



8 Steps to Finding the **Perfect** Wedding Photographer

IN 4 WEEKS OR LESS

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8 Steps to Finding the **Perfect** Wedding Photographer

IN 4 WEEKS OR LESS

YOU HAVE A LOT GOING ON

1

If you're like most people planning a wedding, you're busy. **Like, really busy.**

There's your job, endless household stuff, Target runs, work projects, personal projects, that big trip to plan, girl's nights, **date night**, friend's graduations, showers and weddings to attend and shop for. The list goes on.

Maybe **you're a dog or cat mom.** Maybe you and your fiancé are house hunting. Maybe one of you is in grad school or residency. Or, bless your heart, all of the above.

You've heard it before and it's true: planning your wedding is like a second job. Sure, it's been fun! But let's admit it, it can be a little **overwhelming at times.** The decision-fatigue is real.

So now you're at the 'find a photographer' part of the game. **If you're one of the lucky ones**, you called your sister's photographer -who everyone raved about- and they're available for your date.

On the other hand, **maybe you're starting from scratch.** Square one. A blank slate. You do a quick Google search for 'Philadelphia Wedding Photographers'.

The good news is...you've got options. The not-so-good news? You've got lots and lots of options. **Literally hundreds of them!** Where do you begin?



YOU NEED A PLAN

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND HERE

This isn't a step-by-step of exactly WHAT to look for in a photographer. There are lots of helpful blogs and articles out there that cover this.

But rather, this guide will help you to **sift through the hundreds of options** to find the one who's right for you, your budget and fits your unique style.



first

things

first

Let's revisit some of the **basic fundamentals of time management** shall we?

Some of these I'm sure you've heard of before, but here are a few of my **personal tried & true favorites...**



Work expands to fill
the time allotted.

~Parkinson's Law

TIME-MANAGEMENT HALL OF FAME



1

break it down

Break large projects into manageable tasks. This one is obvious, but worth repeating.

Read on to see how we are going to break down 'Find Photographer' into smaller, doable steps.

2

batch it

Batching is all about getting in the zone and grouping like-tasks with like-tasks. No responding to two emails, then making a phone call and then switching back to emails.

3

set up your space

Windex your desk, put on spotify or light a candle. If you're a paper person, get your notebook and a favorite pen. You might as well make this fun!

4

estimate the time

I've done the work for you here. At the bottom of each section, you'll see an estimate of the time you should allow for each step. This way, you'll have a better idea of how much time to plan for.

5

eliminate distractions

Don't let this time get hijacked by rings, pings and dings. Put your phone on Do Not Disturb or close open tabs so you can focus on the task at hand.

6

set a timer

One of the most life-changing time management hacks I ever learned. And so simple. But you guys, it works. And we'll talk more about this in the later steps.

you have to know what you're shooting for. **Good photographers book up early** and you don't want to miss out because you let things drag on too long.

Generally speaking, securing your photographer is probably going to take you **anywhere from 3-5 weeks**. Maybe more, maybe less.

Questions to ask yourself

- Is my date a popular one?
- Is my life extra busy right now?
- Is work going to be nuts the next few weeks?
- Do I have any big trips coming up or exams to pass?
- How many free weekends do I have in the coming months?

Take all these into account as you assess your calendar and try to come up with a reasonable **target date**.

Mark the date: BOOK PHOTOGRAPHER BY TODAY

Declare the next month or two **'photographer month'** to remind yourself of your goal.

After you've set your target date, go through and **block out time on your calendar** for the remaining steps. See where each of the steps will fit into your life and write that step into that day/week or month.

So you're probably looking at a TON of websites, profiles and galleries. Before you dive any further into the internet vortex, let's get you a system to keep you organized.



In a few short days, all of these gorgeous websites are going to start running together in your brain.

YOU'LL NEED A WAY TO CAPTURE YOUR FAVORITES.

