





Welcome! This is such an exciting time for you! I'm sure your mind is racing with all that needs to be planned. It's all very exciting, but I know it can also be somewhat overwhelming. You're planning the day that you've been anticipating your whole life and you only get one shot at it! By the time you get the hang of it, the planning is over! My goal as a wedding photographer is to make this one aspect of the planning process simple. Photography is more than just images, it's a real part of your day. Not only do you deserve beautiful images, you also deserve an amazing photographic experience. The goal of this guide is to help you plan your wedding day in a way that will allow me to provide you with the BEST experience possible.



Get to know Me

You may have gotten a hint of this already... but I LOVE what I do! Documenting your wedding day is such an honour!! Since we'll be spending a lot of time together on the big day, I want to make sure you really feel like you know me! So, here are some basics.....

Wedding Day Favourites

You may not realize this but every photographer has parts of the wedding day that they favour! Below you can read through three of my favourite parts of the wedding day and find out about why these moments are close to my heart!



Bridal Details

I love starting off the day with beautiful details! I consider this my "warm up" time. These details allow me to be creative from the moment I begin shooting on your wedding day. I love having this time to prepare for the rest of your day!



Bride & Groom Portraits

Portrait time with you, the bride and groom, is hands down my favourite part of the day! This is when my couples really get to enjoy their wedding day. I especially love the moment when the groom sees his bride for the first time! If I could photograph first looks all day long, I would!



After the Ceremony

The first few moments after the ceremony are so special as well! This is when the couple gets to hug, laugh, & cry with those that they are closest to. It's emotional and it's so very special! I love documenting this part of the day!

Table of Contents







- 7 Your Engagement Session
- 8 Engagement Prep Tips
- 11 Preparing for Your Engagement Session
- 15 Sample Timeline Breakdown
- 20 Weddings through the Seasons
- 23 Getting Ready
- 31 Bridal Details & Timing Tips
- 34 Veil Options
- 35 The First Look
- 40 The Father / Daughter First Look

Table of Contents







- 41 Ceremony Prep & Tips
- 44 Planning Destination Weddings
- 46 The Family Formals List
- 48 Your Romantic Portrait Time
- 50 Trusting Portrait Locations
- 51 Your Bridal Party
- 52 Reception Planning
- 56 Creating Your First Heirloom
- 57 Your Online Gallery Explained



Jour Engagement Session

Now that you have picked a date, your photographer and probably a venue as well, you can celebrate! Those are some of the toughest decisions in wedding planning and you can cross them off your list! Hooray!! Now on to the fun stuff.... like your engagement session! I include engagement sessions in The Wedding Experience because I truly believe that they are a VITAL part of the entire process. During your engagement session, we'll both get to know each other better, and you'll have the chance to experience my approach to photography, including how I shoot and how I handle posing and lighting. This session will make a HUGE impact on how the wedding day flows and how relaxed you'll feel on your big day. I'll arrive on your wedding day already knowing how you two interact, what your best poses are and how to photograph you in a genuine way! What I will learn about you during your engagement session is invaluable! You will feel like such a pro on your big day because of the great practice you had during your engagement session, and that's how it should be!

Your engagement session can be scheduled anytime before your wedding day. I normally suggest booking it at least 3-6 months in advance to avoid stress. Because my weekends are filled with weddings, I shoot engagements on weekday evenings, normally from 5-7pm depending on the light and the time of the year. In the winter months, 3-5pm is a normal time frame for an engagement shoot (much later in the summer months of course!...more on this follows later in this guide). As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, we will need to start brainstorming about location ideas. I LOVE it when couples pick a location that is special or sentimental to them in some way! If you can't think of anywhere specific that you would like to shoot, I can help you decide on a location! As long as the light is great, I can make ANY location work! I shoot at farms, campuses, downtown alleys, and even laundry mats! I'm serious! Do not shy away from crazy ideas! The more creative, the better!

Engagement Prep

It's always a little intimidating to have your photo taken....even on a phone taken by a friend! We still want to look good, make sure nothing is in our teeth and that our hair is behaving! I realize that preparing for your engagement session can be a little overwhelming. Here are some tips for outfits & accessories that will make your preparation a little more manageable!







the basics + what to bring

POCKETS | Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have keys or phones showing through your pockets.

TIMING | The sun sets quickly especially if your session is not in the summer months. The later you arrive, the less time we have for photos! Once the sun sets, the session is over.

RING CLEANING | Clean your ring! I love to take a few rings shots while you change outfits. The cleaner the better!

CHANGING CLOTHES | As much as I would like to say that we always have restrooms for outfit changes, more often than not, our clients do quick outfit changes in their car if there are no other options!

DEEP BREATHS | Relax! You don't have to be a pro at this. I'm going to help you along the way and it's going to be a blast! Enjoy this time together, and make a date out of it! Plan dinner afterwards and celebrate!!

PARKING FEE | This may not apply to your session, but you always want to plan in advance and be prepared for any parking fee we may encounter.

CLOTHING | Bringing one casual and one dressier outfit will give your session two totally different "looks". If you're unsure about a few pieces, feel free to bring all options and I can help you decide. Also, you want to make sure you're comfortable in what you're wearing.

AVOID MATCHING! | Try to pick outfits & accessories that coordinate instead. Patterns can be okay if they are small enough....however, graphics are not favourable. If you're wearing a pattern, make sure it's small and not distracting.

FLIP FLOPS | If you're wearing shoes that are difficult to walk in but look awesome, bring some comfy ones for walking to each location!



Engagement Session Approximate Start Times

WINTER

Dec-Mar 3-5pm

From December through mid-March you can plan on your engagement session taking place around 3-5pm. However, daylight savings in mid-March will make the start time one hour later.

SUMMER

Jun-Aug 6:30-8:30pm

Summer engagements, just like all engagements, take place two hours before sunset. This will hopefully mean that the shoot will be during the cooler part of the day.

