

A photograph of a bride and groom smiling joyfully. The bride is wearing a white wedding dress and veil, and the groom is in a dark suit. White confetti is falling all around them, creating a festive atmosphere. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an outdoor wedding setting.

10 Questions
Everyone Asks About
Wedding Bands...
*...And 10 Questions
You Should Be Asking.*



Unless you are in the business of events planning, your wedding may well be the first time you've had to book live music. With the number of options available and people to keep happy, you might feel completely unprepared for the task. To take some of the head scratching out of the process, we've put together the ten most common questions that brides and grooms ask us about booking live music. We've also thrown in ten more questions we think you *should* be asking!



10 Questions

Everyone Asks About Booking Wedding Bands...

1 What sort of wedding band should I book?

A lot of couples make the mistake of thinking they need to work out exactly which songs they want to hear, but a good wedding band will do all this for you. The first thing you really want to establish is your taste in music and the sort of atmosphere you want to create.

Do you want rock and indie, modern pop or soul? Perhaps you want something that ties in with your vintage theme, like a jazz band, or even bandeoke for something interactive?

Do you want your favourite songs all night or songs that will cater to everyone's tastes and get them on the dancefloor? These aren't always the same thing.

Would you prefer a male or female singer – or both? If you need inspiration, try wedding forums or check out a list of Function Central's most popular wedding bands for hire to see what's available.



Where should I start looking for a band?

An obvious way to find a wedding band is to research online. Make sure you check out promotional material, repertoire and testimonials to get a good sense of potential bands. Lots of bands also promote themselves on Facebook and Instagram so look beyond their main promotional video and see if you can get a real sense of their personalities and performances from their posts.

One thing to consider when searching online is that a standard search will return bands that have the most web expertise or can afford paid ads, not necessarily the ones that deliver a great show. So you could potentially be missing out on lots of bands. This is where an agency can help you reach the best bands that aren't necessarily all over the web.

If you don't want to spend hours researching, enlist the help of an agent. This is probably the

easiest option, as good agencies will only have professional bands on their books, and they'll be able to narrow options to suit your budget, tastes and requirements, without you having to trawl through pages of promo material. Be as upfront as you can about what you're after and give as much detail as possible and they'll take a lot of the leg-work out for you.

Booking with an agency such as Function Central also gives you guarantees – not just that you'll have a professional band with the quality gear and the right insurance, but you'll have assistance on the day in case there are any surprises.

Once booked, you can look forward to a night of music, laughter and terrible dance moves with your loved ones.





3

Can we choose which songs the band will play?

You can send through a list of your favourite songs from the band's song list and they'll do their best to include these in their performance. Bear in mind though that they may not be able to play all of your requests because they will need to consider dynamics, pacing and transitions between songs on the day. They might also need to make changes to the set during the performance to suit the audience.

4

Will the band play my first dance?

Most wedding bands can play your special song for no extra charge, but it's important to give lots of notice so they can let you know if it requires rehearsal time. Most won't, but if you're asking for something rare or complicated, or you're into prog or avant-garde jazz, the band might need to add a fee to cover their rehearsals.

Make sure you tell the band as soon as possible if you have a special request, as bands get very busy during peak season and they need to make sure they've got time to learn your song requests.

5

Can I borrow the band's microphone for our speeches?

Most bands should be happy to let you use a mic for speeches and announcements. Of course, a microphone's no good if the PA system isn't set up yet, so if you're going to ask to use a microphone, make sure it's when the band are already on site. If you need to use the PA earlier, ask about an early arrival time.



6

How long will the band play for?

The standard performance time for most wedding bands is two 60-minute sets, but performers are often happy to extend their set by half an hour or even sometimes a full hour without adding too much to the fee – as long as you give them plenty of notice. If you need something more affordable, then a DJ set after the band has finished is still a great option.

It's usually best if the band doesn't play earlier than 8/8.30pm. If they play earlier than this, it might still be light outside. Live music has more impact after dark, and your guests might not be ready to dance before this!

Generally speaking, midnight is the best time to end the night (venue license permitting).



When should the band start their performance?

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Will we need to provide any equipment?

No – most wedding bands will provide all the equipment they need, (though it's still worth checking). Most bands' sound systems are suitable for up to 200 guests, and many bands provide stage lighting too. If you're expecting more than 200 guests, let us know so that we can check that the band's PA is big enough.



How long will the band take to set up their equipment?

