

WEDDING VENUES

VENUE VISIT CHECKLIST

PART A: ASSESS THE VENUE

When you visit the venue (whether it's before booking the venue or afterward), bring this checklist along. Space is included under each item for you to jot down the venue's information.

___ CAPACITY

What is the capacity with people sitting? What is the capacity with people standing? (As mentioned in the reading, if you're looking at an outdoor space and renting a tent, you'll want to ask the tent rental company how large the tent will need to be for your number of guests and then confirm with the venue that the tent will fit on an area of level ground that size.)

___ RENTAL FEE

What is included in the rental fee? What is not included in the rental fee? If tables and chairs are included, what are the sizes, how many are available, and can you see them now?

___ ADDITIONAL RENTALS NEEDED

Are there items on site that can be used for the wedding, and if not, what will you need to rent on your own (e.g., a tent, dinner tables, buffet tables, cake table, dessert table, guest book and gifts table, etc.)?

— SEPARATE SPACES

Are there separate areas for the ceremony, cocktail/social hour and reception? If not, it may take some extra work planning and managing on the day of the wedding. That should be factored in to your manpower resources if you are going to ask family and friends to help with flipping and cleaning areas.

— FOOD PREPARATION

Is there a kitchen that can be used? If so, what are the guidelines? If not, how is food usually prepared on site? Will caterers or cooks need to bring their own set up to prepare food? Will they have enough power and electricity? Are there refrigerators, freezers and water located on site and how far in advance will you have access to them? Is the water drinkable?

— VENDORS

Are you required to work with any vendors? If so, whom? If not, can they make any recommendations for vendors who have worked at the venue before?

— PARKING

How much parking is there? Can guests park and leave easily? Is there a fee for guests to park? Where is the handicap parking? How far is the parking to the ceremony and reception sites? Will any other outside people or groups be allowed to use the parking on the day of the wedding? Will someone need to direct parking, and if so, who usually does this?

___ LIGHTING

What's the night-time lighting like? Does additional lighting need to be brought in or is what's on site sufficient? Are the walking paths and parking lot lit at night? How do you adjust the lighting in the venue?

___ PRIVACY

Will anyone else be able to use the space during your wedding? If so, who and for how long?

___ INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN

What happens if there is inclement weather on the day of a wedding? Where will the ceremony be held? Cocktail hour? The reception? Will the space be cleaned up in a reasonable amount of time if there was a storm in the days leading up to the wedding?

___ LAYOUT

Are there any set up items that need to go in a specific area due to facility limitations (for instance, does the DJ and/or food preparation area need to be in a specific area because of the power and electricity set up)?

— HEAT, AC & FANS

If needed, is there heat, AC or fans on site? How are they turned on and who is responsible for doing it?

— STAFF

Will there be anyone on site when you're setting up for your wedding and on your wedding day? What can you expect them to help with? What can you not expect them to help with? If an emergency arises, who would you call?

— NOISE ORDINANCES

Is there a noise ordinance or policy in place? What noise levels are allowed? Have they had any trouble with noise at events in the past? Is there a time that "quiet hours" start?

— SET UP

What will the venue set up for you? What can you expect to find when you arrive for the wedding? How far in advance can you set up? (For a DIY venue, typically you would want to be able to at least set up the day before.) If necessary, can rentals be dropped off before your arrival? How will the space be secured when you are not there?

— CLEAN UP

What are you responsible for cleaning up and not cleaning up? How much time do you have to clean up? If necessary, can any rentals be picked up at a later date?

— TRASH AND RECYCLABLES REMOVAL

During the cocktail hour and reception, will anyone be on hand to empty trash? Do they have trash bins and trash bags that you can use? Are you or the venue responsible for trash and recyclables removal? If they are, is there a fee? If you are, how have other groups handled trash removal?

— ALCOHOL POLICIES

What are their policies regarding alcohol? Can you bring your own if you decide to have alcohol at the wedding? Can guests help themselves or do you need to hire a bartender? Do you need to get a one-day liquor license? If so, how do you do that for their venue?

— DECOR POLICIES

What can you do and not do for décor?

— INSURANCE

What are their requirements for the type of insurance you need to hold an event at the venue? Even if the venue doesn't require insurance, we still highly recommend getting cancellation and liability insurance.

— BATHROOMS

What is the bathroom situation? If they are available on site, where are they located and will they be clean and fully stocked before the wedding? What does fully stocked mean to them? Where is the extra toilet paper, paper towels, soap and plunger? Are there enough bathrooms? For the average wedding, you need 1 bathroom unit for every 75 people or 2 units for every 75 people if alcoholic beverages are served. (See Topic 8 for more information on bathrooms.)

— POWER & ELECTRICITY

Where is the power and electricity? Make sure to check if there are outlets in each space for the ceremony, cocktail hour and reception. Will there be enough power and electricity for all the vendors including catering, music, etc.? Do vendors ever have issues with their electrical set up at the venue, and if so, what? Is there electricity near that ceremony location if needed for audio?

___ THE GROUNDS

Are the grounds maintained during the season that you're having your wedding? Look to see if walking paths are covered in cement or brick as a hard surface is ideal if it rains. Will everything look pretty much like it does now or is it possible there may be eye sores like dumpsters or construction in view for your wedding?

___ ACCOMMODATIONS

Where will guests stay? If not at the venue, then can the venue make any recommendations of nearby lodging?

___ GETTING READY

Is there a spot at the venue for you to get ready and keep any personal items during the wedding?

___ COAT ROOM (mostly applicable to fall and winter weddings)

Where do guests put their personal items during the wedding?

— PAYMENT SCHEDULES

What is the deposit and payment schedule? Will they get in touch when payments are due? What happens if for some reason you forget a payment date? Is there a late fee or would they release the date?

— ANYTHING ELSE

Is there anything else the venue can tell you that you have already asked such as whether police details are needed for large groups, if someone in your group needs to have crowd-management training for the event, etc. ?

PART B: ASSESS HOW THE VENUE WORKS WITH YOUR RESOURCES

Lastly, you want to assess how well this venue fits in with the wedding that you are planning on and the resources available to you (refer back to Topic 1 “Goals & Resources”). Do your best to answer the questions below as fully as possible:

- How well does this venue work with the financial resources you have available (including things you will need to purchase for the wedding to get the venue up to snuff for a wedding)?

- How well does this venue work with the time resources you have available? How much time will it take to prepare the venue for the wedding? How long will it take to set up and clean up the wedding?

- How much manpower will it take and do you have enough committed people who will be able to help out? How much of your helpers' time and energy is going to be needed?