SPRING

Apr-May - Varies

The sunset time drastically changes throughout the course of these two months and so our session times change as well. You can plan on approximately 5:30-7:30 pm in April and 6:00-8:00 pm in May.

FALL

Sept-Nov - Varies

The sunset time changes drastically during these months. In Sept, you can plan on 5:30-7:30 pm until the third week but 5:00-7:00 pm until mid-Oct. After the first week of Nov, 3:00-5:00pm.









How do we prepare?

If you're a little anxious about how you will do with this whole "picture" thing, you're not alone. I receive many emails from couples who are worried about how your photos will turn out and I have great news for you.... you both are more photogenic than you think! I am constantly surprising couples by discovering their hidden modelling skills and my most common response from my Lisa Rivard Photography Grooms is "That wasn't as bad as I thought! It was actually fun". Boom! Mission accomplished! When the groom says that taking pictures was FUN, I have done my job well! Your engagement session is supposed to be fun and relaxed, not forced or awkward. As you prepare for your shoot, there are a few ways that you can prepare for your session.

First of all, I highly recommend sitting down together and briefly looking through 2-3 of your favourite engagement sessions that I have photographed (on my website under the menu 'Journal'). Spend some time together scrolling through a few blog posts, this will allow you both to gauge what your expectations should be. I also recommend that you allow for plenty of time to get to your shoot! There is nothing worse than when a couple shows up late, and they have been arguing in the car! That is definitely going to put you both in a bad mood! Last but not least, remember to have patience with each other, in particular don't assume that you're not going to have a good time... I think you'll be surprised how much you will both enjoy your session!



what style do you prefer?

These choices represent the three main decisions you will have to make in regards to your outfit choices. There are no right or wrong answers! Maybe you want one outfit to be dressy and the other to be casual. Maybe you want one outfit to be very light and neutral but you want to wear more colour in the next outfit. These categories will hopefully help you determine what you're hoping for in your engagement session. If you're feeling stuck and can't seem to determine what you prefer, that's very normal!

Here are some general ideas when it comes to styling during an engagement session. Once you read through these, you may have a better understanding of what you prefer and you can start planning your outfits. These ideas are based off of my experience and aren't concrete rules that can't be broken. However, if you have questions about one of them in regards to what you want to wear, just email me and we can talk about what would be best!:

Things to Avoid:

- 1. Bright reds, neons (yellow, green, blue) or oranges (they reflect colour onto skin and can be difficult to edit)
- 2. Patterns smaller than a quarter: Tiny patterns can cause a strange effect in digital images. Men's checkered shirts are fine if the "checks" are on the larger side.
- 3. Too much matching! If one of you is wearing very dark jeans, the other may want to wear lighter-coloured pants. If one of you is wearing a navy top, the other shouldn't wear a dark/heavy coloured top. Alternating the "colour heaviness" of your outfits can make your images look more balanced.
- 4. Avoid one of you being casual while the other is more dressy as this may look a bit odd in photos.

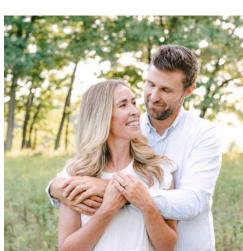












Romantic Style Recipe

For my style of photography that includes "light" and "airy" colours and for more romantic photos, your outfit choices go a long way in making sure your images turn out brighter, softer, and extra photogenic! Here are some ingredients that go into creating a romantic styled shoot. You don't need to choose all of these ingredients, but the more ingredients you include, the more romantic it will be!

Neutral Colours: Blushes, tans, light pinks, faint blues and light minty teals, creams, greys, and whites will always result in a more light and airy look in your images. These colours photograph softer and more romantically!

Long, Flow-y Skirts/Dresses: Dresses and skirts with feminine ruffles and/or multiple layers of fabric, which blow and move in the wind will always photograph beautifully! You would be amazed at how impactful moving fabric can be, and how much it can soften an image.

Khakis vs. Jeans: If you really want your images to be as bright as possible, consider having your groom wear lighter pants instead of dark dress pants or dark jeans.



Sample Timeline

Here's the page that can be somewhat intimidating! The TIMELINE! I know this isn't the most exciting aspect of the wedding day, but this is the one thing that can make or break your photography! These next two pages will outline an ideal wedding day working off of a 6pm ceremony timeframe. This ideal timeline is also based off of a wedding day that includes a first look. 90% of my couples choose to do a first look, and you can read more about that option a few pages over! Remember that all wedding days are different, and your timeline may differ due to travel times and unique situations.

Bridal Details 2:30-3:15



Every bride loves having those beautiful shots of her bridal details. It's an important part of the story and I love having some time to shoot the dress. shoes, jewellery, invitations, etc. These shots allow me to get warmed up for the rest of the big day. I normally like to allow at least 45 minutes for this part of the day. While I'm shooting details, I'm also capturing some shots of the bride and her girls getting ready! If I have a second photographer shooting with me, they will photograph the guys 40 minutes before the first look since it takes them less time to get dressed!

After the details have been photographed, it's time for the bride to get into her dress! This is a big moment! I usually ask the mother of the bride and all of the bridesmaids to be dressed by the time the bride is ready to get into her dress. This ensures that everyone will look great in those images. After the bride is in her gown, she can put on her jewellery, veil, shoes, and I will shoot some additional bridal portraits!

> 3:15-3:45 Bridal Prep





First Look 4:00-4:15

This is one of my favourite parts of the wedding day! I will find the perfect location for my couple's first look prior to the getting ready portion of the day. Don't stress about that one bit! I will make sure the location is as private and as secluded as possible.

The timeline continued....