Here are the places
(buckets) that you're
going to use to store the
ones who really catch
your eye

1

phone
screenshots

2

IG
collections

3

browser
bookmarks

4

theKnot &
Wedding Wire
dashboards

5

pinterest

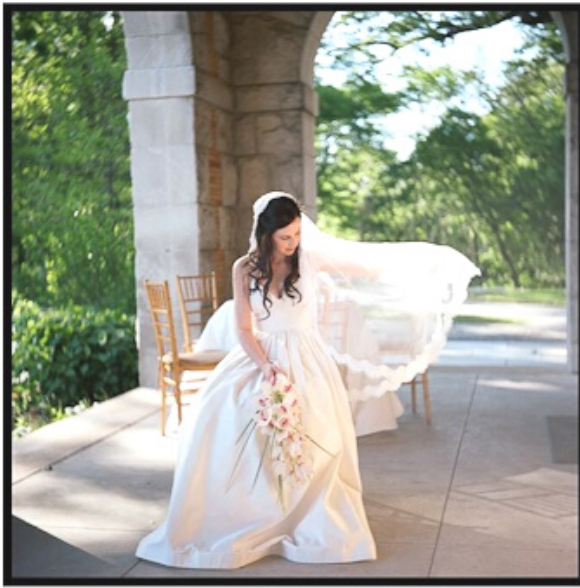
6

other

SOME HELPFUL TIPS



resist the urge
to email anyone right
now - unless you are
so excited that you
can't stop thinking
about them.



just the name
don't stress out about
capturing any other
details at this point.
Just the business or
photographer's name
is fine.



keep it tidy
don't stress out about
capturing any other
details at this point.
Just the business or
photographer's name
is fine.

TIME INVOLVED: 5 MINUTES

OK, now that we have a plan and a system in place, it's **time to start having some fun!** You're going to explore, peruse and pore over all those photographer virtual storefronts. **Go down those rabbit holes.** Surrender to the vortex. It's totally OK. That's what this step is all about!

In this step, you are going to:

- Capture your favorites
- Put them into your buckets

HERE'S WHERE TO LOOK:

1

Start with a basic search such as 'Philadelphia Wedding Photographer'

2

Google your venue and see what / whose images pop up

3

Explore The Knot, Pinterest, IG. Use your venue hashtag

4

Ask your (or your parents) local Facebook community for recommendations

5

Ask your friends & family for recommendations

some

helpful

tips



- **have fun...this is FUN!**
- save only the profiles that get you EXCITED
- **but don't overthink it**
- go with your gut
- **browse to your heart's content**
- browse when you're in the mood
- **browse while in line at Trader Joe's**
- browse in bed
- **give yourself breaks when needed**
- walk away for a few hours or days
- **don't forget to capture!**
- know when to stop

”

If you planned for one week of browsing, then stop at one week of browsing

TIME INVOLVED: 1-2 WEEKS

Take note of what you see. This will happen naturally of course, but the idea here is to get a feel for what's out there and, more importantly, **what you like**. Below are some basic photography styles you will likely discover in your search.

1 light & airy

The photographs of **light & airy style** are predominately color and take on a uniform, super-light and effervescent quality. You may not find a ton of black and white shots fall into this category.

2 dark & moody

On the flip side of that is **dark & moody style**. Here you'll see lots of dark shadows, high contrast and drama.

3 warm, vintage-y

Also trendy right now is the **warm, vintage-y style**. These photos have a nostalgic aged feel to them, similar to color photos from the seventies that have warm orange and sepia undertones.

4 classic

Somewhere in the middle lies the **classic style**. Here the wedding is captured true to real life, with minimal filters or enhancements (this is where my particular style falls).

Notice how you feel

...when you look through all these different styles. Do you lean more one way than another? Hopefully as you go along you can get a sense for what you like and what you don't.



TIME INVOLVED: NO EXTRA TIME

It's time to empty out your buckets and **have a closer look** at each and every photographer that caught your eye.

This is where things get interesting. What you'll learn here is that comparing photographers **isn't exactly apples to apples.**

“Comparing photographers isn't exactly apples to apples”

This step involves:

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT
MADE IT INTO YOUR BUCKETS.



