

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO A STRESS-FREE
WEDDING DAY TIMELINE



wedding day
timeline



MICHAEL+LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

Hey there,
we're michael & laura



We are Michael & Laura, a husband and wife wedding photography team based in Richmond, VA.

We've been shooting weddings together since 2011 and love all things weddings... But most of the time you can find us trying to figure out new parent life, then crashing to binge watching Netflix with our sweet pup, a craft beer, and a big bowl of homemade guacamole. It's either that, or we're creating a random project to do at our house because we not-so-secretly wish we were Chip and Joanna Gaines.

While planning our own wedding nearly 8 years ago, we learned how overwhelming it is to plan a party for everyone you know and love.. especially when the biggest gathering I'd ever planned was a dinner party for 12 people. But, you're not in this alone. Rely on your vendors for help! We've been to a lot of wedding and can walk you through your options.

We aim to serve our couples the best we can and hope this guide is helpful to you as you plan your wedding day, but if you have any questions, just ask (even if you haven't booked us as one of your vendors)!

let's connect



listen to our
audio blog



MICHAEL + LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

answer these questions first

what's important

I'm doing a first look. ☐ yes ☐ no

I want to go to cocktail hour. ☐ yes ☐ no

My reception is scheduled to last ____ hours.

My ceremony is scheduled to last ____ minutes.

I am planning on ____ immediate family photo combinations.

I am planning on ____ extended family photo combinations.

when is sunset?

Sunset is a huge factor when planning your timeline. If you want to take pictures outside, make sure your reception starts at or after sunset.

Sunset on my wedding day is scheduled for ____.

My reception should start at ____.

My cocktail hour will be from ____ - ____.

My ceremony should start at ____.

details about my venue

VENUE

(getting ready)

(ceremony)

(reception)

TIMEFRAME*

(arrival - departure)

(arrival - departure)

(arrival - departure)

*Be sure to check with your venue. Some spaces have very strict rules on when you are allowed to arrive and depart.

TRAVEL TIME

(to get to getting ready space)

(from getting ready to ceremony)

(from ceremony to reception)



MICHAEL + LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

family portrait list

IMMEDIATE FAMILY COMBINATIONS

	DURING FORMALS	DURING RECEPTION
Bride & Groom with Bride's immediate family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Bride's parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Bride's siblings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Bride's grandparents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Groom's immediate family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Groom's parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Groom's siblings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Groom's grandparents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EXTENDED FAMILY COMBINATIONS

	DURING FORMALS	DURING RECEPTION
Bride & Groom with Mother of the Bride's extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Bride's cousins (Mom's side)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Father of the Bride's extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Bride's cousins (Dad's side)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Mother of the Groom's extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Groom's cousins (Mom's side)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Father of the Groom's extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bride & Groom with Groom's cousins (Dad's side)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why a family portrait list?

When you will do family formals and how many people you are including can change your wedding day timeline a lot. Many couples who do a first look choose to take immediate family formals before the ceremony. Most of those people are already at the venue, and it frees up time after the ceremony to enjoy cocktail hour, or spend a little alone time together.

Keep in mind, choosing this option doesn't mean you can't get pictures with your extended family - cousins, or favorite aunt - instead those can be taken during the reception as a less formal picture if you'd like.

Others who choose to do it first look may still decide to take family portraits after the ceremony. This is an especially good option if you want formal pictures of extended family, or if you know your entire family will not be present at the venue before the ceremony.

If you are not doing a first look, or want formal extended family portraits, you will definitely want to take family portraits after the ceremony, during cocktail hour, to make sure you and your new spouse can both be in the pictures.

Keep in mind that if you have a large extended family it can take quite a while to get all of those portraits done. We recommend planning at least five minutes per extended family combination. For very large groups of more than 20 it can take even longer.



Extra timeline information

Other things you may want to add to your timeline

There are many other things that could affect your wedding day timeline. Here are a few things to keep in mind. Try to add a few minutes during those parts of the day.