Portraits 4:15-4:45



After the bride and groom take their time with the first look, I will begin taking a few romantic portraits of the two of them while the initial excitement is still present! I will find the locations for these shots well! Remember. the LIGHT determines where we shoot and so I can't decide on portrait locations until the day. As we shoot these portraits, the bridal party can start making their way to us for bridal party portraits!

Bridal Party Portraits 4:50-5:20



Now it's time for bridal party shots! I buffer in extra time throughout the day just in we have unexpected things that hold us up! One way to make sure we stay on schedule for bridal party portraits is to have the someone put boutonnieres on the guys BEFORE they arrive for portraits. During bridal party portraits, I will make sure to take some.....



..... great shots of the guys and girls both separately AND together!

After bridal party portraits are complete, the bride will go into hiding so that early guests don't sneak a peek, and the ushers will begin their duties.



5:30-6:00 Bride in Hiding

The timeline continued....

Reception Details 5:30-5:50



If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I will use this time to shoot the reception decor UNTOUCHED. If the ceremony and reception are in different locations, I recommend having a cocktail hour outside of the main reception area if possible so that I can grab some great shots of your reception before the night begins and guests start laying down purses and coats on their seats!

It's time to get married!! Most ceremonies are between 15 and 30 minutes long. If your ceremony is longer than 30 mins, we'll make adjustments to the timeline! Cherish these moments! Your ceremony will pass by so quickly!



Ceremony 6:00-6:30

Family Portraits 6:40-7:10

Family formals normally take place immediately following the ceremony. It's best to save all of the family formals until after the ceremony because ALL family members will be present at that time.



We'll need about 30 minutes for family formals & I will send a list before the wedding for you to indicate which photos you would like and to complete with family names. I would recommend shooting portraits outdoors if possible so that they resemble more natural family portraits, especially if the ceremony location is dark!

A Few "Just Married" Portraits 7:15-7:30



7:00 pm is the BEST time of day for portraits in the late spring, summer and early fall! This is when the sun is glow-y and golden. I love having a few extra minutes with the bride and groom to take a few "Just Married" portraits right after family formals (or sneak out for a few minutes during the reception, often in a break between speeches or between dinner and dessert!

Reception Begins! 7:30



This is when the bridal party enters for introductions and the party begins!! By this part of the day, my timeline isn't as strict. I work off of the natural light and so after the sun is set, my portrait time is over and I begin focusing on the reception events!

I feel that photography coverage is important for the main events of the reception and depending on what you are looking for, the first hour dancing! If you're interested in having your exit photographed, there several options for this! You can either add additional coverage or plan an exit with just your bridal party! We have had GREAT success with this and the party never stops! Email me about this if you're interested in learning more!



The Exit 10:30

Approximate lines
DETAILS & PREP: 1.5 HOURS

FIRST LOOK & PORTRAITS: 30-40 MINS

BRIDAL PARTY: 30-40 MINS

FAMILY FORMALS: 30 MINS

EXTRA PORTRAIT TIME: AS MUCH TIME AS

YOU'LL GIVE ME!





Portrait & Timing Tips for: WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER & FALL

Winter

Winter weddings are gorgeous! However, they do take some additional planning simply because of the sunset time. The hard part about a winter timeline is the fact that the sun sets around 4pm. This means that all of your portraits have to be done before then! This isn't a problem if you're having a late afternoon wedding. However, if you're planning on having a late evening wedding, you may have a bit of down time from 4pm until the start of the ceremony. You will also need more coverage time as well.

Spring

Spring weddings are wonderful because they are the perfect temperature! Spring weddings normally mean the potential for some blooms! If we happen to find any type of blooming tree or plant, it will be worth it to give us a few minutes for portraits with it! You'll LOVE the result!

Summer

Summer weddings are amazing! I love that there is so much daylight! In some months, the light will last until 8:30pm! So, if you're having a summer wedding, you'll need to plan on having a few minutes to slip out of the reception for your sunset portraits! You will NOT regret this! This is the absolute best light of the day and you're going to want to have portraits during this time period. Usually these portraits happen during dinner or open dancing so that no one even notices that you're gone for a few minutes!

Fall

Fall weddings are my favourite! I love the temperature and the rich colours! Most of my fall brides worry about colour, and I just want to encourage you that all that I need is one tree with some colour to make it look like fall! A little bit of colour can go a long way!! Your portrait time will vary depending on your wedding date. We'll be sure to discuss this when we approve your final timeline!







Let the day begin!

This portion of The Wedding Experience really sets the stage for the entire wedding day. The next few pages will share tips and tricks that will ensure a seamless morning of bridal preparation and beautiful portraits!







Getting Ready

It's the morning of your wedding! Hopefully all of the little details are taken care of and you're relaxing with your best friends while your hair is being done. If certain items haven't been checked off the to-do list, it's time to hand them over to someone else. Delegation is a key part of a stress-free wedding day. I know it's hard to hand over the decorating duties and all of the last minute things that need to be done, but it really is important to relax the morning of your wedding. The rest of the day is going to be fast-paced and filled with a lot of emotions! Take advantage of this down time! There are a few things to consider about the "getting ready" portion of the day. Do you want to share a "first look" with your dad or any other person who plays a huge role in your life?

Will you and your groom be exchanging gifts during this time? If so, who would you like to deliver them? Are there certain women in your life who would appreciate seeing you get into your gown? Some brides want very few people around for this moment. Other brides love having aunts and grandmas present! It's totally up to you! A few other things to consider.... as you get ready to put your dress on, refrain from putting any jewellery on. I love shooting all of those final steps once you're in your gown! Speaking of the gown, if your gown is on a plastic hanger, try to make a note to bring a wooden or fancy hanger to hang it on. If you forget, no big deal! I'm a pro at finding wooden hangers at venues! Keep reading along for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare!







Kings, Shoes, Jewellery....

