Wedding Insider

TIPS FOR PERFECT WEDDING PHOTOS

1 FIND THE RIGHT PHOTOGRAPHER

You gotta love the work!

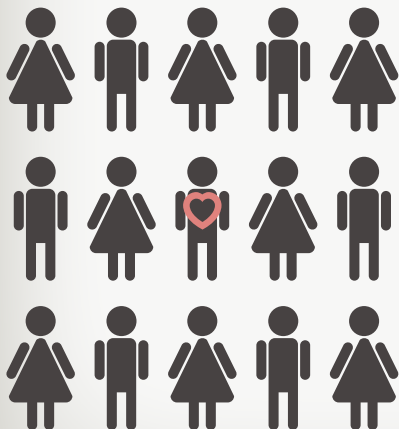**Portfolio + Pricing + Personality =**

First and foremost, you have to fall in love with a photographer's portfolio. If you feel 'meh' about the work on someone's website, MOVE ON; they are not the one for you. Find images you love and make some notes. Are you looking for more of a candid photographer who always finds an amazing angle or someone who spends an hour on epic bride and groom portraits at sunset? Photographers show the images they love to shoot in their portfolio; this is a window into their preferred style.

Next, reach out to your favorite photographers and tell them about your wedding. They love hearing about the details. This can open up the conversation about availability and rates, which can vary significantly based on skill level, experience and the geographic market. If it turns out you have really good taste, your budget might need some gentle massaging. Remember, this is your wedding photography; there are NO RESHOOTS.

Next, ask to see full galleries from recent weddings. This will give you an idea about what type of end product you can expect to receive from a particular photographer.

Once you've found a talented photographer within your budget, you're all set, right? Well, maybe not. Talk to them, get them on the phone and ask questions. Plan a face-to-face and ask them questions completely unrelated to photography. It's sort of like a first date. You want to enjoy being around your photographer because they will be with you for 10 straight hours. It's important to feel confident this is someone who can blend in with your families and friends. Your photographer becomes part of the wedding party, so personality counts.
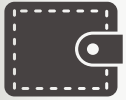
What do I want? What do I need?

Purchasing a package can save you some money up front, especially if you're interested in albums or gifts for the family. However, many photographers offer a la carte products and services, or 'build your own" type packages. Ask if you're able to purchase items later on and if there is a price difference. If you love photos, it's going to be tempting to lock in a large package right away, but it's also important not to stretch your budget too much at the beginning of the planning process; you never want to regret a photography purchase!
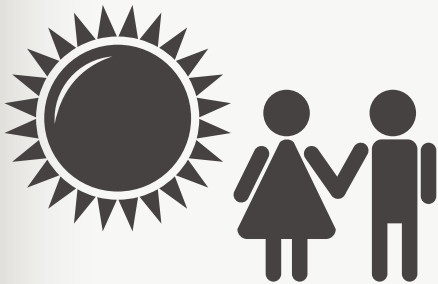
$$\frac{\text{Needs + Wants}}{\text{Budget}} = \text{Perfect Package}$$

What's the best time of day for photos?

From a photographer's perspective, daylight is not created equal. The light in the late afternoon right before sunset is much more flattering than at 12 noon. And wedding photographers don't really have much say in regards to your ceremony or dinner service timing. If you chose your venue based on the stunning sunset photos on their website, plan your portraits accordingly.

Sunset times are changing every day and are dramatically different throughout the year, so don't forget to consider the difference between the seasons. And of course, Daylight Savings Time!

Talk with your photographer and prepare for all the possibilities. If you REALLY love photography, want the absolute best light, and have an opportunity to plan for it, consider involving your photographer in the process. She/he will be thrilled you included them! Following this simple step can seriously rocket your portraits from good to AMAZING!

Traveling can eat up precious time.

Time spent in a car is time your photographer isn't taking pictures. When you're planning out your day, consider the logistics of location changes (for example, where you and your spouse are getting ready, the location of the ceremony, a separate reception area). All of the moving around can affect the timeline, and no photographer wants to miss a moment! One solution would be to have your photographer travel with you in your limo or shuttle? Regardless, if you plan a little buffer room in the timeline --even if it ultimately isn't needed--you'll be happy you did.

