



SKP

SAMI KATHRYN

PHOTOGRAPHY

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THE SKP ENGAGEMENT SESSION GUIDE

*Notes for a Joyful Engagement Session*

*Planning for Your*

## ENGAGEMENT SESSION

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Now that you have picked a date, a 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 my wedding collections because I truly believe that they are a VITAL part of the entire process.

During your engagement session, you'll have the chance to get to know me, experience how I shoot and how I handle posing and lighting. This session will make a HUGE impact on how the wedding day flows. 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!



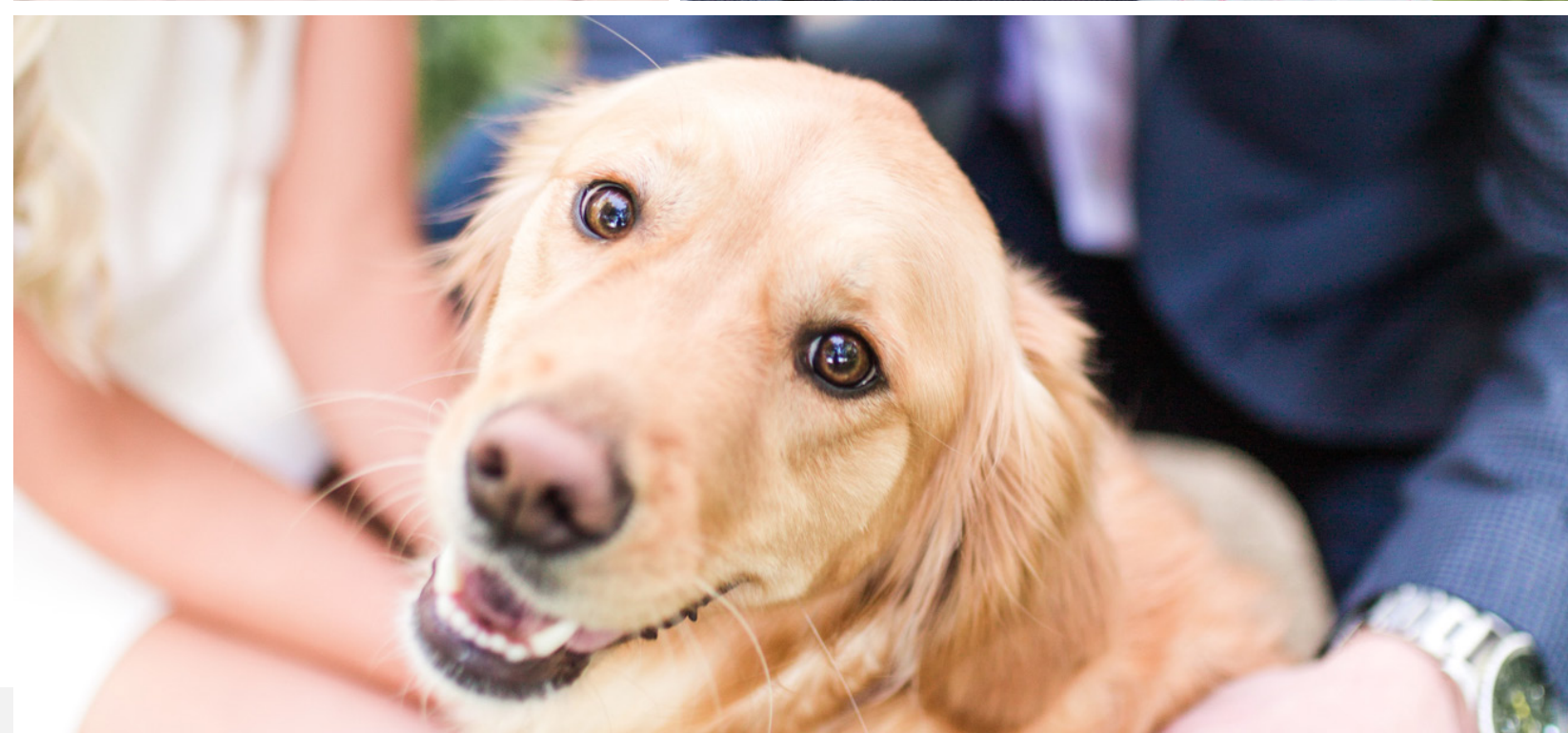
*Planning for Your*  
**ENGAGEMENT SESSION**