- ☐ bride and groom exchange gifts/letters
- ☐ father-daughter first look
- ☐ bustle bride's dress
- ☐ travel times between venues
- ☐ lunch
- ☐ greeting guests

How long to plan for pictures

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 45-60 minutes | Details (dress, bouquet, invitations, jewelry, etc.) |
| 45-60 minutes | Bridal prep (hair and makeup, robe shot, putting dress on) |
| 30-60 minutes | First look/Bride and groom portraits (before the ceremony) |
| 20-40 minutes | "Just Married" portraits of bride and groom (after the ceremony) |
| 30-40 minutes | Bridal party |
| 20-40 minutes | Family formals |



MICHAEL+LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

Sample first look timeline

EVENT	START TIME	END
Getting Ready - hair and makeup	12:00pm	2:45pm
Photographer arrives	1:00pm	
Bride in her dress - Bridal Portraits	2:45pm	3:15pm
First Look/Bride and Groom portraits	3:20pm	4:00pm
Bridal Party portraits	4:00pm	4:30pm
Family portraits	4:30pm	5:00pm
Make-up/hair retouch, room to breathe	5:00pm	5:30pm
Ceremony	5:30pm	6:00pm
"Just Married" portraits of Bride & Groom	6:10pm	6:40pm
Bride & Groom join cocktail hour or have time alone	6:40pm	7:00pm
Reception begins - Introductions	7:00pm	7:15pm
sunset	7:17pm	
Dinner - seated	7:15pm	8:00pm
Toasts & Cake Cutting	8:00pm	8:20pm
Dancing	8:20pm	9:40pm
Grand Exit	9:40pm	10:00pm



MICHAEL + LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

Sample Traditional Timeline

EVENT	START TIME	END
Getting Ready - hair and makeup	12:00pm	2:30pm
Photographer arrives	1:00pm	
Bride in her dress - Bridal Portraits	2:30pm	3:00pm
Individual bridal party portraits	3:00pm	4:30pm
Make-up/hair retouch, room to	4:30pm	5:00pm
Ceremony	5:00pm	5:30pm
Family Portraits	5:40pm	6:00pm
Full Bridal Party Portraits	6:00pm	6:20pm
Bride & Groom Portraits	6:20pm	6:50pm
Reception begins - Introductions	7:00pm	7:15pm
sunset	7:17pm	
Dinner - seated	7:15pm	8:00pm
Toasts & Cake Cutting	8:00pm	8:20pm
Dancing	8:20pm	9:40pm
Grand Exit	9:40pm	10:00pm



MICHAEL+LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

My first look Timeline

EVENT	START TIME	END
Getting Ready - hair and makeup		
Photographer arrives		
Bride in her dress - Bridal Portraits		
First Look/Bride and Groom portraits		
Bridal Party portraits		
Family portraits		
Make-up/hair retouch, room to breathe		
Ceremony		
"Just Married" portraits of Bride & Groom		
Bride & Groom join cocktail hour or have time alone		
Reception begins - Introductions		
Sunset		
Dinner - seated		
Toasts & Cake Cutting		
Dancing		
Grand Exit		



MICHAEL + LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

* With immediate family portraits
taken before the ceremony

My first look Timeline

EVENT	START TIME	END
Getting Ready - hair and makeup		
Photographer arrives		
Bride in her dress - Bridal Portraits		
First Look/Bride and Groom portraits		
Bridal Party portraits		
Make-up/hair retouch, room to breathe		
Ceremony		
Family Portraits		
"Just Married" portraits of Bride & Groom		
Bride & Groom join cocktail hour or have time alone		
Reception begins - Introductions		
Sunset		
Dinner - seated		
Toasts & Cake Cutting		
Dancing		
Grand Exit		



MICHAEL + LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY

* With immediate or extended family
portraits taken after the ceremony

My Traditional Timeline

EVENT

START TIME

END

Getting Ready - hair and makeup

Photographer arrives

Bride in her dress - Bridal Portraits

Individual bridal party portraits

Make-up/hair retouch, room to

Ceremony

Family Portraits

Full Bridal Party Portraits

Bride & Groom Portraits

Reception begins - Introductions

Sunset

Dinner - seated

Toasts & Cake Cutting

Dancing

Grand Exit



MICHAEL + LAURA
PHOTOGRAPHY