

NJ Wedding Band Planning Checklist

Velvet Avenue · The 30-minute guide to booking the right band in New Jersey

12 Months Out — Lock In the Sound

- ☐ Decide on band vs. DJ (or hybrid) based on your venue's vibe
- ☐ Set a realistic music budget (NJ live bands: \$6,500–\$18,000+)
- ☐ Choose a musical direction: classic, modern dance, jazz/swing, Motown, Latin
- ☐ Confirm your venue's sound restrictions (decibel limits, curfew, power)
- ☐ Build a shortlist of 5 bands to evaluate (see page 2)

9 Months Out — Vet & Compare

- ☐ Watch full, unedited live performance videos (not just highlight reels)
- ☐ Read 20+ recent reviews on Google, The Knot, and WeddingWire
- ☐ Ask each band: 'Will the musicians in the video be at MY wedding?'
- ☐ Request a written quote with all fees: travel, overtime, lighting, sound
- ☐ Verify liability insurance (\$1M minimum — most NJ venues require it)
- ☐ Attend a live showcase or public gig if possible

6 Months Out — Sign & Plan

- ☐ Sign contract and pay deposit (typically 25–50%)
- ☐ Confirm number of musicians, sets, and total performance time
- ☐ Discuss ceremony / cocktail / reception coverage
- ☐ Share venue contact and load-in details with the band
- ☐ Begin your must-play and do-not-play song lists

3 Months Out — Personalize

- ☐ Finalize first dance, parent dances, and grand entrance songs
- ☐ Submit any special requests (cultural music, surprise performances)
- ☐ Confirm MC duties: announcements, toasts, hora, anniversary dance
- ☐ Review band attire (formal black-tie vs. cocktail)

- ☐ Coordinate timeline with planner, photographer, and venue

1 Month Out — Final Details

- ☐ Final payment per contract
- ☐ Final headcount and timeline confirmed with bandleader
- ☐ Vendor meals confirmed with venue (bands require hot meals)
- ☐ Backup plan for outdoor ceremony/cocktail hour weather
- ☐ Share final 'do-not-play' list (ex-songs, overplayed tracks)

Your Band Shortlist

Score each band 1–5 across the criteria that matter most.

Band	Live video	Reviews	Price fit	Vibe match	Availability	Total
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						

Smart Questions to Ask Every Band

- ☐ Can I see video of the EXACT musicians who will play my wedding?
- ☐ How many weddings have you played at my venue?
- ☐ What happens if a key musician is sick on my date?
- ☐ How do you read a room and adjust the set list live?
- ☐ What's included: lighting, MC, ceremony music, cocktail trio?
- ☐ What's your overtime rate and cancellation policy?
- ☐ How early do you arrive for setup and sound check?
- ☐ Can we add horns, strings, or a second vocalist?

Red Flags to Walk Away From

- ☐ No insurance certificate or vague contract terms
- ☐ Only edited highlight reels — no full live videos
- ☐ Pressure to sign same-day or unusually large deposits
- ☐ Substitute musicians not disclosed up front

 Reviews younger than the band's claimed track record

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