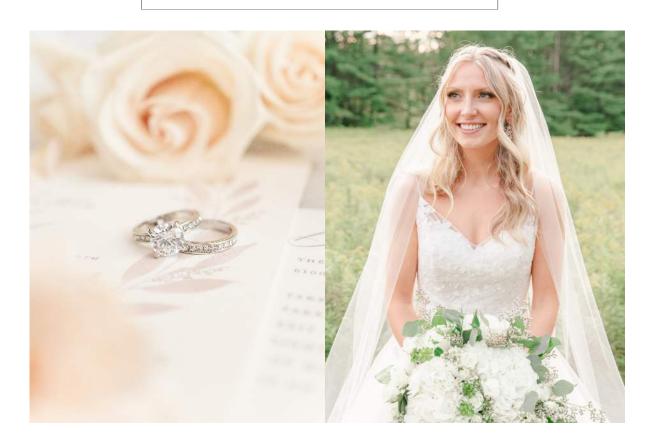
The whole day begins with the DETAILS! This is one of my favourite parts of the wedding day, because it allows me to prepare and get my creative side warmed up for the rest of the day! I photograph a bride's details in a way that matches and showcases the style of the entire wedding day. So, in some ways, the details set the stage for the look of the whole wedding and I really appreciate having enough time to stylize, and shoot everything from the dress, to the jewellery, to grandma's keepsake! Read on to find a list of the most common details that I shoot. I ask brides to gather any details they have before I arrive so that I can walk in, say hello, give you a big hug and then begin with all the goodies! (Please be assured that I will take GREAT care of the dress, I promise!)



WHAT TO BRING

dress
veil / hair pieces
rings (all three!)
shoes
bridal bouquet &
groom's boutonniere
jewellery
perfume
invitation suite
extra (loose) florals

Day of Reminders





GATHER the goods

Please collect all your details IN ONE SPOT before I arrive so I can begin quickly & have more time for some "getting ready" shots of you & your girls!

EXTRA elements

Sometimes, depending on the theme and "look" of the wedding day, there may be some extra elements that you could include when you gather your details. For example, if you're having a rustic-themed wedding that includes some wooden elements, maybe save a small piece of wood for me to use when I'm shooting your rings and jewellery. This REALLY makes for beautiful, consistent album spreads!

KEEP all three rings

The most common detail missing when I arrive are the rings! Moms, officiants, and planners will tell you to hand over your wedding band to the best man before the day begins. However, it's actually better to hand it over (along with the groom's band) during the bridal party portraits so that I can shoot some great ring shots earlier! I promise it will get back to the best man.

BRING the bouquet

Don't forget your bouquet! Have the bouquets & boutonnieres delivered to you before the first look so that you can have these for your portraits. No worries, if it's hot, we'll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony!

When you're planning a wedding day timeline, the best advice I can give is to ADD CUSHION TIME! Sometimes the most simple things can take an extra 20 minutes and then all of a sudden, the whole morning is thrown off. I have seen "getting the bride in her dress" take almost 40 minutes because of a button malfunction. It's a smart idea to add in an extra ten minutes here and there so that we have some wiggle room to work with! This way, if one part of the day gets thrown off by 20 minutes, I can help you compensate for that time in other areas. There are so many different things to think about when you're planning a wedding day, and so here are some tips for the preceremony timeline! I realize that every single wedding day is different and so not all of these tips will apply to every wedding day schedule. Something else to consider is that not EVERYTHING will go as planned, and I promise you, that is completely normal!!

BOUQUETS & BOUTONNIERES

You will need your bouquet & boutonniere for your first look! Have them delivered to the bride's getting ready location!

TRAVEL TIME

Be sure to think about the travel time and TRAFFIC to and from your getting ready location and your venue!

HAIR & MAKEUP

I encourage brides to have at least their makeup done before I start because who wants a ton of shots without their makeup on?! Nobody.

GROOMSMEN PREP

My second photographer will photograph the guys getting ready if they are getting ready in the same location as the bride or within 10-15 mins travel distance.



Timing Tips





GETTING IN THE DRESS

I'll instruct you to get into your dress close to a window and it would be fabulous to have your bridesmaids dressed when you're getting in your gown!

CREATE A CUSHION

A 10 minute cushion every now and then is a GREAT idea! It's amazing how fast time slips away the day of!



The Bridal Bouquet

There are so many expenses when it comes to wedding planning. Many brides have to prioritize what they want to invest in. I just want to give a little tip that can save money and make a huge impact on the way your images turn out. If you're having trouble making a decision about your florals, here is what I suggest. I recommend making your bridal bouquet a big priority! When I'm photographing a wedding, if the bride has a gorgeous bouquet, I can make the entire day look like there were beautiful florals everywhere! I can use the bridal bouquet to spruce up bridal details, reception details AND even bride and groom portraits as well! The bridal bouquet is a focal point for me when it comes to your photography, and so I highly recommend getting your DREAM bouquet and investing less on the bridesmaids' bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much!



Veil Options

Since 90% of our couples opt for a first look, we get a lot of questions about whether the bride should wear her bridal veil for this part of the day! I recommend that the bride only wear her veil when she comes down the aisle and I recommend this for three different reasons. 1. This is something new for your groom to see when you're walking down the aisle! 2. A lot of times, during a first look, the groom is so excited to see his bride that he accidentally pulls the veil out when he throws his arms around her! And 3. Saving the veil for the ceremony ensures that I will get some "Just Married" portrait time with the couple because EVERY bride needs to have a "Veil Blowing in the Wind" shot of their own! This isn't a rule that we ask all brides to follow, it's simply a suggestion that we make!



The First Look

Your first look is an amazing part of your wedding day! If you aren't sure about this tradition, the next few pages will explain why it would be a romantic addition to your wedding day celebration that not only adds to the experience but also reduces stress. Please know that I would never want any of my couples to feel pressured to go with this option. However, I do want to make sure that I share all of the benefits of a first look, because there is a reason 90% of my couples do this and LOVE it!