Most bands need an hour to an hour and a half to unload their equipment, set it up and do a sound-check (which means playing through a couple of songs to check the volume is right for each instrument). The band might need longer if there are lifts or stairs at your venue, or the performance area is more than 75ft from the venue's unloading area. We strongly recommend allowing as much time as possible for the band's soundcheck, so the band can work with the venue's acoustics to get the best levels.

Classical musicians, steel pan bands and any other bands that don't use sound equipment usually take 15-20 minutes to set up and sound-check.

It is best if the band can set-up and sound-check in an empty room, before your guests have arrived. However, if your guests have already arrived when the band arrive, and you don't want

to pay an early set-up fee, don't panic: bands can set up in the same room as your guests and will always do their best to avoid disturbing your guests. If the band has to set up during drinks or dinner, it is best if they can use a side or back entrance close to the stage, so that they don't have to carry equipment through the reception or dining area. Even if your guests arrive before the band, the band will still need 10-15 minutes to sound check. At a wedding, they can usually do this between the speeches and the first dance, when there are fewer guests in the room. They will never make any noise during speeches.

If you would like to avoid the noise of a sound check altogether, the band might be able to do a 'line-check', which is a simple test to make sure all their equipment is working. However, for the best possible sound, we always recommend a full sound-check.



10

How loud will the band be?

If you're booking a live band for dancing, your guests might still be able to hold a conversation, but probably not without straining. Bands are always happy to turn down if you'd like them to, though a rock/pop band which is too quiet can lose its impact. If your venue has a sound limiter installed, read the relevant FAQ under band and venue requirements below.

None of our bands are likely to reach uncomfortable volumes, but if you've got any concerns about children or elderly guests, consider hiring a band that doesn't play modern rock music. A swing, jive, or rock 'n' roll band can be great for dancing, without drowning out everything else!



10 Questions You Should Be Asking



1

How can I save money on my wedding band?

If you really want live music at your event, but your budget just won't stretch to a standard four or five-piece wedding band, there's always a way. Smaller bands can still create a perfect atmosphere. Some talented three-pieces do the job of a four-piece, with the bassist or guitarist providing vocals, or you might go for a more folk feel with a percussionist and acoustic instruments. They can still offer an extensive repertoire, particularly if classic rock and pop hits are your thing.

If your budget is only big enough for one or two performers, a solo singer or duo with backing tracks can be just what you need to get the songs you want while still having a performer to interact with the crowd and get everyone on their feet. If you've fallen in love with a singer's voice but are on a tight budget, it's always worth asking if they'll consider performing with back-

ing tracks instead of their band. This kind of set up can work beautifully for small events and intimate weddings.

Our wedding bands offer competitive rates, but if your wedding entertainment budget is limited, consider hiring a band from your local area, to save on travel and accommodation costs. Tip: once you've added your location and event date, sort your results by "nearest to me".

Also, if you haven't yet set your wedding date, consider booking a midweek or winter wedding to take advantage of the most competitive rates.



Is there a sound limiter at my venue?

Council noise restrictions and noise complaints mean sound limiters are increasingly common in wedding venues across the UK. These can raise difficulties for big bands - not only risking damage to expensive musical gear but also dulling the party vibe.

Sound limiters or meters are designed to restrict the amount of noise a band can create during

their performance. While most bands are happy to work with a sound limiter set at approximately 92db or higher, they always prefer these to be switched off during the performance. This is because most sound limiters work by cutting off the power to the band when the band or the crowd's applause exceeds a certain volume, which can damage band equipment.

If your venue's limiter is set lower than 92db, you may be better off choosing a smaller band such as a singer with backing or an acoustic band. Alternatively, if the live music is an important part of your big day, you might want to consider a different venue.

3

Is there enough space at my venue for a band?

As a guide, a 4-piece band will usually need a stage space measuring 4 metres wide and 3 metres deep. It's likely each additional member will require an additional metre's width. You can find exact information about space requirements for each band on their Function Central profile page under 'performance information'. What's really important is that the stage area is level, and that there's no risk of excitable guests knocking over equipment and getting injured.



4

What time will my venue need to turn the music off?

In our experience, the majority of venues tend to have a music curfew of midnight. If you're keen to carry on partying into the early hours, you'll need to make sure your venue can accommodate this. Their bar license may only run until midnight as well, so make sure you're happy with this when you book. All our bands know how to wind down a party – so if they say 'it's our last song' but there are still ten minutes to go, don't worry, they're just leaving space for an encore so you're not left with a sudden dramatic end to the night!

