

10 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a DJ

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1. What kind of entertainment background and training do you have?

Look for someone with many years of experience DJing your kind of event, and do ask about training. Most DJ's have had little to no entertainment training, yet there is a lot of skill involved. The best DJs attend trade shows and seminars and study trends in musical tastes and technologies. They can lead the latest crowd-pleasing dances and activities, coordinate an event with other vendors, sense the mood and moment, read a crowd, and determine the right music to play at exactly the right time.

2. What can you do to make our event or celebration memorable and exceptional?

The reason for this question is to get an understanding about whether the DJ thinks the job is just to play music or whether it is to create entertaining moments that guests will be talking about for years to come.

3. How will you make sure that our guests will always feel involved in our celebration?

Pay close attention to how they answer this question. They may tell you that they will make everybody dance. This may not necessarily be what you want. There are many ways to make an event memorable for your guests, and they vary widely. If a DJ is able to share simple ideas that you find entertaining and make you feel like this is going to be a great fit, then you may have found the right entertainer for you. Do not go with someone who does not listen to you and with whom you are not comfortable.

4. How do you define your role as our Master of Ceremonies?

It is a common misconception among entertainers to believe that a Master of Ceremonies just makes announcements. The real duties of the Master of Ceremonies include directing the event and keeping things moving at a good pace so that the guests never get bored or restless. A good Master of Ceremonies also manages logistics and coordinates the action behind the scenes to make sure that things do not go wrong. Ask them how they see their role, if they only talk about making announcements, be wary. That may be all that they provide.

5. May we call your references?

It is essential that you call others who have used this DJ's services and ask about their experience. Were they satisfied? Would they rehire this DJ? In addition to clients, ask to speak with other event professionals with whom this DJ has worked. If a DJ service declines to give you references, that should serve as a warning. If they do provide references, be sure to call and ask questions. Their responses will reinforce your decision to hire this DJ or not and leave you confident in your choice.

6. Will the entertainer for my event be guaranteed with a written contract?

Some companies will tell you that you are booking their most experienced DJ and then send their newest recruit instead. If they are unwilling to put the name of the DJ in the contract, you might want to ask yourself, "why not?" You want NO SURPRISES on the day of your event. For that, a well-written contract that protects both parties is essential.

7. How early will you be there to set up?

Most DJ's will offer you a 4 or 5-hour package of services. Make sure that you know whether that includes their set up time. Will they be prepared and properly dressed when your guests arrive? A good DJ will be set up and dressed well ahead of time.

8. Do you belong to any professional associations?

People who treat what they do as a profession tend to get involved and network with other like-minded professionals. If you find a DJ who isn't investing in learning from others, you've probably found someone who has been doing the same show in the same way for years. Ask the DJ what groups they participate in.

9. Do you carry a liability insurance policy?

Good businesspeople carry liability insurance policies for everyone's protection. Most event facilities require that mobile DJ's provide proof of such insurance. I have received far too many frantic calls from brides or event coordinators requesting my services because the DJ they hired was turned away by the facility on the day of the event. Be sure to ask for a copy of their policy ahead of time.

10. What do you provide in terms of sound equipment and backup equipment?

Some entertainers have been known to show up at an event with home stereo equipment. A professional entertainer will use professional grade gear and bring a full set of backup equipment to replace anything that might malfunction. This will ensure that the party goes on.