

# Does Your Wedding Ceremony Need a Sound System?



Your family and friends are coming to your wedding ceremony to hear you say two words..... "I do."

What happens if your guests can't hear you say those words? You've got a problem.

Not every wedding needs a sound system. Here's how to tell if your ceremony should be amplified – and how to make sure that it gets done right.



## 4 Signs You Need a Sound System

**1. Your guest count is 75 or more.** Expecting 25 or 35 guests at your wedding? It's charming to keep things organic and intimate – no microphones, no electricity. But the larger your crowd gets, the harder it gets for the folks in the back to hear what's going on. My rule of thumb is that 75 guests is the point at which you're going to regret not having amplification. In fact, I "strongly recommend" it for as few as 50 guests.

**2. Your aisle is 8 rows long or longer.** Most church pews are 3' from pew to pew – and even if your guests are sitting in folding chairs, they'll take up about the same amount of space. So 8 rows puts your back row of guests 24' from the front. That's too far to hear well.

To see what I mean, find a friend – and a parking lot. Parking spaces are 8' wide on average, so an 8-row wedding aisle is 3 parking spaces long. Add a 4th space for the distance from your officiant to the front row. Can your friend hear you talking from 4 parking spaces away, or do you have to shout?

**3. Your ceremony is outdoors.** Outdoor weddings are beautiful – but they're twice as hard to hear as indoor weddings. Inside, sound reflects and bounces back. Outside, it disappears into the wind.

Speaking of wind, you'll also have the sounds of nature to compete with at your outdoor ceremony – and, if your location is near a thoroughfare, traffic as well.



To hear the difference being outside makes, try the experiment mentioned above: Talk to a friend while standing at least 4 parking spaces apart. Try it first in an indoor parking garage – then outdoors at the nearest Wal-Mart. What's easier?

**4. You want to use recorded music.** If you are planning on using recorded music for your prelude, the bridal party processional, the bridal processional and recessional or any special aspect of the ceremony, then you need a sound system. One thing nice about having a sound system is that you don't need to hire live musicians for the ceremony, which will allow you to allocate precious wedding budget funds elsewhere. You can also choose any music you want.

If any of the above describes your wedding, you **NEED** a sound system.

### 3 Things a Good Sound System Needs

**1. Two wireless microphones.** At Narrow Gauge Sound, we bring a wireless clip-on mic for your officiant and a wireless handheld mic for any other speakers. This second mic goes on a stand, where it can be used for special readings throughout the ceremony. If there are no readings, then you won't need the second microphone.

What about your vows? At most weddings, the mic clipped to your officiant will pick up the wedding couple too. For those weddings where the groom needs a wireless microphone, we always have that option available.



**2. Speakers and a mixer.** The number of speakers needed is usually one or two depending on the number of guests. As a general rule, one speaker will comfortably cover 75 people. One of our speakers "can" cover up to 150 people outside, BUT, the volume has to be pretty loud and those closest to the speaker may perceive it as being too loud. Two speakers will easily handle up to 250 guests. No matter how many speakers you need, it is important to set them up in the right place, so that they amplify your ceremony but also stay out of the photos.

Of course, Narrow Gauge Sound has all of this and in addition we have systems that are completely battery operated for venues without power.

**3. A sound engineer.** This really is *the most important part* of the sound system. Some companies will rent you equipment and let you run it yourself, but we don't. We understand that this is a once in a lifetime event, and the biggest day of your lives. We don't want that to be diminished in any way, and want to make sure that you and everyone enjoys the moment.

It takes a lot of skill and experience to run sound at a wedding. Whoever runs sound has to know what they are doing. In addition, they have to pay attention to the ceremony in a different way and won't be able to enjoy it like other guests. If Uncle Joe



runs sound, he will “miss” the ceremony. The sound tech has to think about what is coming next, not so much on what is happening at that moment. We don't hear every word, like your guests do because we are paying attention to a host of other things. That is why it is best to have a dedicated engineer, someone who is trained and has experience running sound at a wedding.

You have spent too much time, energy and money planning the most important day of your (or your daughters) life. There are so many moving parts during a wedding ceremony. Let a pro deal with these issues so you can enjoy every moment.

### **Someone else's problem**

Over the years, I've learned that just because you love someone and want to get married - it doesn't mean you're a sound expert. So the Narrow Gauge Sound philosophy is this: We figure out what you need and we make sure it's at the wedding. You worry about saying the vows. We'll worry about amplifying them.

If that sounds like the right approach - and your wedding is in Tucson – email me personally at [Jim@NarrowGaugeCountry.com](mailto:Jim@NarrowGaugeCountry.com). We'd love to help you have an amazing wedding ceremony.

