

A DJ is a disc jockey in full, that means a person who plays some certain music from the playlist. The average cost of a DJ for any kind of private event for a 3–4-hour set is about **\$450 - \$850**, however higher, and lower options exist as well, with weddings costs varying between **\$1,200 - \$1,800** depending on the amount of time and details required of the DJ. When choosing a DJ for your special event, it's highly advised to stay within the average cost described above because odds are that DJs working at a minimum cost will make your event special but in a bad way.

FACTORS INFLUENCING DJ COST

The DJ cost depends on different factors but the crucial are the following:

DJ's experience, previous event ratings or popularity

\$450 - \$850 per event is paid to a part-time, but still-experienced and personable DJ with events

\$900 -2,000 per event is the amount any professional and experienced full-time DJ get for one evening of work.

Working hours

On average, the DJ is needed for some **3-4 hours** and that is a typical time to calculate the cost.

Equipment

The DJ typically has his own equipment and brings the equipment with him/her to the event. Some standard extras from your venue might be needed like extension cords/power strips, tables, chairs, etc. all normal in the DJ services world.

Other Costs

Be ready that most DJs will ask you to pay a deposit around 50% of the total fee and that many deposits are non-refundable. In case the agreed timing is over, and you want the DJ to stay, you will typically have to pay for overtime which can be a double the normal rate per hour, but many DJ's make agreements with their clients for overtime accommodations. Make sure you discuss this possibility beforehand. Many charge for drive to/from time, setup and breakdown time and most reliable DJ's will have liability insurance costs to factor for their business insurance needs.

Discounts may apply if you book a DJ for several days if you have a weekday event, and some DJs can give you up to 5-10% discounts for referrals or if you're a repeat customer.

What kind of DJ do I need?

DJs differ in terms of their functions and preferred line of work. There are four basic DJ types:

Private Events/ Party DJs work all kinds and levels of parties and can play both dance music to set the mood, or a light lounge to create pleasant and chill background music. They are ideal for birthday, picnics, graduations, retirements, and business parties as well as anniversaries and even family gatherings and reunions.

Wedding DJs are specifically oriented towards weddings only. This means particular playlists, special mixes, **frequently** additional services included in the cost package such as lighting, mics, travel, set up time, etc.

Dance club/bar DJs are specialized and frequently the residents of particular places and are usually experts in sound whose goal is to get the crowd moving. They work in clubs and are oriented towards this culture.

Bar and lounge DJs are specialized and usually experts in light music and are perfect for art gallery openings, exhibitions, and similar events.

When looking for a DJ try to set goals for your event and ensure that the chosen DJ has worked on a similar kind of party or event.

What services do I get from a DJ?

DJs offer not only music playing service, but many also MCing, reading the crowd, some offer crowd games usually for extra costs though. For instance, your DJ can be the host of your party, event or wedding, he or she may take music orders and requests from the crowd or mix the songs on the spot to entertain your guests. Everything depends on your preferences and needs.

For large/high-end weddings, it's highly effective to hire a DJ and an MC as two separate people to keep the guests entertained and ensure that your music is played at all times. For private events, parties, etc., DJ and MC can be one person to set the crowd off and keep the communication ongoing. So, here's a list of services to consider:

- *MCing*
- *Arrangement of dance competitions or standard group dancing (Line dances, Soul Train Dances)*
- *Special announcements*
- *Taking requests*
- *Crowd/Music Trivia Games (Name That Tune, TV Theme Songs, etc.)*

How long do I need a DJ for?

DJs work on average **3-4 hours** during the set plus preparation and setting up time which many factor into event costs, as well as travel time to/from events. So, these 3-4 hours will mean the provision of quality dance/listening music for your guests. If you need to break the set for short speeches (if you're having a wedding, birthday party, retirement, graduation, etc.) or maybe you need breaks for food and business discussions, then add these hours to the estimate. In this break you have two options:

Pay the DJ to play some background light music not to keep guests in silence.

The second option is better if you're tight on a budget, while the former works better for high-quality events.

As a rule, when you surf for the DJ cost you will see the cost of those 2-4 hours set while the additional hours of playing background music or overtime will add up to the estimate. For instance, if the fixed rate is **\$700** for 3 hours in a package for instance, or as most prefer, to charge **by the hour**, then every additional one will be about **\$100-\$145** more. However, in case you hire a DJ for several days, some DJs will cut down the hourly rate.

Does the DJ provide equipment?

Be ready that very often equipment is **not included** in the many DJ services. Professional DJs working in the business will have essential pieces, but residents and DJ/MCs will not. There are two types of equipment DJs may offer: light and sound, some will also provide special custom services such as a smoke machine or Karaoke, keep them separate in mindset and planning needs for standard events/weddings.

If your DJ provides any of the above-mentioned equipment, then don't forget to ask if it's included in the total cost. If not, then the average cost of lighting equipment for a middle-sized venue (for no more than 100 people) is about **\$150-\$250** extra, additional mics may be extra as well as many DJ's don't have more than one.

Should I care about my DJ's reputation?

In the DJ world reputation matters, but don't mix it with **popularity** and **fame**. Reputation is positive reviews about a particular DJ, and this is what you need to focus on. Check reviews and comments on their website (Google or Yelp) or on event planning websites to evaluate his or her quality of work. Personality is **vital** for a DJ and the service provided so don't just hire the most popular. Its about quality not quantity of jobs done with DJ work.

When should I book a DJ?