MAKING A LIST OF THE
PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT EXCITE YOU



TOSSING OUT THE REST!

here's how
to do it



- go bucket by bucket
- start with your 'screenshot bucket' or another one of your buckets
- start with the first photographer and pull up their website
- do this ON A DESKTOP OR LAPTOP (trust me on this)
- spend a minute or two on each site, having a second look around
- check out their galleries, about page, philosophy and rates, if listed
- keep a notebook next to you to write a simple list the ones who make the cut



Keep or toss?

05

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:



**do I love
their work?**

**do they seem
like someone
we'd enjoy
spending the
day with?**

**from what I can
see, are they
within the scope
of my budget?**

**am I excited to
work with this
person?**

**am I excited
about their
brand?**

step five

A woman with long dark hair and glasses is sitting on a light-colored sofa. She is wearing a white knitted sweater and black pants. She is holding a book open in her lap and looking down at it. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a framed picture on the wall.

i

If you can't answer yes to all or most of these questions, **simply move on.** And the ones who do make the cut? Write the keepers on your notepad.

Aim for a list of fifteen - twenty five photographers at the end of this process.

”

TIME INVOLVED: AN AFTERNOON

LET THE EMAILING BEGIN!

It's time to go through your list and ask the two magic questions:

1

are they available for my date?

2

can I afford their services?

step six

here's how
to do it



r

Remember the BATCHING we talked about earlier? Here's exactly where that comes in. Instead of sending one email here and there, you are going to sit down and **send them out all at one time.**

g

Get out the notepad where all of your favorites are written. Starting with the first one, pull up their site (do not use your phone for this step) and **go straight to their contact page.**

d

Do not DM them in IG. **Send them an email** or simply fill out the contact form on their website. Ask about your date, pricing details or anything else you'd like to know.

u

Use your first inquiry message as a template, or simply **cut and paste** as you go onto the next photographer and the next.



afterwards:

a

Allow between 24-48 hours for a response. Any longer than that for a reply is questionable

b

But do take into account that **many photographers will not respond to emails on shooting weekends**, so if you are sending your inquiry on a Friday afternoon, it wouldn't be unreasonable to hear back on Monday

a

As replies come in, **cross out any names of photographers** who are either not available for your date or who's prices seem well outside of what you could possibly afford

y

You may want to print out and **save any pricing PDFs** that you receive during this time

“

when It comes to
finding & choosing a
service provider of
any kind, 3 has always
been my magic
number.

CONGRATS!

You're in the home stretch!

So at this point, **you've whittled down your list** to a group of photographers whose work you love, that you can afford and who are available for your date. Nice work!

Now it is time to set up some virtual calls. I recommend meeting with between 3-5 photographers - maybe more if you really enjoy this step and have the time. Do you!

For me though, when it comes to finding & choosing a service provider of any kind, **3 has always been my magic number.**

More than three?

OK, so what if you have more photographers on your list than you have time to meet with? Then I would **just pick your top 3** and set up calls with those photographers only.

That way, if for some reason you don't click with them, you can **just go back to your list** and choose another photographer to set up a meeting with.

TIPS FOR A GREAT MEETING:

07

always meet face to face (virtual is great)



have a pre-established end time



ask questions (see the list below for ideas)



don't worry if you run out of time, anything else
can be answered via email



the point here is to get a feel for the
photographer's personality and energy



remember, there is no pressure. And chances
are, there will be no hard feelings if you discover
that he or she is not a good fit



relax and enjoy yourself!

SOME **HIGH-VALUE** QUESTIONS TO ASK:

has anyone
else met with
you about
our date?

what
happens if
you get sick?

what is your
photo planning
strategy?

what happens
if it rains?