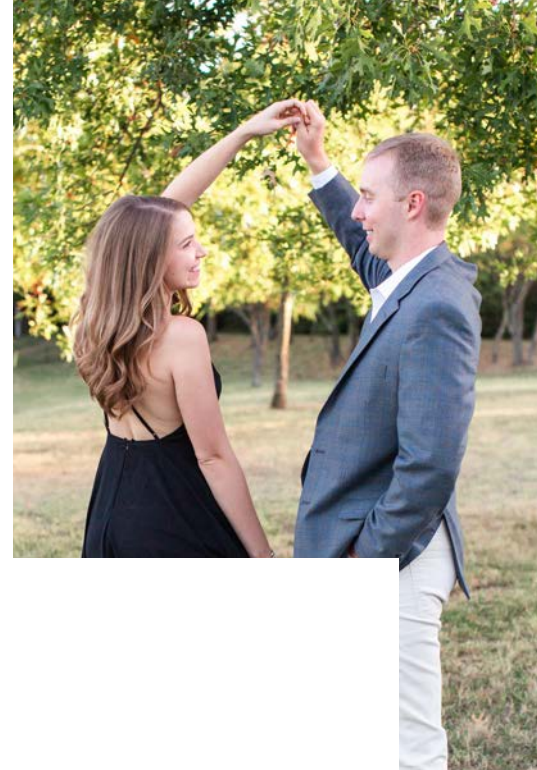
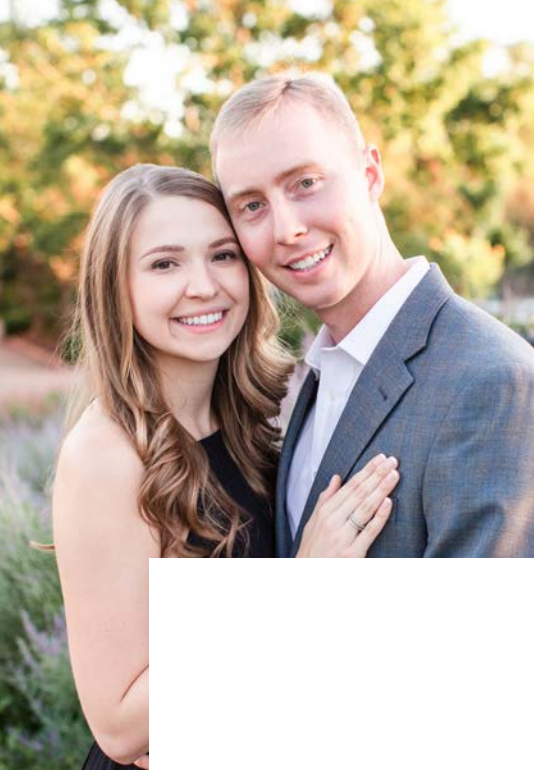
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Your engagement session can be scheduled anytime before your wedding day. I normally suggest booking it at least 3–6 months in advance to avoid stress.

As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, you 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! I shoot at parks, campuses, downtown alleys and even in my couples' homes! Don't shy away from crazy ideas! The more creative, the better!

Keep reading for more information on how to prepare for your engagement session and what you can expect! And, as always, if you have any questions, I'm just an email away!





## *Engagement Session* PREPARATION

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It's always a little intimidating to have your picture taken .... even if it's just a photo on an iPhone that is taken by a friend. We still want to look nice, make sure nothing is in our teeth and ensure that our hair is behaving! I realize that preparing for your engagement session can be a little overwhelming. Here are some tips for outfits and accessories that will make the e-shoot preparation a little more manageable! Find even more Engagement Session tips and tricks on the next few pages. Let's dive in:

Couples usually like to have one casual everyday outfit and then one outfit that is dressier! This will give your shoot two totally different "looks". I recommend saving your favorite outfit for the second half of the session.

Don't try to match... instead, try to pick outfits and accessories that coordinate. If everyone wore the same exact color at their engagement shoot, how boring would those images be?