As soon as possible is the best answer. Once you know the theme and venue of your event, book your DJ. This will give him or her plenty of time to prepare visual effects (should you need them) and decide on the equipment pieces required (either for them to prepare or for you to book additionally).

Remember that by booking a DJ you simply book the date and time, additional meetings about the music required and show preferred for the event should be held about a month before the party (and no less than two weeks prior).

QUESTIONS OF EXTRA EXPENSES ON DJ TO CONSIDER

Do I need to tip my DJ?

Tipping is always voluntary, yet in most cases, it's implied. For large events (with more than 60-70 people) it's highly advised to include about 10% of the total cost to your total DJ budget. If you're having a large event (with more than 100 people) then 15%-20% is considered a fair appreciation of DJ's work.

Why can't I hire a DJ for just a few hours?

Most people think they are paying for the time they people DJing. In reality, the value in hiring a good DJ is the hours spent preparing for the event as much as the time of the event itself. By the time the first song is played, a typical DJ has spent an average of 3 hours preparing the timeline, music, and floor plan details, making custom edits and mixes, organizing the playlists on the laptop. Another 1-2 hours is spent loading equipment and driving to the venue, setting up, breakdown and returning equipment to storage. That's an average of 5-8 hours beyond the hours you see the DJing. Because so much goes into every event many DJ's only offer package rates, not hourly.

Do I pay for DJ at the event?

If you're hiring a DJ for only several hours, then you don't have to include any additional expenses for your DJ's food. For events that last more than 4 hours, be ready that you need to provide food for your DJ. Non-alcohol drinks should always be provided. Most often you will also need to cover DJ's travel cost if your event is in a different city/state or if it's hard for DJ to reach it. However, make sure that you discuss it prior to making the final agreement.

How far does the DJ have to travel?

Be aware that DJs do charge extras for travel expenses. This is a normal practice because they need to deliver the equipment on their own, driving to/from the events, etc. Of course, extra fees apply if the DJ's traveling outside of the city or state. If your venue is within the city borders, in most cases no fees will be applied but that is completely subjective depending on economic conditions, cost of fuel, etc. Make sure that you discuss it prior to making the final agreement.

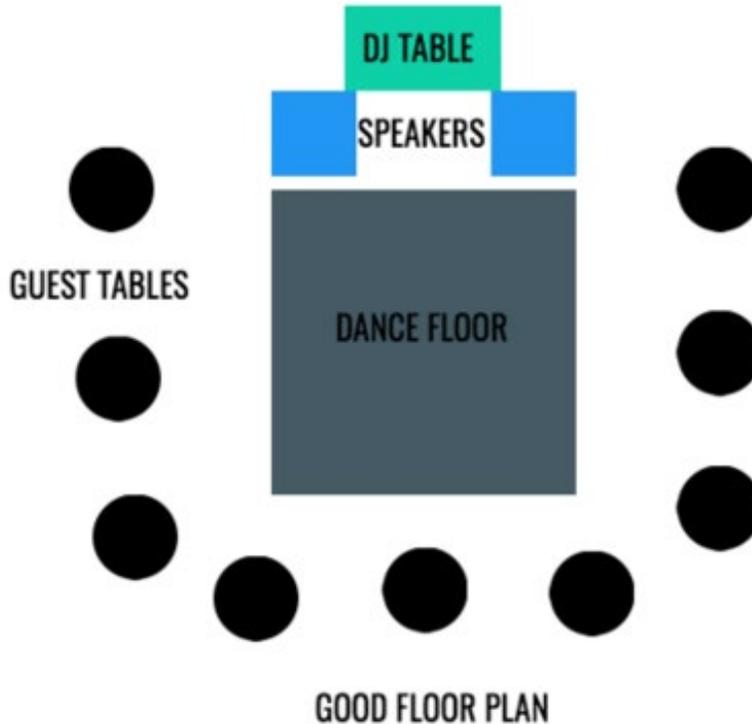
Bottom line

The standard rate stated above exists on the paper only because you are likely to meet additional travel or equipment expenses. In most cases with event DJ planning, a **\$1,200 to \$1,800** budget will likely to cover everything you need (including all the above-mentioned points) for wedding DJ's. Private event DJ planning budgets should be from **\$450 to \$850**. And a little tip for you: don't fall for the popularity, or number of venue's done, opt for positive references from any venues where they have DJ'd, steady quality, their personality and customer service overall, and finally, an adequate cost to ensure that your special event goes smooth and cheerful, and the DJ is key to that success!



SCOTT'S MUSIC PLACE, LLC – DJ COST GUIDE

AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD DJ SET UP



Make a check list with all the following to avoid surprises at your event!

Have a plan and stick with it. Events are highly choreographed behind the scenes. Lots of people are working together to make them flawless. The best time for changing details is in the months, weeks, and days ahead of time not in the seconds before hand. DJ location, dance floor, sound in the space, lighting, proximity of crowd, tables, etc. all are key in event planning.

Use Google Docs for planning and working with all vendors. With a shared timeline and other vital details everyone can stay on the same page, quite literally. With everyone using a shared document you can cut down on unnecessary emails and for once the photographers can have the timeline ahead of time. Full, open communication, whether in e-mail, docs exchange, text, phone, etc., is vital to an events success.

Avoid "Dance Sets" with a DJ. These only make sense with live bands that need to take breaks. Let the DJ build up the energy and take people on a seamless musical journey - that's what they do, and the crowd always love it and become engaged with the DJ.