



Using Specialty Lighting for Your Wedding and Reception

No matter where the wedding and reception takes place — a tent, church, temple, banquet hall or what have you — lighting can transform it from ordinary to extraordinary. One type of lighting may be perfect for one part of the wedding event and look awful for another. Lighting designers can customize rented lighting for the particular space while adhering to your desires and budget. What follows is a basic introduction into the types of lighting and some ideas as to how to use lighting for your event.

Types of Lighting Available For Rent

- **Pin Spot** – Small spot lights that are used to illuminate an object by projecting a spot of light on it.
- **Video Projector** – Project customized, computer-generated images onto walls and ceilings.
- **Gobo** – Custom templates are ordered and used to project a light pattern, monogram, date or logo on floors, walls and ceilings. In this case, the Gobo itself is purchased and the spot light is rented.
- **Portable chandelier** – As their name implies, these hang from brackets attached to the center pole of pole-style tents.
- **PAR “Can”**. (Parabolic Aluminized Reflector) – These lights have an attachment that allows the color of the light to be changed with a colored piece of plastic called a “gel.”
- **Icicle lights** – Similar to the icicle lights that you can hang on your house, these lights can be used behind table skirting or behind sheer drapes.
- **Curtain lights** – Similar to icicle lights except that the hanging strands of lights are about 5 feet or longer and can be used in a variety of ways.
- **Tube lights** – Light strings encased in a gossamer tube that can be hung from the ceiling or draped on walls.

Why Use Specialty Lighting?

- Enhance the mood of your wedding event. The type and color of lighting you choose can make the experience seem more romantic, elegant or exciting.
- Wedding pictures capture memories of the event for a lifetime. Proper lighting makes the photographer’s work so much better.
- Help wedding guests look their best. Glaring florescent light does little to flatter the way people look. Better lighting options can give the bride and her guests a nice glow.
- Draw attention to your décor. Properly selected and positioned lighting can make your investment in cake, centerpieces, dance floor etc. look their best.
- Everyone wants a one-of-a-kind wedding event. Colored lighting, photo images and other special lighting for the bride and groom’s first dance can give the wedding a very personal touch.



Ideas for Ways To Use Lighting

- Highlight the beauty of your wedding cake, centerpieces and floral arrangements by illuminating them with pin spots. These can also add flair to your table place settings or linens.
- Add drama to large potted plants by wrapping mini light strings around the base or shine colored gel lights up from the plant’s base.

- Call attention to the head table and/or the cake table using our backdrop backlit with either curtain lights, pin spots or PAR cans. Use icicle lights under the table skirting.
- Project computerized images to enhance the dance floor. Couples may also enjoy dancing in a spotlight.
- Decorate walls using color washes or patterns of light, by using PAR cans; themed graphic, an image, a favorite quotation or a monogram with a Gobo.
- Use PAR cans to create color washes on ceilings, turn a ceiling into a moonlit sky with a projector or combine lighting and tube lights draped for a special effect.
- Create staged scenes, for example, using an artificial tree along with a bench and flowers. Place a Victorian-style street lamp nearby. Use soft lighting to set the mood for a sunset.
- Use suspended lighting such as decorative glow bulbs or pin spots that shine up into the tent ceiling.
- Set the mood, outdoors on the walkway to your venue using portable street lamps, tiki torches, paper lanterns or luminaries.



Some DOs and DON'Ts of Lighting

Robert Shakespeare, associate professor of theatre and drama and director of the center at Indiana University Bloomington said, "Lighting design is the art of revealing things. It's the art of influencing what you see and what you don't see, and how you feel about what you're seeing."

Properly designed and implemented lighting schemes can make an ordinary venue into a fantasy palace. Improperly designed lighting can do just the opposite. If the budget allows, obtain the services of a lighting expert. But, for many of us, that's not possible. High school and community college theater departments are possible sources of low cost lighting expertise. One of our services is to recommend lighting to our customers. Perhaps the rental agent in your area has expertise to share.

Be extremely careful with the color of lights you choose. The hot fashion colors currently are the many shades of green. But employing green lighting has its pros and cons. On one hand, green mood lighting produces a calming effect, but is unflattering for human skin making everyone at your event appear sickly. That expensive catered meal will not be very enjoyable when every plate has green roast beef on it. A better, more flattering choice would be amber lighting. Research your lighting choices carefully.



