Wedding Reception Checklist

A planning checklist for the reception covering venue layout, food and drink, timeline, entertainment, decor, toasts, and send-off.

Venue and Layout

- [ ] Confirm the rental window, capacity, and overtime fees.
- [ ] Choose the floor plan for tables, dance floor, bar, and stage.
- [ ] Decide on a head table or a sweetheart table for the couple.
- [ ] Plan guest flow from cocktail hour into the dining space.
- [ ] Confirm power, parking, restrooms, and accessibility needs.
  Check that the band or DJ has enough outlets and a load-in path.
- [ ] Arrange rentals for tables, chairs, linens, and place settings.

Food and Drink

- [ ] Finalize the menu and confirm the dinner service style.
- [ ] Account for dietary restrictions and allergies.
- [ ] Plan the bar package and choose a signature cocktail.
- [ ] Confirm cocktail-hour passed bites and stations.
- [ ] Order the cake or dessert table and schedule delivery.
- [ ] Arrange vendor meals for the photographer, band, and staff.

Seating and Stationery

- [ ] Finalize the guest list and table count.
- [ ] Build the seating chart once RSVPs are in.
- [ ] Prepare escort cards or a display seating chart.
- [ ] Set place cards and any menu cards on tables.
- [ ] Reserve seats for parents, the wedding party, and special guests.
- [ ] Create clear signage for the bar, guest book, and gifts.

Run of Show

- [ ] Draft the reception timeline from entrance to send-off.
- [ ] Schedule the grand entrance and announcements.
- [ ] Set times for dinner service and toasts.
- [ ] Plan the first dance, parent dances, and cake cutting.
- [ ] Mark when open dancing begins and the bar closes.
- [ ] Share the run of show with the DJ, caterer, and coordinator.
  Give the emcee or DJ a script with name pronunciations and cues.

Entertainment

- [ ] Confirm the band or DJ and their setup needs.
- [ ] Build a must-play list and a do-not-play list.

- [ ] Choose songs for the entrance, first dance, and parent dances.
- [ ] Plan a microphone for toasts and announcements.
- [ ] Arrange any photo booth, lawn games, or special performances.
- [ ] Confirm sound and lighting work in the actual space.

Decor and Ambiance

- [ ] Finalize centerpieces and table florals.
- [ ] Plan lighting such as string lights, uplighting, or candles.
- [ ] Style the head table, cake table, and entrance.
- [ ] Add personal touches like photos or a memory table.
- [ ] Coordinate linens, napkins, and table numbers with your palette.
- [ ] Confirm who handles setup and teardown of all decor.

Toasts and Send-Off

- [ ] Confirm who is giving toasts and the order of speakers.
- [ ] Remind speakers to keep remarks brief and rehearsed.
- [ ] Plan the cake cutting and any cultural traditions.
- [ ] Choose a send-off such as sparklers, bubbles, or petals.
  Check whether your venue permits sparklers or open flames outdoors.
- [ ] Arrange transportation for the couple and any guests.
- [ ] Assign someone to collect gifts, cards, and personal items at the end.