

VENDOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Use this guide as you go through meetings with your potential vendors to help you ask the right questions and ultimately find the best fit for your wedding!



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE:

Keep it simple:

Only open the section pertaining to the vendor you're hiring, when you're hiring them. This questionnaire will otherwise feel overwhelming.

Vendors are interviewing you as much as you are interviewing them:

They are watching for red flags to determine if they want to accept you as a client just as you are deciding if they are a fit for you.

Red flags your potential vendors are looking for include:

- Attitude
- Selfish language – are you including your partner in the process? How do you talk about your future in-laws?
- Short in tone, lacking friendliness or gratitude (inquiries take a massive amount of time for vendors)
- Asking too many questions (all of them could be valid, but too many feels micro-managing)
- Red-lining their contracts or asking for a lot of changes. Clarity is good to seek! Ask questions before making demands, though.

How to ask questions:

I do not recommend asking *all* of the questions in each category. Select the ones that are most important to you. When asking questions, work them into the conversation rather than presenting to the vendor as a barrage of questions. They want to feel valued and trusted but if they aren't giving you the information you need, absolutely ask for it!

Photographer

Key information to understand, most likely provided in the proposal or contract:

- Their style
- If they shoot digital, film or both
- Hours of coverage and the charge for overtime
- If they have a second shooter
- Turnaround time to receive photos after the wedding
- Restrictions for sharing photos and copyright parameters

Additional questions to ask:

- How do you edit your images?
- What percentage of color to black and white images can we expect?
- What is your backup plan if you get sick or have an emergency?
- How do you work with videographers?
- Have you ever shot at my venue before?
- Is there anything special we need to do at that venue for lighting?
- What will you wear?
- How do you manage any conflict with a wedding party or family on the day?
- Do you manage the family photos or should I have someone else get people ready?
- Do you use a shot list?

NOTES:

Videographer

Key information to understand, most likely provided in the proposal or contract:

- Their style
- Hours of coverage and the charge for overtime
- If they have a second shooter
- Expected length of final film
- Turnaround time to receive the film after the wedding
- Restrictions for sharing the film and copyright parameters

Additional questions to ask:

- How do you edit your films- color balance considerations, etc?
- What is your backup plan if you get sick or have an emergency?
- How do you work with photographers?
- Have you ever filmed at my venue before?
- Is there anything special we need to do at that venue for lighting?
- What will you wear?
- How do you manage any conflict with a wedding party or family on the day?
- How do you choose the music for the film?

NOTES:

DJ

Key information to understand, most likely provided in the proposal or contract:

- Their style
- If they emcee and make announcements + what is their style
- Number of hours of service + charge for overtime
- Lapel mic for officiant
- Handheld mic for toasts
- Mic stand and mic for readers or soloists
- Ability to set up in multiple locations (ceremony, cocktail hour and reception)
- If they have back-up equipment in case any fails
- If they bring their own table and linen
- If they have lighting options

Additional questions to ask:

- Will you be the DJ at our wedding?
- If not, can we meet that person before signing the contract?
- How do you motivate the crowd if they aren't dancing?
- What is your back up plan if you get sick or have an emergency?
- Will we meet again before the wedding?
- Can we visit you at a performance?
- How involved can we be in selecting the music for our day?
- When do we need to finalize those selections?
- Do you take requests from guests?
- Can we submit a "do not play" list?
- What will you wear?
- Do you take any breaks?
- What is your policy on alcohol and smoking during the event?
- Do you set up a sign or banner with your table?

NOTES:

Band

Key information to understand, most likely provided in the proposal or contract:

- Their style
- If they emcee and make announcements + what is their style
- Number of hours of service + charge for overtime
- Requirement for breaks
- Stage requirements
- Green room requirements
- Meal and alcohol requirements
- Ability to provide music / amp / mics for ceremony and cocktail hour
- Lapel mic for officiant
- Handheld mic for toasts
- Mic stand and mic for readers or soloists
- If they have back-up equipment in case any fails
- If they have lighting options

Additional questions to ask:

- How do you motivate the crowd if they aren't dancing?
- What is your back up plan if band members get sick or have an emergency?
- Will we meet again before the wedding?
- Can we visit you at a performance?
- How involved can we be in selecting the music for our day?
- When do we need to finalize those selections?
- Do you take requests from guests?
- Can we submit a "do not play" list?
- What will you wear?
- Do you play recorded music during breaks?
- Do you set up a sign or banner with your table?
- Are you able to learn songs and is there a cost?
- Are my VIP songs (first dance, father / daughter dance, mother / son dance) in your current repertoire? If not, can you play them recorded?