I have confessed my deep love for "First Looks" numerous times. There is a reason for this. They're AWESOME! However, not everyone is aware of how awesome they are, because they get caught up in how "non-traditional" it is, and they immediately write it off. This is something that I hear often! Brides want a REACTION....they want their groom to be so surprised and overcome with joy when they walk down the aisle that their grooms cry at the first sight of them! Isn't that EVERY girl's dream? Who doesn't want that reaction? Luckily, sometimes you have the best of both worlds, because you decide to share an intimate "First Look" moment on your wedding day, AND your groom sometimes still LOSES IT when you come down the aisle. The groom can still be in tears along with everyone who sees him overcome with emotion!! No matter what, walking down the aisle on your wedding day will be a moment that you will treasure for a lifetime!!

Some brides love "traditions".... but what a bride REALLY wants when it comes to her groom seeing her for the first time, is a REACTION. Those who are not interested in a First Look usually think that by seeing each other beforehand, they will lose part of that reaction. They also assume that it will not be as emotional or as intimate as it would be if they were coming down the aisle. What I have found (this is starting to sound like a research paper!) is so ironic! Starting with the fact that everyone knows that wedding days are a bit stressful for the bride and groom.

The whole day is focused on them, they need to look their best, they need to be on time, the groom has no idea what side the boutonniere is supposed to go on and little by little... the tension grows.

It's before the ceremony and the gravity of what is about to happen starts to sink in and the calm, collected groom who was playing golf just a few short hours ago is now starting to feel a little anxious. So what happens next? The groom waits in a little room somewhere for his sign from the officiant or coordinator. It seems like it's taking FOREVER. Finally, the officiant or coordinator leans their head in and hurries the groom to get ready. With clammy hands, the groom enters the ceremony and what does he find? he finds anywhere from 80-300 people and they're all looking where? Right at his face... because everyone has expectations and anticipation about his first reaction. This is the farthest thing from a private, intimate moment. Sure, it's SO powerful and SO wonderful. ... I already said that walking down the aisle is one of the BEST PARTS of many wedding days!! It's magical!!

But it's also true that when the nerves are gone... true emotions are free to be expressed. So if I were to condense what I just wrote... basically, grooms normally become incredibly nervous on wedding days.... even if they seem cool and collected.

For most grooms, the nerves kick in before they see their bride because when they see her, everything becomes VERY real! So when the nerves start creeping up, instead of keeping the groom in a secluded space until his time to enter the ceremony, what if you took him to a private place... no people, no on-lookers, no distractions.... and you let his beautiful bride, the love of his life, quietly call his name and have him turn around to see her for the first time. He would turn around and finally get his first look at his stunning bride and not only would he get to see her... he could embrace her... cry with her.... kiss her... and ENJOY that moment with her for as LONG as they wanted. As she shows him her dress, twirls a few times and then asks him what he thinks... his nerves start to diminish. After all, she's the one who can make him most comfortable anyway.

Because they aren't on a time crunch... they casually move into their romantic portraits. No one is around, the coordinator isn't announcing "15 minutes left", and there is no pressure. It's just the two of them and their photographer..... capturing the excitement and the joy of their wedding day. This is their time to be TOGETHER... and to be ALONE. When does that happen on a wedding day? Without a first look.... it doesn't. After their romantic portraits are done, they meet up with their best friends. Their bridal party joins them and because they still have plenty of time to spare... the bride touches up a little makeup while the guys act like guys. After a few minutes the bridal party portraits begin and they're FUN. They're FUN, because there is time to make them FUN.

There aren't any guests waiting impatiently at the cocktail hour and there isn't a DJ coming to find the photographer to get a time check. It's wonderful!

After portraits are done, the girls and guys separate and prepare for the ceremony. The guests begin to arrive and the ushers are in place. Pretty soon it's time for the processional music to begin and one by one, the bridesmaids make their way down to the front of the ceremony. As the groom clasps his hands... they aren't clasped out of nervousness but excitement. The music builds, the mother of the bride stands and all of the guests follow her lead. The groom looks up, and here comes the BRIDE!!! His best friend, his companion, his sweetheart.....she's stunning... ABSOLUTELY stunning. The closer she gets, the bigger he smiles.

Now let me put a disclaimer on here before we continue...my clients are not required to do a first look by any means! I used to feel bad for sharing this option with couples who were against it, because I didn't want to push anything on them. However, I've seen the benefits of a first look over and over again, and so I only share this because I want the BEST for my couples!! It's totally okay if couples choose not to share a first look! It's just my preference to do one for many reasons.... Keep reading to find out more of the benefits of sharing your first look privately! For brides not interested in a first look, let's start chatting soon about how we'll create a special timeline to fit everything in!



FIRST LOOK | Why it's Worth It

40% MORE PORTRAITS

You're investing a lot into your wedding photography. With a first look, you'll receive 40% MORE portraits of the two of you... and those are the images you will decorate your first home with! With a first look, you make the most out of this large investment and get the most for your money.

ENJOY THE SURPRISE FREELY

You actually get to have intimate time on your wedding day with your groom. Most brides don't realize that when you come down the aisle and totally SHOCK him with your gorgeous-ness... he can't even tell you how amazing you look. He can't touch you, embrace you or even SPEAK to you. You have to wait until 30 minutes later when the ceremony is over for him to react and tell you how amazing you look. And after 30 minutes of the ceremony, the reaction isn't the same as the initial first glance.

EXTEND YOUR DAY BY 3 HOURS

First looks allow you to extend your wedding day. Normally the wedding day would start when you come down the aisle, then the ceremony would end, you would rush through portraits so that you're not late for the introductions and then it's reception time. With a first look, your wedding day is extended by almost 3 hours! Instead of being rushed for your bridal party portraits... you actually get to enjoy them and have fun hanging out with your BEST friends on your wedding day. The WHOLE first half of my client's wedding albums are filled with images just from this time together before the ceremony.

