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# WEDDING TIMELINES

A LITTLE EXTRA HELP WITH YOUR SPECIAL DAY

# HOW TO PLAN YOUR TIMELINE

The two most important pieces of a wedding day from a logistics perspective are the ceremony time and dinner time. Once you have these two things figured out, you can work with your other vendors to create a good timeline for the whole wedding day.

Why is ceremony time so important? Your ceremony determines when the majority of photos occur. If you are getting married in November when the sun sets earlier, you're less likely to be able to get great portraits after the ceremony if you have it at 4:30 pm. Summer weddings are extra hot, so having your ceremony at 2:00 pm means your guests may be sitting outside during the hottest part of the day. Typically, ceremonies are less than 30 minutes; but if you're having a traditional religious ceremony, it could be up to an hour!

Suggested Ceremony Times (Outdoor Ceremonies) Based on Season:

Winter: no later than 3:00 pm

Fall: between 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Spring: between 3:30 - 5:00 pm

Summer: between 5 - 6:30 pm

It's common to allow an hour between the end of the ceremony and dinner, aka Cocktail Hour. This is usually the time when you may take family photos, wedding party photos, and couple's portraits (if you didn't do a first look).

At the end of Cocktail Hour, you'll have your DJ ask everyone to be seated for Grand Entrances. If you're planning to go right into toasts or special dances, make sure to add about 5 minutes for each segment.

Dinner usually takes about an hour but could be more depending on your guest count. Make sure to check with your caterer for their recommendations!

Now that you've got ideas about ceremony and dinner time, you can use these as anchors to decide other times for the day, like when you'll start hair and makeup. When planning your timeline, make sure to take into consideration any travel times or transition times. Generally, everything that takes 5 minutes normally, takes 10 on a wedding day!



# YOUR WEDDING DAY TIMELINE

There are a lot of moments and details that need to come together smoothly on your wedding day. I find it magical how a group of vendors, who likely don't know each other, all show up and work together to make your wedding vision come to life and execute the day flawlessly. The magic behind this is careful planning.

On the next several pages, you will see real wedding day timelines from real couples! I have included timelines from main wedding seasons with different lengths of photography coverage to give you an idea of what can be accomplished in that time. Some timelines will be very general and others will be super specific to give you a full perspective.

## Tips

- If you are interested in taking couple's portraits at sunset, make sure to consider that. Here are general sunset windows based on season:
  - Winter ranges from 4 - 5:30 pm
  - Spring/Fall ranges from 5 - 8 pm (depending on time change)
  - Summer ranges from 7 - 8:30 pm
- Ask your vendors for their opinions on what has worked best at other weddings
- Hair and Makeup should be finished or just about finished when your photographer arrives
- Remember, your wedding day can look however you want it to. These timelines are here to serve as inspiration. Morph them into whatever they need to be for your day!



The next several pages have examples of timelines from REAL weddings for you to use to help plan your day!



# SUMMER WEDDING TIMELINE

## *4 and 5 Hour Photography Coverages*

**3:30 pm:** Hair and Makeup Finishes up

**4:00 pm: Photographers Arrive /** Capture last bit of getting ready

**4:15 pm:** First Looks/ First Touches/ Etc.

**4:45 pm:** Guest begin to arrive, bride hides away

**4:55 pm:** Line up for ceremony

**5:00pm:** Ceremony

**5:30pm:** Ceremony ends

**5:30 - 6:15 pm:** Family Portraits at ceremony space, Cocktail Hour, Wedding Party and Couple Portraits

**6:15 - 6:30 pm:** Grand Entrances, First Dances, Blessing

**6:30 - 7:30 pm** Dinner \*make sure vendors (photographers, sound, music) get food when couple does

**7:30 pm:** Cake Cutting (or first dances here)

**7:40 - 8:00 pm** Couple Sunset photos, photographers leave

Or with an additional hour:

**7:30 pm:** Cake cutting or first dances

**7:45 - 8:45 pm** Social dancing / Couple sunset photos (for only 15 min)

**8:45 - 9:00 pm** Grand exit / Photographers leave

# SUMMER (JUNE) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *6 Hour Photography Coverage*

**10AM - 1:30PM:** Girls Getting Ready (123 Honeymoon Lane) Lunch provided.

Men set up at Venue (999 Wedding Venue Drive)

Guys get ready (555 Family Home Avenue) Lunch provided.

**1:45 pm:** Girls arrive to venue, finalize decor/setup

**2:30 pm:** Girls get dressed, First look with bridesmaids and mom/dad

**3:00 pm:** Photographer Arrives

Bride and Groom First Look + Private Vows

**3:15 pm:** Solo + Couples Portraits

**3:45 pm:** Wedding Party photos, if time, photos with immediate families

**4:30 pm:** Guest begin to arrive, wedding party sits in bridal suite.

**4:55 pm:** All family except Father of Bride seat themselves for ceremony.

Prelude (musicians/DJ) will begin.