When properly positioned, pin spots can bring out the beauty of floral arrangements and centerpieces. Plan the placements carefully so that the intense beam of a pin spot is not accidentally directed into your guests' eyes.

Electrical overload is a serious concern. A professional lighting consultant will ensure that the current draw for the desired lighting scheme is within the limits of safety. There are ways for professionals to temporarily add additional power handling capabilities to a venue. But if you're attempting to install added lighting to your event yourself here are some basic cautions.

- ALWAYS read and follow the manufacturer's safety precautions and installation instructions. They offer that advice for a reason: They know the safe limits of their product. Failure to follow these instructions may result in your insurance company refusing to reimburse your costs should an accident occur.
- Extension cords are rated by how much current they can carry. Not just any extension cord will do – and don't be fooled by how thick the extension cord looks. Some companies use light gauge wire inside big cables to make the cord look more substantial than it really is. ALWAYS read the specifications carefully.
- Here's a general rule of thumb that we use when we install lights at an event. Add the wattage of all the lights to be used on one extension cord together. Divide this number by 120. The resulting number should never be higher than 80% of the rated capacity of the cord. If it is more, you must get a cord that is capable of handling higher current loads. Example: 3-400 watt mini-light strings equals 1200 watts. 1200 divided by 120 equals 10. Therefore your extension cord must be rated at 12 Amps or better.

- Avoid “daisy chaining” extension cords together. Two 25-foot cords hooked end-to-end will not carry as much load as one 50-foot cord.
- NEVER string more than three long strings of mini-lights end to end. If you do, the most likely thing that will happen is the fuses in the light plug will blow plunging your effects into the dark. Should that safety device fail, the wires will overheat and cause an electrocution or a fire hazard.

An Important Message About Candles

Nothing is more romantic than candlelight. Unfortunately, repeated careless use by some has resulted in strict rules regarding the use of real candles in wedding ceremonies and reception halls. Indeed, some venues have banned open flames altogether. If your venue allows candles here are some safety precautions to ensure that you have an event that is memorable for the right reasons.

- **Purchase quality candles** – Low cost candles sold at many dollar stores and similar stores are low cost for a reason. They are manufactured from low quality materials that melt at lower temperatures and as a result the entire structure of the candle may melt prematurely and allow the flaming wick to fall into a puddle of melted wax creating a flare up. Discount centers and hobby stores generally sell products in a range of quality. Research your purchases carefully. For peace of mind, purchase candles from a reputable shop – you’ll pay slightly more but end up with a high quality product guaranteed to burn properly.
- **Enclose your candles** – Place all burning candles in a glass container approved for candle burning. Unapproved containers may overheat and shatter, scattering glass slivers onto your guests. Also make sure that the tip of the flame is not higher than the lip of the container. This will minimize (but not completely eliminate) the danger of accidentally igniting some other flammable item on the tabletop.
- **NEVER – EVER burn candles in artificial arrangements** – Artificial and dried floral arrangements make wonderful centerpieces for your table BUT they will BURN LIKE A BLOWTORCH should they be accidentally ignited. Don’t do this!

Alternatives to flaming candles are available. Our store rents several low cost options that offer a similar look and glow. You should call your local rental center to discuss alternatives.



- **Mechanical candles** – These, often called Paradise Candles™, are made of metal to look like a real taper candle and contain a real candle inside. As the wick burns, a spring pushes up the real candle. They are dripless and never overheat, melt prematurely or sag. The added advantage is that many venues that forbid open flames make exceptions for mechanical candles. They are often used in churches for weddings because the candles all remain the exact same height as they burn giving a very elegant look. The church rarely objects because there isn’t any candle wax embedded in their expensive carpet.
- **LED Light** – These battery-powered lights come both regular and waterproof. We stock only the waterproof variety, which allows them to be placed in the vases of floral arrangements. You can vary the intensity of the light by altering the number of batteries in the light. These also can be obtained with randomly flickering lights that emulate the flicker of a natural candle.
- **LED Lighted Base** – These are rechargeable LED lighted bases that are placed under a floral vase. The light shines up through the bottom of the vase giving an unusual and elegant look. We recommend placing colored jewels in the bottom of the vase to catch the light better.

Regardless of the type of event you’re hosting, investing some thought and money in specialty lighting will enhance the ambience of the event. Call or visit our website for some ideas for your event.