

10 Tips for the Best Wedding Photos!

Part One: Finding a photographer who is a great fit:

Tip #1 - Skill and experience. Weddings are notoriously difficult to photograph. They are fast paced, emotional and involve special moments that only happen once (the first time you see each other...the kiss!). You'll want to find a photographer with lots of experience. They'll know how to budget their time wisely, and how to anticipate the important moments so that no special moment is missed. Although it can be super tempting to have a friend step in and shoot for free, the quality of your images may not be up to professional standards, and with no contract, there is little recourse if you don't receive your photos.

Tip #2 - Personality! This may not seem important, but trust me... it is almost as important as skill and experience! Your wedding day is an experience, and no one will be with you throughout the day more than your photographer...from getting ready, through the ceremony, all the way until your grand exit. Having a photographer you click with (oh guys, pun intended!), with a calm, joyful, reassuring presence, will add so much to your experience of the day.

Tip #3 - Editing Style. There are several ways to shoot and edit wedding photos. Make sure you love your photographer's style. You won't want to hire a photographer who shoots in the "Light and Airy" style (like I do) if you prefer a "Dark and Moody" look to your photos. Take a look at their work before hiring them. Look for consistency in their editing. If all their galleries are consistent, you can expect the same look for your own photos. Inconsistent editing can be the sign of an inexperienced photographer.

Part Two: Ways to get the most value from your photography:

Tip #4 - Provide a Wedding Day Timeline (let your photographer know how each part of the day will run). We recommend including your photographer's input in the creation of the timeline. They'll be able to guide you through how much time it will take for posed photos, how long to plan on for family photos, and what time to start your ceremony to take advantage of the day's best light.

Tip #5 - Stick to your timeline!!! Make extra sure you have planned out the correct amount of time to "get ready". Know how long hair and makeup will take, and then add in 30 minutes extra for unexpected delays. Also know how long it will take to put your dress on (dresses with a long string that laces up the back of the gown can take almost 20 minutes to lace) and add in a little extra time for that as well. It is so much better to be ready "too early" than to be running way behind. Being ready early will give your photographer time to take some beautiful bridal portraits in the dressing room before your ceremony begins. These photos will have to be skipped for a bride running way behind on hair and makeup.

Tip #6 - Create a family shot list. This is a list of all the family groupings you would like photographed. A good rule of thumb is that it takes about 2 minutes for each family grouping (this includes rounding everyone up, posing them and getting the photo). I recommend no more than 10 - 15 formal family groupings (which would take approximately 20 - 30 minutes). And catching less formal photos with the others during your reception. List participants by first name, so the photographer or photographer's assistant has an easy time finding and rounding up the correct people for each shot!

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Tip #7 - Make sure you are totally happy with the fit of your wedding attire, prior to the big day. A too tight jacket, a too long hem, a dress that is too tight and creates the dreaded “back fat”, for example, can really impact how confident you feel during photos. I have seen so many brides who have not tried on their full attire (meaning gown with correct undergarments and shapers and shoes) only to discover on the morning of the wedding that their bra straps show, or their dress is too tight, or their shape wear doesn't do what they hoped it would, or the hem is too long with their wedding shoes on. Your wedding attire is such an important part of the day, give it its full due, and make sure you try all items on ahead of time.

Tip #8 - Let your photographer know how you are feeling while taking photos on your wedding day. They'll be thinking about so many things...exposure, composition, fluffing your train, completing the list of requested photos...they'll also be trying to gauge how you guys are doing...if you are getting tired, need a drink, need a moment, need to take your shoes off. If your anxiety is acting up, if you are feeling overwhelmed, or too hot, or need a little break – let your photographer know – they want you to be happy and comfortable! Communicating those things to them, can help make the experience great for all of you.

Tip #9 - Take a little time to make a decision about guests and their devices. Do you want all your family members snapping away on their phones during your ceremony? Experienced wedding photographers are used to working around this, but guests can be notoriously unaware of the impact they are having on the professional photos, when they lean way out into the aisle to get cell phone pics of “the kiss” or decide to stand in the background of the entire wedding procession to film a video on their phone. Many couples are opting to have an “Electronics free ceremony”. This can be accomplished by a small sign in the venue, and a friendly announcement made by the officiant just before the wedding ceremony begins. Something like *“Ladies and Gentlemen, before we begin, BRIDE and GROOM would like to invite you to be fully present with them during their wedding ceremony, and respectfully ask that all phones and cameras are put away during the ceremony. Please take as many photos you like during the reception!”*

Tip #10 - Embrace the creative spirit of your day! Your wedding will have its own unique feel, spirit and energy. Your photographer will be able to use their creativity to create the best photos that represent your day. Some couples end up providing a long list of Pinterest photos they would like to copy. This can end up stifling your photographer's creativity and prevent them from capturing the unique elements of *your day and your personalities!* Trust that your photographer will have lots of creative ideas and try to limit your Pinterest ideas to just a very few favorites

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