Wedding party lines up

**5:00pm:** Officiant opens ceremony with announcements

Ceremony begins (see Ceremony Outline)

**5:30pm:** Ceremony ends

**5:30 - 6:00 pm:** Family Portraits at ceremony space, Cocktail "Half-hour." Ceremony space gets broken down and everything moved inside.

**6:00 - 6:05 pm:** MC introduces Wedding Party, Couple enters, Blessing for Dinner.

**6:05 - 7:30 pm** Dinner by Table Number \*make sure vendors (photographers, sound, music) get food when couple does / Couple greets guests

**7:30 pm:** First Dance, Family Dances if desired

**7:35 -8:15 pm:** Social Dancing ending in bouquet toss

**8:15 - 8:55 pm:** Cake Cutting/ Dessert / Couple Sunset Photos

**8:55- 9:00 pm:** Guests line up for exit / Couple exits / Photographer leaves

**9:15 - ??? pm:** Wedding Party and Family Cleans up

# SUMMER (AUGUST) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *10 Hour Photography Coverage*

12:00 - Photographers Arrive / Bridal Party finishing hair and makeup

12:30 - First Look w/ Bride + Groom / Couple's Portraits

1:00 - First look with Bride/Father

1:15 - Bridal Party Photos

1:45 - Immediate Family Photos

3:00 - Ceremony

3:30 - Cocktail Hour / Additional Family Photos

4:30 - Grand Entrance and First Dances

5:30 - Blessing and Dinner

6:15 - Toasts/ Speeches

6:30 - Cake Cutting

6:45 - Sunset Photos

7:00 - 9:50 Reception

9:50 Couple Private Last Dance

9:55 Sparkler Exit

10:00 Couple Departs

# FALL (EARLY OCTOBER) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *6 Hour Photography Coverage*

1:30	Bride Gets Dressed and ready; photographer arrives
2:00	First Look and Pics
2:30	Wedding Party + Parent Photos (3 bridesmaids, 2 groomsmen, 3 sets of parents)
3:00	Put bride away??
3:15	Shuttle arrives at Rixey
3:30	ceremony
	Group photo before cocktail hour
4:00	Cocktail hour
	Family Photos (Bride's brothers + fam, grandparents, flower girls -- will send final list in a few days :))
5:30	Dinner (Seating)
5:35	First dance/parent dance; We welcome everyone & announce dinner
5:45	Dinner (Announced)
6:15	Sunset Photos
6:30	Speeches (after everyone is seated and workin on their meal)
	Cake cutting, wedding game (??), bouquet toss
7:00	Shots
7:00	Dance floor open
7:30	Photographer leaves

# FALL (OCTOBER) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *8 Hour Photography Coverage*

9:00AM Girls start getting ready

11:30AM Lunch Delivered + Cake/Cupcakes

12:00/12:30PM Guys - Get Ready at House

2:00PM Photographer Arrives - Venue + Details + Decor

2:45PM Photographer - Getting Ready Shots

3:00PM Girls Photos

3:20PM Bride and Groom First Touch/Prayer

3:30PM Bride - First Look with Dad & Brothers

3:40PM Guys Photos

4:00PM Back in House / Bridal Suite - Touch Ups

4:00PM Guests begin to Arrive

4:20PM Lineup for Ceremony

4:30PM Ceremony Starts!!

5:00PM Ceremony Ends, Cocktail Hour Starts, Couple Private Vows,  
Photos of Family, Bride and Groom, Full Bridal Party

6:15PM Reception Introductions - Bridesmaids, Groomsmen, Couple / First Dances /  
Welcome from Dad / Blessing for Dinner

6:45PM DINNER!

7:15PM Dance Floor

8:15PM Cake Cutting + Dessert

9:45PM Last Song for Reception + Private Last Dance for Couple

9:55PM Sparkler Send Off

10:00PM Clean up

# FALL (SEPTEMBER) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *6 Hour Photography Coverage*

- 12:30 Photographers arrive (take venue details/ bridal details)
- 12:30 Bride and Bridesmaids getting ready
- 1:00 Groom and Groomsmen Portraits
- 1:45 Bride gets dressed, mom helps
- 2:00 Bride First Look with Dad
- 2:20 Bride gets in car
- 2:30 Ceremony begins
- 3:00 Cocktail Hour + Family Photos / Bride and Groom Portraits
- 4:45 Grand Entrance, Welcome
- 5:00 Dinner
- 5:30 Toast and Dances
- 6:00 Cake Cutting
- 6:10 Social Dancing
- 6:30 Photographers Leave

# FALL (NOVEMBER) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *8 Hour Photography Coverage*

- 1:30 - Bride Arrives to Venue
- 2:00 - Groom Arrival
- 3:00 - Ceremony Starts
- 3:30 - Ceremony Ends/ Cocktail Hour Begins
- 4:30 - Cocktail Hours Ends/ Grand Entrance
- 4:35 - First Dance
- 4:40 - Dinner Served
- 5:45 - Dinner Ends / Speeches / Champagne Toast
- 6:00 - Special Dances
- 6:10 - Open Dancing / Bouquet Toss / Cake Cutting
- 9:00 Late Night Snacks
- 10:00 Event Ends



# SPRING (MARCH) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *8 Hour Photography Coverage*

7:30: Bride wakes up and showers at her house.

