

PACIFIC SOUND

ENTERTAINMENT CANADA INC.

THE COMPLETE PLANNING GUIDE

The Ultimate Vancouver Wedding Reception *Timeline & DJ Checklist*

A professional planning resource for couples celebrating across Vancouver, the Lower Mainland, the Fraser Valley, and beyond — everything you need to design a reception that flows beautifully from the first toast to the last dance.

Why Your Timeline Matters

The difference between a reception people talk about for years and one that feels flat almost always comes down to one thing: timing. A well-built timeline keeps energy high, gives every vendor a clear plan, and protects the moments that matter most — your entrance, your toasts, your first dance.

After years behind the booth at venues across the Lower Mainland, we've seen exactly where receptions stall and where they soar. This guide distills that experience into a step-by-step framework you can return to throughout your planning, and bring straight to your DJ and coordinator on the day.

VANCOUVER · LOWER MAINLAND · FRASER VALLEY

A COMPLIMENTARY RESOURCE · PACIFIC SOUND ENTERTAINMENT

The Ideal Vancouver Reception Timeline

A typical reception runs four to five hours. Below is a proven sample flow for a 5:00 PM reception start. Adjust the clock times to your own schedule — the durations and the order are what keep the night moving. Each stage includes a DJ note so you know exactly how the music supports the moment.

60 min 5:00 – 6:00	Cocktail Hour Guests arrive, mingle, and grab a drink while you finish photos. The tone is relaxed and social. <i>♪ Lounge, jazz, or soft contemporary at conversational volume — set the mood without overpowering the room.</i>
10 min 6:00 – 6:10	Grand Entrance Guests are seated and the wedding party — and then the couple — is announced into the room. <i>♪ High-energy entrance track, names confirmed phonetically in advance. This is the night's first big lift.</i>
60–75 min 6:10 – 7:25	Dinner Service Welcome toast, then dinner. Pacing follows the caterer's plated or buffet rhythm. <i>♪ Warm background music, volume low enough for table conversation. DJ coordinates timing with the caterer.</i>
15 min 7:25 – 7:40	Toasts & Speeches Best man, maid of honour, and parents. Keep to 3–5 minutes each to hold the room. <i>♪ Music fades, wireless mic handed off and tested beforehand. DJ cues a soft bed between speakers.</i>
5 min 7:40 – 7:45	Cake Cutting A quick, photogenic moment that naturally transitions the room toward the dance floor. <i>♪ A short, fun, recognizable track signals guests that the celebration is shifting into high gear.</i>
4 min 7:45 – 7:49	First Dance Your spotlight moment. Floor cleared, lights focused, guests gathered close. <i>♪ Full version or a clean edit — confirmed in advance. DJ can invite the floor in on the final chorus to build momentum.</i>
6 min 7:49 – 7:55	Parent Dances Father–daughter and mother–son dances follow the first dance while emotions are high. <i>♪ Songs confirmed per family. DJ can shorten gracefully and bridge directly into open dancing.</i>
90+ min 7:55 – 9:30	Open Dancing The heart of the night. A packed floor is the single best memory most guests take home. <i>♪ DJ reads the crowd live, blends generations, and honours your must-play / do-not-play lists.</i>
5 min ~9:30	Bouquet Toss (Optional) A brief, upbeat interlude mid-way through dancing — optional and easy to skip. <i>♪ Playful track and a clear MC call to gather. DJ pulls the floor right back into dancing after.</i>
4 min END	Last Dance & Send-Off A meaningful closing song that gives the night a clear, emotional finish. <i>♪ Send-off song chosen in advance. DJ coordinates with venue on hard cut-off and any noise curfew.</i>

DJ Planning Checklist

Work through this list with your DJ four to six weeks before the wedding. Every item finalized here is one less decision on the day — and the foundation of a reception that runs itself.

☐ 01 **Ceremony Music**
Prelude, processional, and recessional selections confirmed (if applicable).

☐ 02 **Grand Entrance Song**
Entrance track chosen, with all names spelled phonetically for the MC.

☐ 03 **First Dance Song**
Exact version specified — full song or edit, and whether to invite guests in.

☐ 04 **Parent Dance Songs**
Father-daughter, mother-son, or alternative selections confirmed per family.

☐ 05 **Cake Cutting Song**
A short, recognizable track to mark the transition into the party.

☐ 06 **Must-Play Songs**
Your non-negotiables — the songs that have to happen before the night ends.

☐ 07 **Do-Not-Play Songs**
The list is just as important. Genres or specific tracks to avoid entirely.

☐ 08 **MC Announcements**
Who introduces what, how names are pronounced, and special acknowledgements.

☐ 09 **Venue Restrictions**
Noise curfew, decibel limits, power access, and load-in details confirmed.

☐ 10 **Final Timeline Approval**
Master timeline shared with and signed off by both of you and the venue.

☐ 11 **Vendor Contact Confirmations**
DJ has direct numbers for the planner, photographer, and caterer for day-of sync.

Reception Success Checklist

Most reception problems are predictable — and entirely preventable. Here are the four categories where things most often go sideways, and exactly how to stay ahead of them.

T Timeline Mistakes

Cramming too much into too little time.

