

An Organised Party Math in my Life #4

Have you ever had a party at your place where you felt you didn't get enough time to talk with the friends who came by? I was at a wedding last summer - in New York! - where the wedding guests were about half family, and half special friends. The total number of guests was somewhere around 160. A medium-size wedding by US standards.

The bride and groom, as is usual, hardly sat or ate during the reception, because they were busy visiting with everyone in the room. By the end of the evening they were utterly exhausted. They were also in a nasty temper and the bride was in tears! Getting married can be quite an ordeal I think! The bride's biggest concern was that during the reception she had only had time to visit relatives, and hadn't visited with *any* of her friends. People tried to console her by telling her that weddings are that way, and that everyone understood, but the bride still felt terribly guilty.

So that's when I started wondering if I could put the problem in perspective by doing a little mathematics. The newlyweds arrived at the reception hall at about 5:30pm. The party lasted till 9:30pm, and so was 4 hours long. Some of that time was taken up with wedding activities:

toasts	= 10 minutes
bride and groom's first dance	= 20 minutes
cake cutting	= 5 minutes
throwing the bride's bouquet	= 5 minutes
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	= 40 minutes

That left the bride

$$\begin{aligned}4 \text{ hours} - 40 \text{ minutes} &= 3 \text{ hours and } 20 \text{ minutes} \\ &= 3 \times 60 + 20 \text{ minutes} \\ &= 200 \text{ minutes}\end{aligned}$$

to visit with her guests. So, if the bride wanted to spend time with every single guest, the maximum amount of time she could spend with each one was

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{200 \text{ minutes}}{160 \text{ people}} &= 1.25 \text{ minutes per person} \\ &= 1 \text{ minute and } 15 \text{ seconds per person.}\end{aligned}$$

That's not very long!!!

We can look at this another way. Suppose the bride decides that spending 20 minutes with each of her guests would be sufficient. Then she could visit with just $60/20 = 3$ people every hour and in four hours could only properly visit with 12 people!!!

That's pretty amazing. I'll keep this in mind when I'm drawing up my own wedding list someday...