NOTES:

Florist

Tips:

- Come to this meeting with images of flowers you like and even some you don't like.
- Share your Pinterest board with the florist if you have one.
- Pay attention to if the florist was educational, expanded on your ideas and heard your vision vs pushed their own agenda on them.
- It's good to already have your dress before designing your bouquet or at least know you may want to re-work that design after you purchase your dress.
- Think about repurposing flowers from your ceremony to your reception.
- Do you ever reuse flowers from a previous wedding or event at your next wedding or event?

Things to know-

- Are you familiar with the restrictions my venue has?
- What is your process for designing and working with a client?
- Do you have a minimum and will my vision work with that?
- Do you offer other services like rentals, lighting or draping?
- Is your team doing both setup and tear down?
- What happens to the flowers after the wedding?
- What style do you work in?
- What recommendations can you give me to maximize my budget?
- What flowers are in season for the month I'm getting married?
- What flowers do you recommend for my budget and color scheme?
- What are the different options for wrapping my bouquet?
- Do you do sketches or mock-ups?
- Will you work with my baker if I decide to have flowers on the cake and is that something you style?
- Can you help me preserve my bouquet after the wedding? Are the flower types we've selected possible to preserve?
- Will you be staying after the ceremony to move things from the ceremony to the reception?
- What is your process for design changes or new ideas along the way?
- When do I need to have my final headcount for ordering flowers?

NOTES:

Hair and Makeup

Tips:

- Come to this meeting with images for inspiration.
- Share your Pinterest board with the stylist.
- Schedule your trial run on the same day you do bridal portraits if you are doing them. Otherwise, plan the trial around a date night or other event so you are glammed up!
- Your getting ready room needs ample space and natural light. A hotel room is very difficult and can be overwhelming even to you. Spring for a suite at a minimum, one with large windows if possible!
- Remember to feed your stylists the same way you'll be providing vendor meals to your vendors later in the evening. Account for them in the sandwich tray or they will likely need to leave and return. They are often unable to bring a lunch more than a snack based on accommodations.
- Travel per artist is incurred when not going to their salon, even if not far. They can make more money in the salon without having to carry their things back and forth, which usually takes 2-3 hours of time.

Questions to ask:

- What is your cost and what does it include?
- Is there a travel fee to my venue? Or do I have to come to you?
- Do you have photos of work you've done on my skin or hair type?
- What kinds of products do you use and can I incorporate some of my favorites?
- How will you ensure my makeup and hair lasts all day?
- Do you have samples of lip color so I can reapply after you leave?
- What kind of look would you recommend for me with the dress and venue I've chosen?
- Do you make schedules for the wedding party to follow?
- At what point in the order will I get my hair and make up done?
- My photographer wants us ready by X time, with my headcount, what time will we need to start?
- If I decide I want it to take less time, can we hire additional stylists to make it faster?
- Is the getting ready room big enough or do we need to make alternate plans?
- My wedding party is paying for their own hair and makeup, how do we go about this? Can they pay you directly?
- What is your back up plan if you get sick or have an emergency?

NOTES:

Cake

Tips:

- Prior to the tasting, provide your preferred flavors per what the vendor instructs or allows.
- Take photos of cakes you like or don't like.
- Take photos from your floral proposal if already secured.

Education:

- The truth behind fake layers-
 - Cake is cake so if they do a fake layer for impact, but have a sheet cake in the back, it's the same cost and sometimes more because they have to do both vs just designing the tier with cake vs foam.
 - If you simply don't want the extra tiers, for your aesthetic preference, a fake layer is likely to save a little money.
- You only need cake for about 75% of your guest count depending on when it is served in your timeline.
- Cakes are primarily located inside due to elements like heat and bugs.
- Do you make your cakes from scratch or you use commercial box recipes?
- Do you have cake stands for rent? Do you pick it up at the end of the night?
- How many servings would you suggest if we are also having other desserts?
- Do you bring boxes for leftovers?
- How do we freeze our top tier, or do you make anniversary cakes instead?
- How many flavors can we have?
- Do you work with fondant or buttercream?
- Do you make sugar flowers?
- If I prefer fresh flowers, will you work with my florist?
- Are you licensed by the state?
- What is your delivery process?
- What is your back up plan if you were to get sick, have an emergency or if something were to happen to the cake on the way to the venue?