Fix: Build in 10–15 minute buffers. Receptions always run long, never short — plan for the drift.

Scheduling dinner too late.

Fix: Feed guests within an hour of the entrance. Hungry guests leave the floor; well-fed guests fill it.

Front-loading every formality at once.

Fix: Space toasts, cake, and dances so the energy builds in waves rather than peaking and crashing.

D Dance Floor Mistakes

Opening the floor cold with no transition.

Fix: Bridge from the first dance straight into a guaranteed crowd-pleaser to carry momentum.

Placing the dance floor far from the action.

Fix: Keep it central and well-lit. A floor tucked in a corner stays empty all night.

A Audio Mistakes

One sound source for ceremony, speeches, and dancing.

Fix: Use a system scaled to the room with a dedicated wireless mic for toasts — tested before guests arrive.

Ignoring the venue's noise curfew until it's too late.

Fix: Confirm decibel limits and cut-off times in writing and build the last dance around them.

V Vendor Coordination Mistakes

Vendors working from different timelines.

Fix: Distribute one master timeline to every vendor. The DJ, photographer, and caterer must move as a unit.

No single point of contact on the day.

Fix: Designate a planner or trusted person so you're never the one fielding questions in your gown.

Vendor Information Worksheet

Print this page and fill it in as you book. Having every contact in one place is invaluable on the day — for you, your planner, and your DJ.

VENUE

NAME _____ CONTACT _____
 ADDRESS _____
 PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

WEDDING PLANNER / COORDINATOR

NAME _____ COMPANY _____
 PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

PHOTOGRAPHER

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 ARRIVAL TIME _____ EMAIL _____

VIDEOGRAPHER

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 ARRIVAL TIME _____ EMAIL _____

DJ / ENTERTAINMENT

NAME _____ COMPANY _____
 PHONE _____ LOAD-IN TIME _____

TRANSPORTATION

COMPANY _____ PHONE _____
 PICKUP TIME _____ PICKUP LOCATION _____

CAKE / DESSERT VENDOR

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 DELIVERY TIME _____ EMAIL _____

OFFICIANT

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 ARRIVAL TIME _____ EMAIL _____

EMERGENCY / DAY-OF CONTACTS

POINT PERSON _____ PHONE _____
 BACKUP CONTACT _____ PHONE _____

10 Mistakes Vancouver Couples Make

These are the patterns we see most often at receptions across the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. Sidestep all ten and you're already ahead of the curve.

1

Booking the DJ last

The entertainment shapes the entire flow, yet it's often an afterthought.

Solution: Secure your DJ early — great ones book 9–12 months out, especially for peak summer dates.

2

Treating the timeline as optional

"We'll figure it out on the day" reliably leads to dead air and rushed moments.

Solution: Finalize a written timeline and share it with every vendor at least two weeks out.

3

Underestimating BC venue curfews

Many Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley venues enforce strict noise cut-offs.

Solution: Confirm your hard end time in writing and design the last hour around it.

4

Skipping the do-not-play list

Couples obsess over must-plays but forget the songs that would make them cringe.

Solution: Give your DJ a clear do-not-play list — it matters as much as the favourites.

5

Over-scheduling formalities

Too many speeches and traditions back-to-back drain the room's energy.

Solution: Limit toasts to 3–4 speakers and spread traditions across the evening.

6

Forgetting about the shoulder seasons

Vancouver weather and early darkness in spring and fall reshape photo and lighting timing.

Solution: Plan key moments around sunset and have an indoor backup ready.

7

Renting an undersized sound system

A speaker meant for a small room disappears in a 150-guest hall.

Solution: Match the system to your guest count and venue — ask your DJ to confirm coverage.

8

No designated day-of coordinator

Without a point person, the couple ends up managing vendors on their wedding day.

Solution: Assign a planner or trusted friend to own the timeline so you can be present.

9

Ignoring the multi-generational crowd

A floor that only plays for one age group empties out fast.

Solution: Trust a DJ who reads the room and blends eras to keep everyone dancing.

10

Not meeting the actual DJ beforehand

Some companies book you with one person and send another on the day.

Solution: Confirm exactly who will be at your wedding and have a planning call with them.

PACIFIC SOUND ENTERTAINMENT

Planning Your *Vancouver Wedding?*

You've just seen what goes into a flawless reception. Now imagine handing the entire flow to a team that does this every weekend. Pacific Sound Entertainment helps couples across Vancouver, the Lower Mainland, and the Fraser Valley create smooth, stress-free celebrations — so you can be fully present for every moment.

Wedding DJ Services

Experienced DJs who read the room, blend generations, and keep your floor full from the first dance to the last.

Professional MC Services

Clear, warm announcements that guide your guests through every moment with confidence and polish.

Premium Sound Systems

Clean, properly scaled audio and wireless mics — sized to your venue and guest count, tested before guests arrive.

Reception Planning Assistance

We help you build the timeline, coordinate with your vendors, and lock in every detail well before the day.

Let's design a reception your guests
will be talking about for years.

CHECK AVAILABILITY & GET A QUOTE

pacificsoundentertainment.tech · Vancouver · Lower Mainland · Fraser Valley