8:00: Bride will have breakfast at her house.

8:30: Everyone - mothers and bridesmaids who will be getting ready with the bride need to meet at her house.

~8:50: Bride leaves her house to go to the venue.

10:00: Bride arrives at the venue with bridesmaids, goes upstairs, and starts getting prepared for the day.

10:00: Makeup and hair artists arrive at the venue

~10:10: Makeup and hair services start.

ROUGH SCHEDULE:

10-11:30 both bridesmaids hair & makeup junior

bridesmaid won't take as long

11:30-12:45 bride hair & makeup

12:45-1:10 bridesmaids makeup

1:10-2 - mom hair & makeup and other hair and makeup

10:30: **Coordinator** arrives at the venue, checks in with the bride, and starts working

11:00: **Florist** arrives at the venue.

~12:00: Bride will have some lunch - it can be around noon - earlier or later

12:00: Groom and groomsmen arrive at the venue and they will be already dressed.

12:00: Final touches with makeup and hair on the bride - if needed. **Photographers Arrive**

12:10: Bride starts putting her dress on, then shoes and accessories if any.

12:30: Bride completely ready!

1:30: **DJ arrives** at the venue and starts preparing for the ceremony, cocktail hour and reception.

1:30: **Caterer** arrives at the venue and starts setting up everything for dinner.

# SPRING (MARCH) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *8 Hour Photography Coverage*

*Continued*

12:30: First look bride and groom. Photographers will manage this.

3:00: All decorations must be completed by then. Photography Break & Touchups.

3:00: Guests start arriving at the venue. Venue managers will control the flow of the cars to the parking lot. Coordinator will greet and guide them.

3:00: Officiant arrives at the venue, and checks in with the coordinator. Coordinator will give them the marriage license.

3:15: Everyone who is part of the procession must be lined up.

3:20: DJ asks guests to take their seats, and let them know that the ceremony will start shortly.

3:25: Coordinator will release officiant. This is also a way that guests know the ceremony will start soon.

### CEREMONY AND COCKTAIL HOUR

3:30: When the bride is ready, the coordinator will queue the DJ, the music will start playing, and the processional begins.

4:00: Ceremony ends, and the recessional begins. The bride and groom will leave, stop at the end of the aisle for a kiss photo and go to take a break.

4:00: Cocktail hour starts outside.

4:10: Bride and groom are back from resting and will continue the photos. Extended families will meet the photographer for photos.

4:30: Sweetheart photos and Bridal Party

~4:40: The rest of the pictures are finished, and the bride and groom can join the cocktail hour. Coordinator will help mom bustle the bride's dress. Candid pictures will be taken during this time.

5:00: Cocktail hour ends, and the guests transition to inside.

# SPRING (MARCH) WEDDING TIMELINE

## *8 Hour Photography Coverage*

*Continued*

5:10: Guests seated.

5:15: Wedding party Introductions. DJ announces. They will be announced as pairs, the order they walked down the aisle

5:20: Dinner blessing by Tim Swanson.

5:22: Buffet tables open and dinner starts. The caterer will serve the bride and groom first, then the DJ will announce that the VIPS tables can go first and then release them by table number.

5:40: Vendors are back from eating.

6:00: Wedding Toasts. DJ announces.

6:20: Dinner is finished and buffet tables close.

6:25: Cake cutting - bride and groom will cut the cake. DJ announces. Photographer captures this.

6:35: DJ announces the bride and groom's first dance and asks guests to go downstairs. Coordinator will guide them and ask them to stay around the room to watch the couple.

6:45: Bride and Groom First Dance

6:50: DJ announces Anniversary Dance.

6:55: Dance floor opens downstairs after the anniversary dance.

7:55: Last song to be played.

8:00/Maybe 8:10 No later than 8:20: Formal send off for the bride and groom. DJ announces and asks guests to meet with the coordinator at the front door. The coordinator will distribute the Fiber Optic Wands to guests and line them up.

~8:15: Reception concluded for guests. Guests leave.

Need more help with wedding planning? I'm here for you! Let's grab a coffee or schedule a phone call to work on making your wedding vision a reality!