5 Is the room right for the number of guests?

Booking a venue with just the right amount of space is crucial. Too little and you're overcrowded, too much and it all starts to look a bit bare. While a large room may look spectacular, if your guests aren't going to fill it, the party atmosphere may suffer later on in the evening. If some of your friends and family are hesitant to start dancing, a large, open room will make them feel even more exposed on the dancefloor.

Talk to your venue and take their advice on optimum numbers for the space you're booking, then invite as many evening guests as you can to fill the dancefloor and get your evening party off to a great start!

The band will be able to advise you on how many power outlets your band will need, but ask your venue about the stage area and what the socket situation is. Most bands will have extension leads, but not all will have 30m extension reels, so make sure to find out so they can make necessary arrangements. This is especially important if your evening party is in a marquee running off a generator or indoor power sockets.

Of course, if your heart is set on a venue that isn't quite ideal for your dream band, talk to your agency and they'll help you find a way to get the most of your live music for your big day.

6 Where is the bar in relation to the dancefloor?

If there's one thing that's going to keep guests away from the dancefloor, it's the bar, so it's very important to make sure the bar isn't too far away from the music or entertainment. There's only so much a band can do to fill the dancefloor if all your guests are hitting the tequila in

the next room. It's best to have the whole reception contained in one room to keep everyone together and create a fantastic atmosphere for all. This also ensures no one misses any special moments like cutting the cake or the first dance.





Is there a loading bay at my venue?

Our bands have mastered the art of quick load-ins and set ups, but they'll appreciate a venue that makes it as easy as possible. If your room is 50m from the nearest loading bay and there are stairs to navigate, setting up can take much longer than the recommended two hours – not to mention tiring the musicians out before they've even started!

Find out everything you can from your venue about the flights of stairs, quickest routes to the stage and how many parking spaces there are.



Can the band play background music in the afternoon?

There are lots of points throughout the day where live music will create a perfect atmosphere, so why not see if the musicians you've booked for your evening reception party can arrive a bit earlier.

For a small fee, a guitarist, pianist or singer could provide ceremony music in the church or acoustic sets for your drinks reception, so you don't have to fork out for several bands during the day – or rely on a relative to man an iPod.

Ask your live music agent about daytime add-ons, which will create a memorable atmosphere during the quieter parts of the day. Musicians in covers bands have wide repertoires, so even if you've booked a rock covers band, don't think they won't also know some jazz and soul classics to serenade your guests.





What happens when the band aren't playing?

There are three ways of filling the time between bands sets: iPod interval music, a DJ service provided by the band and a professional DJ.

1) iPod interval music

When they're not playing, all our bands can use an mp3 player (such as an iPod) to play recorded music through their PA system for no extra charge. The music they play will be upbeat music in a similar style to their own, so your guests can keep dancing. The band can't take requests, but if you'd like to hear certain songs during the interval(s), you can give the band an iPod with a pre-prepared playlist at the start of the night to use during the intervals. Bear in mind that as the songs will be played on an mp3 player, the band can't "mix" or "beatmatch" them like a DJ.

2) Laptop DJ service provided by the band

Some bands offer their own DJ service. A band member is in charge of playing music from a laptop equipped with the latest virtual DJ software, and they mix songs in the same way as a normal DJ. They use a microphone for basic announcements and can take a limited number of requests for well-known songs. This is a great value alternative to a DJ, saving you space as well as money. To find out if a band offers this service, see "booking options" on the band's profile page.

3) A professional DJ

This is the ultimate choice. Our professional DJs can tailor their song selection to your guests' moods and create smooth and skilled changes between songs, as well as choose from a much bigger selection of songs than a band. You can submit your own playlist to them in advance to make sure they play all your favourite songs. Our professional DJs have more extensive lighting and effects than bands, and are experts at keeping the dancefloor full. We're currently offering discounts on our DJs to clients who book a band.





What happens if a band member, or even the entire band, has to cancel?

If a band member is ill or can't attend on the day, most bands should be able to substitute the missing member with a well-rehearsed "deputy" musician.

If several members, or even the entire band cancels, things get more difficult. The advantage of booking via an agency is that your booking will be secured with a live music contract, effectively preventing the band from pulling out of your event in all but exceptional "force majeure" cases.

If the worst happens and inclement weather, accident or illness prevents an entire band from reaching you on the day, a good agency should be able to find a similar replacement from the hundreds of bands and musicians at their disposal, and with only a few hours notice.



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