YOUR ONLY ALONE TIME

First looks allow you to be TOGETHER and alone on your wedding day. When you see each other, not only is it intimate, it is often some of your only time to be alone the whole day! Brides and grooms cry and laugh and cry some more... and then that puts you in the PERFECT mood for your romantic portraits. Normally portraits are a little rushed after the family formals, and it can be hard to really get back into that "lovey dovey" mode.... especially with family around! When you have just shared your first look, you're feeling so much love, and I always capture some super sweet images during those moments!

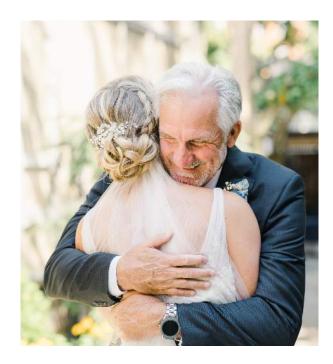
DIMINISHES NERVES

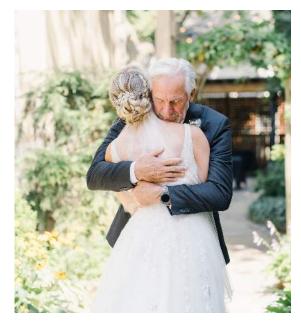
You get rid of your nerves! I'd say, literally 1/2 of my couples who have decided to do a first look, the grooms were not fans of it at first. However, because they have never experienced their wedding day before, they didn't know how nerve racking it can be. I have heard from many grooms who initially weren't a fan of the first look... but afterwards admitted to being SO much more relaxed and ready for the ceremony!



Brides, if you have never seen your guy cry or get emotional, you can't expect him to be overly emotional on your wedding day. Some guys just embrace their brides and never cry.... and that's OKAY. Some guys show very little emotion when their bride is coming down the aisle and that's okay too. Just enjoy this amazing day, and try not to put any expectations on him. If you take this advice to heart, I could potentially be saving you a lot of disappointment on your day. One thing I have noticed after shooting many weddings is that the stress and nerves that come with a wedding day can sometimes make it hard for some grooms to truly express their emotions. It's just a lot to take in all at once. This is a great reason to share a first look and also a great reason to give some grace to your guy! Sure, you deserve to feel beautiful, but my encouragement to you is to enjoy this time together, no matter what his reaction is like!







The Father / Daughter

FIRST LOOK

This is for all of the brides who have a sweet spot in their heart for their dad. I have to admit that Father/Daughter first looks make me a little teary. For a lot of dads, this is when everything feels real and it hits him... "My baby girl is getting MARRIED!" These are precious moments to photograph and I highly encourage any daddy's girl to make time in their timeline for this moment. It doesn't take long at all! The hardest part is making sure dad shows up on time! If dad doesn't show up on time, the whole timeline can get thrown off, or we'll have to skip the father/daughter first look. Another sweet idea we've seen is having the father of the bride escort the bride to her first look!









Lighting

Ceremony lighting is really important. If you get married outdoors at 12 noon, the lighting will be extremely harsh and not only will there be harsh lines of light on your faces, you will also be squinting. I suggest planning an outdoor ceremony 2 hours before sunset if you are having a FIRST LOOK. If you are not interested in sharing a first look, then I would suggest having your ceremony 3 hours before sunset to ensure that you will have plenty of time for all of your portraits afterwards. The lower the sun, the more romantic the lighting. If you are having an indoor ceremony, it is always best to have EVEN lighting at the altar. If there are two spotlights on the bride and groom, I will not be able to get a good photo of the rest of the bridal party. It is better to have soft, even light across the whole altar.

Order of Service

I have seen so many couples do so many AMAZING things during their ceremony. Some couples share in communion while some light a unity candle. I've seen rope ceremonies and the use of coloured sand to symbolize the blending of families. The options are limitless!! As you plan your ceremony, make sure you design it to be exactly what the two of you envision it to be. This is your day!! If you have the freedom to be creative, then by all means, be creative!!



Programs & Details

The BEST advice I have for the program-making process is to remember that not EVERY guest needs a program! Also, before ordering your programs, have SEVERAL people check it for spelling and grammatical errors. Programs and the ceremony decor are things that the bride can plan in advance but then delegate the actual job of setting it up to a friend or coordinator. The last thing a bride needs to be doing the morning of her wedding is running around setting up floral arrangements! This leads me into my next column!

Coordination

Hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator can be helpful, if you have the budget!! Brides realize very quickly that if they do not have someone in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility will automatically fall on the mother of the bride, the photographer or the BRIDE! When a photographer is in complete charge of the timeline and the coordination of the day, the images may suffer. All of my most stressful wedding situations were caused by a lack of organization and coordination. It's so important to make this a priority. If you need any recommendations on wedding coordination services I would love to share some of my favourite vendors with you!

DESTINATION

Weddings

If you are planning a destination wedding, a lot of the details in this guide will not apply to you! Your details, your timeline and even your preparation for the big day will be much simpler. However, it is a good idea to start thinking about a few key components of the day such as: your ceremony time and your ceremony/portrait locations (some destination weddings require some planning to find portrait locations without tourists in the background). Be sure to check the sunset time at your wedding location before settling on your ceremony time. As your wedding day draws closer, we'll begin to chat about the timeline of the day and the travel arrangements. Get excited!! This is going to be amazing!!

Family Formals







Sample List for

Family Formals

I absolutely love meeting my couple's families on the wedding day! Family formals are normally my first interaction with them and so I always like to have a game plan for this part of the day! Eight weeks before the wedding, you'll receive a template from me that will ask you to list out the family formals you want me to capture, along with family names. Here is a sample family formal list to help you start preparing what shots you need. I do have to limit the family formal time in order to ensure that I have plenty of daylight for your romantic portraits. However, any large family group shots that I don't accomplish during family formals, I can be sure to try to capture at the reception!