5 ORGANIZING THE CHARACTERS

Keep everyone in the loop.

Keeping your family and friends informed will ensure that everyone is where they should be on your wedding day. Make sure all your attendants have a copy of the timeline, and communicate with them as the wedding day approaches. Online resources make it so easy! Use Facebook, a separate website or blog, or even just sending old-fashioned emails!

Keep the wedding party happy.

Keeping everyone comfortable is incredibly important when it comes to your photos. This means bringing snacks, beverages, and items to beat the climate--or organizing with your getting ready and reception locations to have these items brought to you.

In the summer, have plenty of water with you and, in the cooler months, consider shawls for the ladies to cover up with and something warm to drink.

From the time you get ready to the ceremony to your portraits, you and your wedding party will have been at it for hours! So, keeping everyone hydrated and fed--including you--is integral to getting good, relaxed, and beautiful wedding party photos!

7 KNOW YOUR LOCATIONS

No surprises!

Restrictions *and* Rules

Some venues have rules about photography. It's important to alert your photographer so she/he can prepare and scout the location. This is especially important for church ceremonies that often have rules regarding flash usage and photographer positioning--for example, restricting movement during the ceremony. Have a vision for a sweeping shot of the congregation and your party on the altar, but from the choir loft? Love that garden alcove at the library where your outdoor ceremony is being held? Site reps are usually more than happy to accommodate requests to let you and your photographer into these locations, but asking ahead of time, or simply knowing who to ask, can minimize any disappointment on your day.

Also, think about plan "B" for rain or weather contingencies. We all hope for the best, but Mother Nature needs to be considered. Talk with your photographer about backup ideas, just incase.

Sometimes it's like herding cats.

ORGANIZE FAMILY PORTRAITS 8

Regardless of how many, or how few, groupings you're thinking about havings, portraits will usually take longer than you expect. It's always advisable to write down every single breakdown and talk it over with your photographer and wedding coordinator before your day. Will there be infants or precocious toddlers? Are there any seniors or guests that might require special assistance? Think about how to organize your breakdowns to minimize the impact on these important guests. Perhaps a chair will be needed for a great aunt--either in the picture or while she waits to join in. You'll be a hero, and everyone will appreciate your preparedness!

9 UNPLUG THE EVENT

No phones or gadgets, please.

Imagine a wedding where all your guests are truly present and not constantly staring at their phones or gadgets; or at you through their phones or gadgets! If you ask your guests to unplug, maybe just for the ceremony itself, what you'll really be doing is bringing them closer to the event they came to witness. Your photos will look so much better without electronics thrust up over your guests' heads, or hanging out into the center aisle--and the majority of your guests will appreciate it, even if they can't post photos instantly to Facebook.
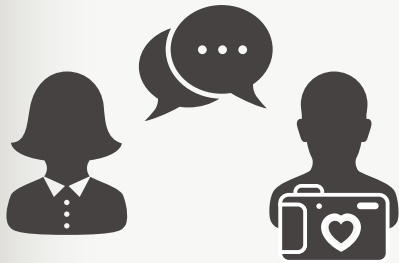
"Hey!"

It's important to keep in touch and reach out to your photographer in the time between the contract signing and your wedding. Inform your photographer about EVERYTHING!

Find them on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and all other social media. This will help you stay up to date on their current work. And of course to brag to all of your friends about how amazing your wedding photos are going to be.

If you're planning something different or unique--for example, additional speeches, special rituals during the ceremony, a family tradition--your photographer will need to know about it to best position himself to capture those images for you.

Even if nothing has changed, it's always helpful to check in to help build a rapport with your photographer. If you do, on your wedding day, it can feel like a trusted friend has arrived to spend your day with you.

and NOW YOU ARE TEN STEPS CLOSER TO PERFECT WEDDING PHOTOS!

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