



Timing is Everything

One of the questions I get asked most is how do you decide when your reception should begin and when it should end? While wedding ceremony lengths tend to vary, traditionally the reception is between four and five hours and normally includes a cocktail hour while the photographer snaps away with the wedding party after the ceremony. If using two locations, one for the wedding (i.e. a church) and another venue for the reception, allow at least thirty minutes in between. Keep the cocktail hour to one hour. Your guests will be anxious to celebrate with you and will become impatient beyond that.

Factoring in travel time your wedding will be a six hour event for the majority of your guests. Take their comfort into account when planning. For instance if there are many youngsters and seniors, an early reception might work out best for them. If it is an evening wedding be sure to spend time with them early so they can depart early if they are fatigued. The right reception length for your special day should depend on a number of factors such as how many guests, wedding party size, what time of day, what's being served, etc. I recently attended a wedding at Stoneleigh and the four hour reception was perfect. Any shorter and everything would have been rushed, much longer and people would have started getting bored.

Because many couples will have spent months planning and want to feel as though they maximize their wedding experience, they will often choose the very latest time that their venue will allow as the determining factor for choosing their reception end time however, this is not always the right decision. Based on my experience both attending and planning weddings, choosing an ending time of no later than 9:00 pm to have the majority of all interactive events and activities completed with a final exit time of around 10:00 pm will help to ensure the maximum amount of participation from your guests. Determining the best time for your reception to begin is simply a matter of subtracting four or five hours from your determined reception end time.

Developing your wedding day timeline in this manner will help you to create a reception that will have the most amount of involvement while leaving your guests wanting more.

Aisle Dish is written by Meredith Thomas, Stoneleigh's in-house Event Consultant. If you would like assistance planning your special day, Meredith offers a complimentary one-hour consultation to all brides hosting their wedding at the Club and is available for further planning services at an additional fee. Contact Meredith at mthomas@stoneleighgolf.com or 540.338.4653 ext. 303.