NOTES:

Officiant

- Do you have a script or do you customize each ceremony?
- How will it be created and how much input will we have?
- Can we write our own vows and can you help us with that?
- How long are your ceremonies?
- How many times will we meet?
- Do you do rehearsals?
- How do you work with wedding planners?
- What do you wear?
- What if our ceremony time changes?
- Do you offer pre-marriage counseling?
- Will you help me know how to file for a marriage license?
- Will you fill out our marriage license on the wedding day and send it to the state for us?
- What is your back up plan if you get sick or have an emergency?
- We have a religious preference, are you able to incorporate?
- Do you expect to stay for cocktail hour or the reception?
- We would like to do a variety of special elements like a unity candle, ring warming, songs, readings, etc. Are you able to help us with organizing that?

NOTES:

Photo Booth

- What does the booth look like?
- How many people can be in a photo together?
- Do you require power?
- Do you bring your own props?
- Do you bring a table and linen or do we need to provide that?
- Do you offer print outs on site?
- Are guests able to get a digital version as well?
- Do you provide a photo album for printouts and pens for guests to leave a note?
- If arriving after guests are at the venue, are you able to set up discreetly?
- Do you offer guidance to guests?
- Will we get an online gallery?
- What backdrop options do you have?
- Do you customize the printouts with our name and wedding date or a monogram?
- Do you design that or can we?

NOTES:

Transportation

- What kind of vehicles do you have available?
- How many passengers can they accommodate?
- Does the cost cover all mileage, gas and gratuity?
- What does the driver wear?
- Do you have hourly minimums? Or are you able to do one way transfers?
- Where do your shuttles go during the event?
- What if I have guests who want to leave early?
- Are allowed to provide drinks and snacks on the shuttles?
- Do your shuttles have bathrooms, A/C or other amenities?
- Do you communicate with my wedding planner about departures and timings?

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Venue

- How many people will your venue accommodate for X style set up? (seated, standing, stations, band with dance floor, etc) *Don't go based on websites or proposals because their layout completely determines headcount options.*
- What is the rental time block and does that include getting ready, set up and break down?
- What is the charge for added hours?
- Are there other events taking place on the same day or nearby?
- What is included in the rental? Tables, chairs, China, other rentals, etc?
- Who sets up the rentals provided by the venue?
- Is there two getting ready room for both partners? Can it be locked once the wedding starts?
- Is there a designated smoking area?
- Is the venue ADA compatible?
- What are the decorating restrictions?
- Do you require certain vendors?
- Do you have highchairs?
- What are your alcohol rules and regulations?
- Are we able to bring our own alcohol?
- Do you require security and wedding day insurance?
- Do you allow shuttles to idle in the parking lot?
- What are the various inclement weather plans that have been implemented at the venue?
- What is your plan if there is a power outage, sewage backup or other emergency?
- Are my guests able to leave cars overnight if they end up having too much to drink?
- Can we have a rehearsal at the venue?
- Is there a kitchen available for catering?
- Am I allowed to move the venue furniture around?
- Can we use open flame candles or have sparklers?
- Do you have signage to help guests find various areas of the property?
- Do you provide heaters or umbrellas?
- What does your manager on duty do and will they be okay with my wedding planner?
- Does the staff assist in getting items to my hotel room after the event? (hotel specific question)
- Do you have a sound system for piping music?
- Are there any noise restrictions?
- What is parking like?
- Do you provide overnight accommodations?
- Are you able to recycle?

NOTES:

Catering

- What services are included?
- What services are not included?
- Where do you source your food?
- What is your staff to guest ratio?
 - Proper ratios:
 - Buffet: One server to 18 to 25 guests
 - Family-style: One server to 15 to 20 guests
 - Plated: One server to 12 to 15 guests
- Have you catered at my venue before and are you okay with their kitchen space?
- How will the food be prepared on the day?
- Do you have China or handle renting it?
- Do you handle set up and break down at the venue?
- Do you clean, sweep, mop, handle bussing, trash, etc?
- Do you cut and serve cake?
- Do you provide bartenders?
- Can they do tableside service?
- What menu items are popular or in season for our date?
- Can you tell me more about the varying styles of services and their pros and cons: buffet, family style, plated and stations?
- Are you able to accommodate for special dietary restrictions?
- When do we need to submit our final headcount?
- Can you provide kid's meals?
- Will there be someone available to check on us as the couple and our VIPs?
- How do you handle leftovers?
- What is your policy for vendor meals?
- Do you attend the final walk through and work with wedding planners on timeline and layout?
- When tasting food, ask questions about seasoning, portion sizes and serveware. Don't be afraid to ask that the chef adjust a seasoning, make something spicier, or remove / exchange an ingredient.

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