ROMANTIC PORTRAITS

If I'm being honest, all of the wedding day images are important, but the real favourites are almost always from my time with the bride and groom alone! These romantic portraits of just the two of you will be the images that you frame beside your bed or over your mantle, and they will also be the images that will fill your album for generations to enjoy. These images are always my favourite not only because of their beauty, but because this is such a sweet portion of the day. For this brief moment in time, you will be alone with your groom on your wedding day. You will have a chance to be with each other and really connect before the craziness begins! Romantic portraits are normally done before the ceremony (after the "First Look") and then I LOVE shooting a few "just married" portraits after the ceremony as well! This is when the light is low and golden! It's such a romantic time for bride and groom portraits! If you're not interested in a First Look, I will make sure to include a lot of time after the ceremony for these portraits!









Your Bridal Party

Let's chat about your bridal party! This is when the fun REALLY begins! I know from experience that all brides want their closest friends to have an AMAZING time during their big day, and I will make sure that happens! Bridal party portraits should be a ton of FUN! After you share your first look, depending on the locations and the timing of the day, your bridal party will join us for portraits! If all goes well, we will be able to accomplish ALL of your bridal party portraits BEFORE the ceremony. This means that your guys and girls will be free to mingle at cocktail hour if they wish! If there are flower girls and ring bearers involved, they can either join us for the pre-ceremony portraits or we can take one final group photo after the ceremony, before family formals. Be sure your groomsmen arrive with boutonnieres on, and your bridesmaids arrive with bouquets!

Reception Details





The party is here!! Receptions can be a blast! However, it's important to make sure that you have your event well thought out. This is the job of your venue manager/wedding coordinator, and/or your DJ/Band. Your caterer will also play a big role in the design and set up of your event. Every aspect of your reception affects the overall outline of the evening. For example, if you're not having a plated meal, your reception will need to be set up in a way that allows movement. Guests will need to be able to find the food stations easily, and there will likely be a mixture of dinner tables and hightop cocktail tables. This will encourage guests to mix and mingle. If you are having a plated dinner, you will more than likely need place cards, full place settings, and space for all of your guests to be seated comfortably. Whatever the style of your event, make sure that you plan out all of the aspects of the evening. Your venue manager/coordinator and/or DJ can help you set up the evening so that guests won't leave early or experience long periods of waiting for the next thing to happen.



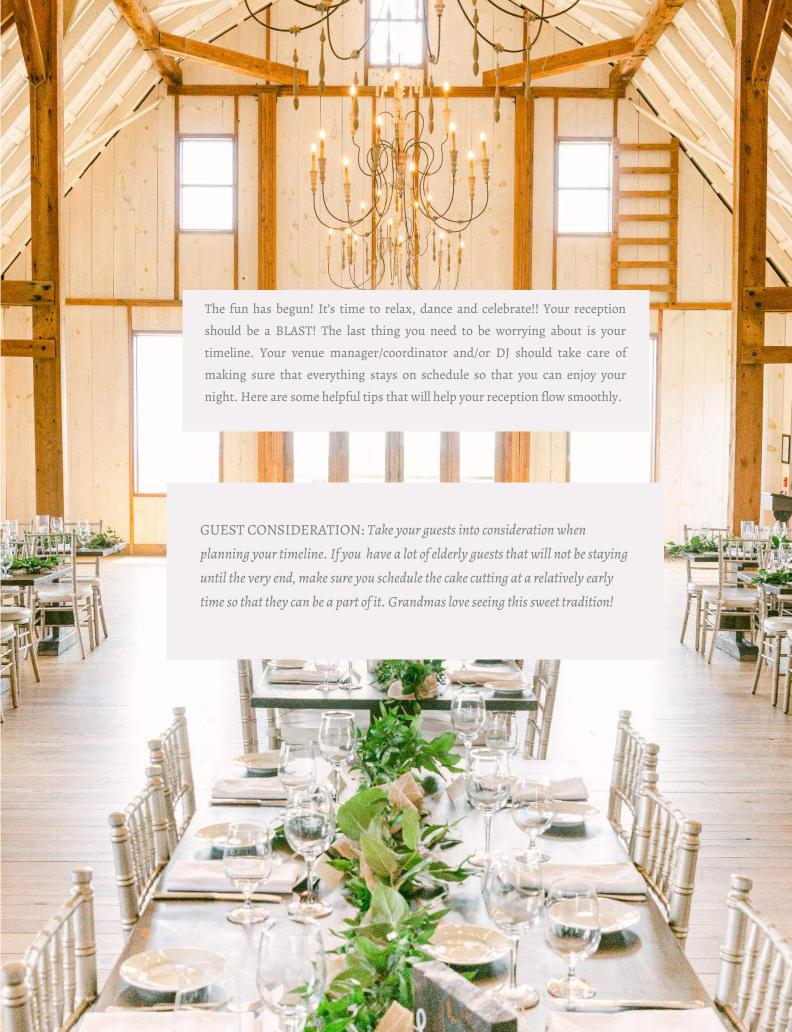




Much like the ceremony, you have the freedom to make your reception your own! It's your party, it should be exactly how you want it to be! Here is a list of some key events that happen often at receptions:

- Bridal Party Introductions
- Bride & Groom First Dance
- Father-Daughter Dance
- Mother-Son Dance
- Traditional Religious Dances
- Welcome by Father of the Bride

- Blessing
- Cake Cutting
- Speeches
- Bouquet and Garter Toss
- Large group portraits with friends
- The exit of the Bride and Groom





Reception Tips

MAKE IT YOUR OWN: If you want to have a special dance with your grandparents, do it! Make your reception a reflection of who you are and don't feel tied to traditions. Also, make sure you give your DJ or Band a "Do Not Play" list if there are some songs you really don't want to hear during your reception!