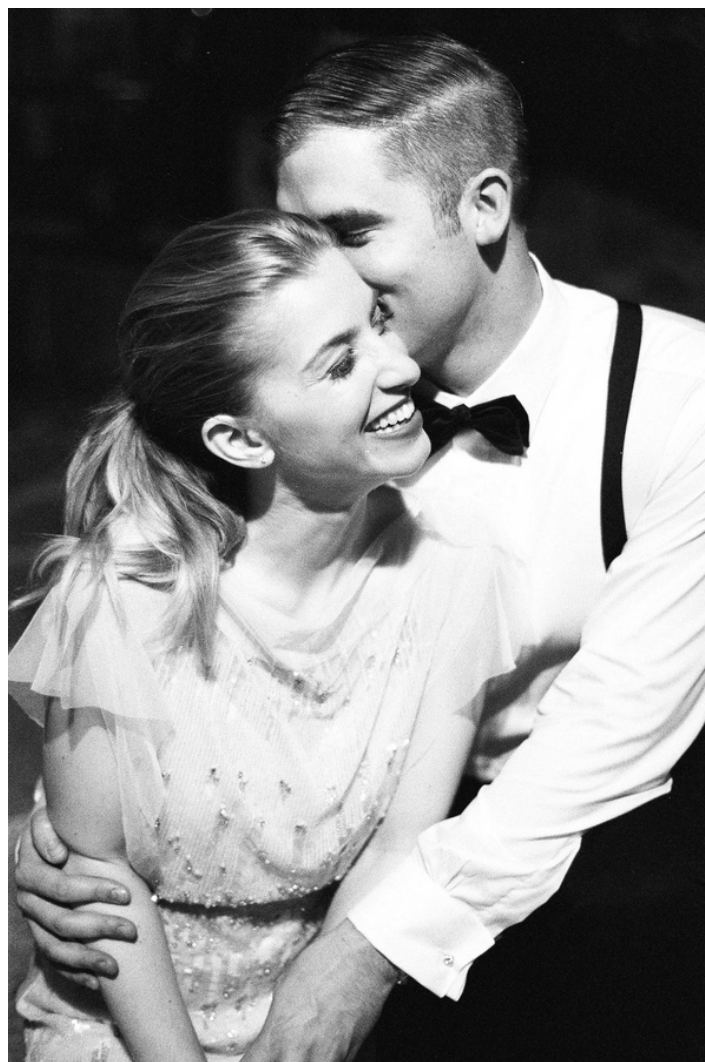
what would you
say are your 3
greatest
strengths as a
photographer?

what makes
you stand out
from your
competitors?

TIME INVOLVED: 1-2 WEEKS

Here it is...

...the moment of truth. This step might be a no-brainer if there was one photographer that really stood out from the rest. **On the flip side**, it could be tough because they were all super cool and affordable and you could picture yourself going with any of them.



some

helpful

tips



sleep on it, this is a BIG decision



give it a few days if you're just not sure



how does your fiancé feel?



go with the photographer that you are **most excited about**



you should feel pumped about working with this person and their brand!

08

step eight

**You did it!
you found a
photographer!**

”

cool,

so now

what?



send an email to the lucky winner



tell them you would LOVE to have them
photograph your wedding!



chances are they will be just as excited!



don't leave the others hanging ...take a minute
or two to reply to the ones that didn't make
the cut (they'll really appreciate it)



celebrate!

TO WRAP THINGS UP

So there you have it! **The 8 steps to finding your perfect wedding photographer.** I hope that these tips and strategies have been helpful to you in your wedding planning journey.

Please be kind to yourself during this wedding planning process. It's a lot for anyone and if you're feeling a **bit overwhelmed**, know that you are certainly not alone. 95% of my clients admit to feeling frazzled at times. And the other 5% are probably lying!

“

everyone keeps
telling you

‘you’ll get it all done’ and ‘it will be beautiful’ and they are absolutely right. But sometimes having a plan can help take some of the pressure off.

”

A recap of the 8 steps:

STEP 1 SET A TARGET DATE

STEP 2 CHOOSE YOUR SYSTEM

STEP 3 BROWSE & CAPTURE

STEP 4 NOTICE WHAT YOU LIKE

STEP 5 SIT DOWN & EVALUATE

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STEP 7 MEET & GREET

STEP 8 DECISION TIME

and because no one follows these guides to the letter (that would be weird, even for time-management connoisseur like me), just choose a **handful of these strategies** or suggestions. Or just use the steps as a general framework to keep you on track. Do what works for *you*!



happy planning!

ANNIE

*Philadelphia Wedding &
People Photographer*

