This practice completely purifies a main goal of this craft: a baseline in attempting perfect sound and function. (Having a Mac is not a game-changer, my epic #1 run w/ a PC is proof of that.)
	Song Storage	Discover: How do you store all your music? (These days an average DJ should store all music on a 2+ terabyte external solid state hard drive.)	I use external solid state -- Fail Example: 1)Adding 1.5 terabytes of music onto the 2 terabyte internal hard drive and 2) not using solid state
	Traveling Gear	Discover: How does your DJ travel to gigs? Do they borrow or rent their transportation? For that matter, do they borrow or rent equipment from another DJ? (a 'yes' here might be a conversation-ender.)	I keep my equipment in a trailer attached to a 4X4 Jeep. An exception to the rental rule: I used to rent a U-Haul trailer each weekend, then decided to buy one.
	Mixing Skills	Some clients put mixing songs on the beat at a very high bar. Which is more important?... 1) the very next song you play 2) beat mixing 3) both -- the mood and schedule are always more important than beat matching: this is where reading the crowd and having become a Master (10,000 hours spent doing your craft) is so useful. This could be the moment of the night where a great DJ's skill in juggling these options shines out. At least see what the DJ has to say on this.	I'm great at mixing. But I used to worry exclusively about playing a great song for the very next moment. This mode has literally made me the number one Wedding DJ on Google Chattanooga / Cleveland / Dalton. However, when the crowd is popping and focused it's time to juggle: Play the perfect song AND beat match; this is how we Master DJing.
	Proper Aesthetics	Discover: Does the DJ look like a nicely dressed Wedding attendee or does he/she dress like the hired Entertainment, Baby!?	Of course I dress in a Tuxedo jacket, a Disco Ball shirt, and a signature bent tribly; No one is mistaking me for a nicely dressed 'plus one.' Also, black pants + black shoes and black socks.
	Time Management	Discover: Is your DJ dressed and ready to go at the Ceremony Prelude start time? Is it imperative to them to watch the clock so that everything is happening as the Bride and Coordinator has painstakingly worked out, instead of shooting the breeze talking / texting, or generally not paying attention? This attention to detail is so very important in real time, and can be the difference between the guest's perception of a lazily put together event and a 5-Star Masterpiece.	I'm promptly on time and I know for sure people are watching and measuring. I personally EXPECT to hear the following statement at the end of my gigs: "This was the Best Wedding I've ever been to!"
	Day-of Communication with Bride and Coordinator	How communicative and open is your DJ with people on the day-of the Wedding, especially the Coordinator? Let's face it, some people might be great at beat matching but have zero personal skills and are afraid to leave the backside of the DJ Booth.	I put a smile on my face and maintain constant communication with the Coordinator, especially upon my arrival. I know my place is behind the DJ Booth except when to handle my duties. In part this includes being at ease yet focused and driving as I talk on the mic, all while choosing my words carefully (many times all pre-written and / or memorized) and concisely.
	Day-of Energy	Discover the fitness level of your DJ. Let's face it, do you really want to look over and see your DJ sweating and breathing like a Kentucky Derby horse? No. This is a big deal, put a lot of stock on this.	I owned my own personal fitness training gym for 21 yrs on Lookout Mtn TN (closed for Covid). I still train in LM client's homes. I'm in great shape. I take pride in my fitness. I bounce around the venue and dance floor. I bring lots of energy and happiness to the event. This alone may account for 60-85% of my highest rating status.
Any unlisted freebies?	Understand: some vendors are over the top awesome, but simply don't boast some free items / efforts, not wanting to overwhelm the Bride w/ extra details.	Ask the question: what are your unlisted freebies? In other words, what do you do for me, post booking, that isn't written down and I'm not currently aware of? This could include free stuff, extra prep-energy, extra day-of energy, and / or extra post-event energy.	I take dance party video and provide it ASAP for free via Dropbox: It's my understanding that this is so very highly unusual that I may be the only one doing it, for 15 yrs running. I play free music as I'm setting up, pre Ceremony Prelude Start Time, usually almost 2 hrs. Post end-time I also play about 45 minutes of 'Outro' music as people clean up.
Do your Weddings routinely end early?	Discover: Are the events ending early because guests are losing interest in the DJ's entertainment?	Of course the DJ will not admit 1) He / She hopes to God the event ends early 2) Wants to beat their record in leaving the facility (not a joke). Many DJ's actually bring and set up the most minimal equipment in an effort to minimize their stay / breakdown. -- In passing you should discover if the timeline for their past events gets altered at the end of the night with an early exit. This is Not Normal. This could be a sign the guests are not being entertained, or no one is amused by the DJ's efforts, or everyone can sense the DJ isn't trying anymore, or everyone notices the DJ is packing up in the middle of the party.	It's always been my pride and joy to make the dance party last all the way to the Last Dance and Grand Exit. As a matter of fact I can't tell you how many times (jirreal) my fellow vendors (who should know better) try to forecast a Wedding ending early only for it to go all the way, with gusto! So many times it's not even funny or odd anymore. I just shrug my shoulders. (Inside baseball: most Photographers also beg for the party to end early!)
DJ sickness	Ask: What if you're sick and have to cancel?	Discover: What happens if your DJ gets sick and can't perform the Wedding? The DJ should have a protocol in place to handle this. If the DJ is a one-person show he/she would have a network of personal DJ friends to firstly contact. Then, to reach out to a broader pool, maybe a DJ chat room. The reality is that the DJ needs to find a suitable replacement themselves (not the Bride), forward monies already deposited, and be ready to lose money if the difference is greater than the original contract.	I have never missed a gig of any kind, either due to sickness, or vehicle breakdown, or equipment fail. As of '24 I've performed 536 listed Weddings and countless non-Wedding parties / events.