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Choosing the right reception hall

Weddings can be a very complicated endeavor to pull off. Far more than pulling on fancy clothes, strolling down the aisle and saying, "I do," a successful wedding is a testament to a couple's ability to plan and juggle multiple tasks.

One of the biggest tasks a couple must handle is choosing a reception hall. Since most couples choose a religious facility based on where they attend services or where they attended growing up, that decision is often easier than choosing where the couple and their guests will go to let loose once the ceremony's over. Couples facing the dilemma of where to host their post-wedding party should ask the following questions when on the hunt for a reception hall.

- **When is the hall available?** If you've already chosen a wedding date, this is obviously the most important question to ask. If you haven't pinned down a date yet, perhaps a favorite hall's availability can help you determine when to walk down the aisle. Just remember that many houses of worship frown on picking a date and booking with a reception hall without securing the ceremony first.

- **How much?** Different places charge different prices, and with the escalating costs of weddings these days, this should be the question you ask immediately after learning of the hall's availability. It's also good to have a number in mind with respect to how much you can spend on the reception.

It's also wise to ask what's included in the fee. Some halls, believe it or not, charge extra for tables, chairs and linens. Be sure to state your preference of round tables or banquet tables as well.

- **What is the capacity?** This can often be researched via the Internet. If your wedding party is going to be large, there's no sense in driving to a locale that can't accommodate larger crowds. Some reception halls feature rooms for smaller crowds and rooms for larger parties.

- **What about the catering?** Some reception halls insist customers use their kitchen staff, while others allow outside caterers to come in. Oftentimes, halls that require on-site staff do the cooking also require a minimum number of guests. In addition, those that permit private caterers might charge extra to allow kitchen usage to outside vendors.

- **What service styles are available?** Food and drinks can be served cocktail style, formal, or buffet style. Couples should determine what they want, but should also keep in mind that buffet style serving is often less expensive.

- **How can drinks be served?** The bar service can range from a full open bar (often the most expensive) to only certain drinks offered at the open bar (i.e., beer is open bar, mixed drinks cost guests per drink) to individuals paying for their own drinks all night, called a cash bar.

- **How late is the reception hall open?** Most reception halls will stay open until around midnight before informing guests it's closing time. Some halls, however, might close earlier. Make sure the party hours are spelled out in your contract.

- **What is the refund policy?** This can be an important question to ask in the unfortunate case an emergency arises and the wedding is moved or the couple calls off the wedding.



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