DON'T GET CAUGHT UP in the formalities and the details. Sure, details are pretty and fun to photograph, but they can steal the joy of the day if you get too caught up in them. (Just speaking from experience here) Plan your centrepieces, welcome table, etc. well before the wedding date, and show your coordinator or family friend how to set them up so that you aren't even thinking about those things the day of!

KEEP IT MOVING: Chat with your venue manager/coordinator about how you can plan your reception in a way that will keep guests engaged and moving all night!



RECEPTION COVERAGE: If you haven't purchased enough coverage time for your photography to last until the exit, you have a few options: You can either add additional coverage or plan an exit with just your bridal party! Let me know about this if you're interested in learning more! I recommend planning your timeline so that you can have at least one hour of dancing photographed. The guests who dance during the first hour will still be dancing in the third hour! One hour of dancing will be enough time to really capture the joy of your reception!

Heirloom Albums

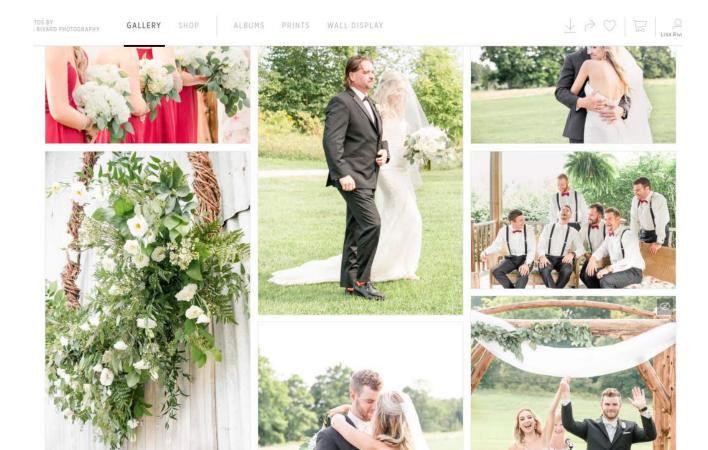
I have always said that I would grab my whole family and our wedding album if our house ever caught on fire! Could we always build another wedding album if something happened to this book? Yes. However, there is something special about creating your first heirloom album. Having digital images is wonderful, but having a printed keepsake that tells a visual story of your wedding day is priceless! If you haven't already invested in an heirloom album of your own, you can always come back to me at any time and order one. We aren't a photography business that pushes product sales at all. However, these albums are important not just for our couples to have... but for their grandchildren to enjoy as well.

SIZE OPTIONS:

8x8, 10x10, 12x12

SAY THANK YOU WITH A PARENT ALBUM:

After the wedding chaos is over and life returns to normal, or if you want to surprise your parents with their very own albums from your wedding for Christmas, let me know before October 1st so we can get them ordered!



YOUR ONLINE GALLERY

Years ago you had to order prints of the images that you wanted to have forever. That isn't how I work these days! I want you to have ALL of your memories in your possession forever and ever! I also want you to share your images freely and without any hesitation. This is why I deliver your images via an online gallery. This means that you don't have to wait on a package in the mail, and you'll have access to them wherever you are! I've listed some important information that will help you understand your online gallery and all that it can do on the next page!

DOWNLOADING PHOTOS:

You will be able to download your edited images directly from your online gallery, with the choice of 'web-size' for faster loading for social media, and 'high resolution' for prints, canvases, and albums! The process to download is very simple. You will receive an email with a link to your gallery. To access your gallery, you click the link, enter your email, and then create your own password (to be used any time you access the gallery). You can then select individual photos to download or download all of them at once. It takes a few minutes to prepare for hundreds of images to be downloaded!

ACCESSING YOUR PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE:

With my online galleries, you will have the option of pulling up your gallery for viewing in your phone's browser. You'll be able to access your wedding and engagement galleries and you can download images directly to your phone for clear, crisp instagrams photos! However, I wouldn't recommend using the downloaded phone photos when you print. It is best to use the original high resolution images on a USB!

ORDERING PRINTS:

Multiple print sizes are available. I suggest having these images printed in a professional lab to ensure colour and contrast accuracy (I have access to a very reasonably priced photography printing lab). You are more than welcome to print images on your own also. If so, I would recommend an in-store or online photo shop like Henrys. I would avoid printing at non-professional labs, especially for larger prints or wall canvases. I cannot promise that your colours will print true-to-life or that these photos will be as sharp as with a pro lab.

GALLERY EXPIRATION:

I have great news! Your galleries will not expire for 1 year! Isn't that amazing?! However, even though you will have access to your images for a year, I would still recommend downloading them and saving them in multiple places for safe keeping!

SHARING, WATERMARKING & EDITING:

You have the freedom to share your images in any way that you choose. These are your images, and I want you to love them so much that you can't help but share them! I don't believe that it is necessary to watermark my images. All I ask for is credit whenever you use an image on social media. I only have ONE request when it comes to what you can and cannot do with my work. I always encourage my clients not to re-edit their images. Let me do that hard work! However, if you have an image or two that you want to print at a very large size and you find an imperfection, I will gladly perfect it!



Thank You!

Last, but certainly not least, THANK YOU for trusting me with your special day. I am so honoured to be the one capturing your memories, and I cannot WAIT to celebrate alongside you! Enjoy this season of planning but also remember that your MARRIAGE is more important than the wedding. The wedding will come and go in a matter of hours, but your marriage needs to stand the test of time. Continue to make time for one another, even with all that needs to get done. As you continue to plan, please feel free to contact me with ANY questions you may have along the way! Depending on your date, the next step would be to finalize an engagement session. Also, about 8 weeks before the wedding, you'll receive an online questionnaire that will provide me with everything I need to know for your big day!! I hope this guide has been helpful as you continue to plan and prepare for your wedding day!