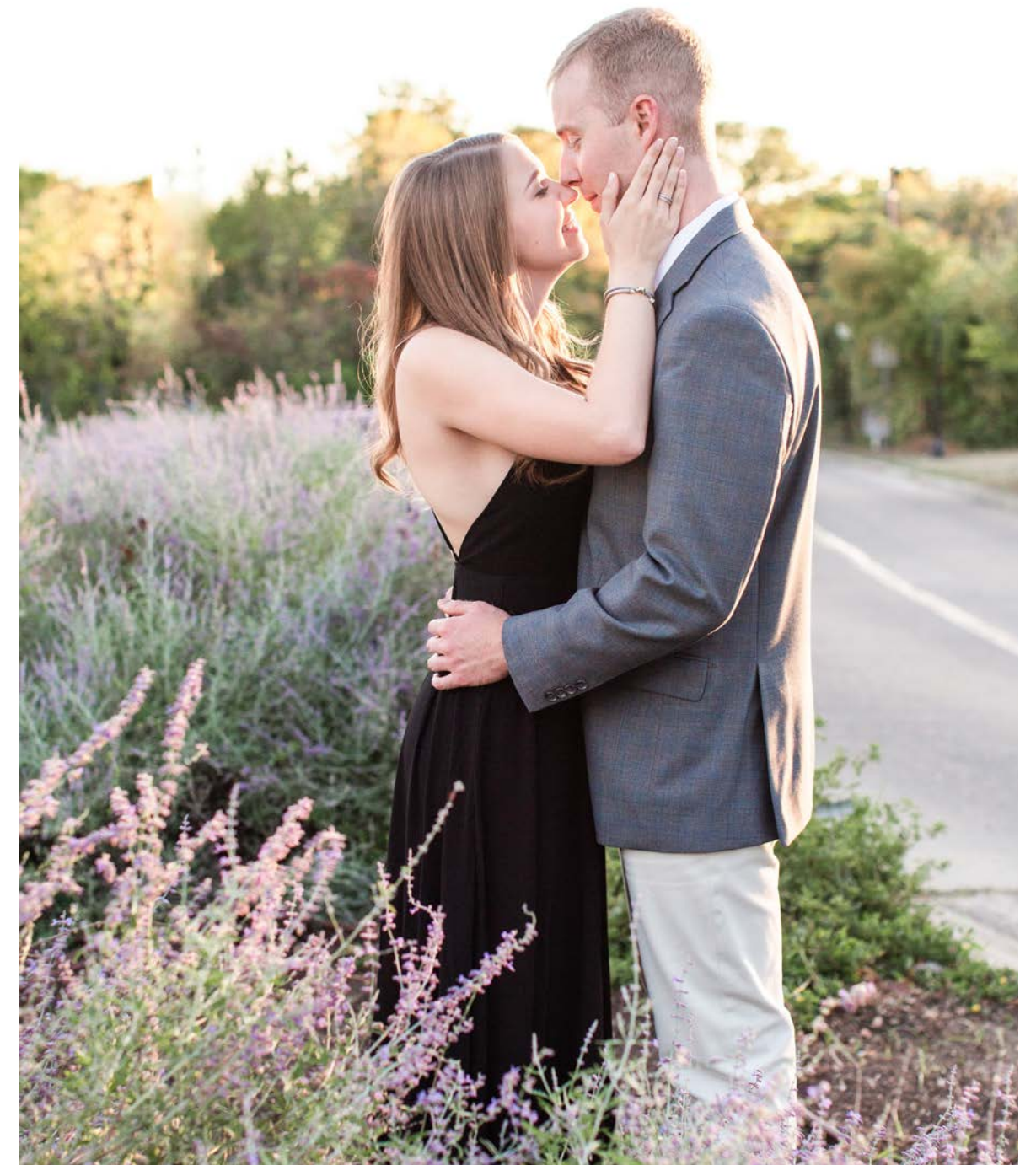
Most patterns are actually okay... however, graphics are not favorable for portraits. If you're wearing a pattern, make sure it's not overwhelming or distracting.

Make sure you feel comfortable in what you're wearing. And ladies, if the top is super low-cut, be aware that will limit the amount of angles I can shoot from.

Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets. (This is for the guys especially!)

Be on time! The sun is only out for so long! The later you arrive, the less time we have to shoot! And nobody wants that!

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!



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*QUICK TIP: Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets (this is for the guys especially!)*

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*The*  
LOGISTICS

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You can bring one outfit set or two! Most of my clients who choose two outfits will bring one “wow” dress, and then another slightly more casual dress that has a “date night” feel. But if you want to bring two “wow” dresses and forgo the more casual dress altogether, give yourself permission to do it! The camera loves runway-esque apparel and so do I!

Remember, though, you don’t have to bring two looks if it’s too stressful to coordinate or if you’d rather just stick to one fabulous look. One outfit that you love will be so much better than one outfit you love and another you’re not very excited about. And if you stick with one outfit set, you won’t have to spend any of your time changing half way through, so we’ll be able to sneak in a few more photos! So, one or two? It’s really up to you!

*Approximate*  
START TIMES

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WINTER

*December–March: Varies*

From December to mid-January, expect your session to occur around 3:30–5:30. At the end of January, expect a timeframe of 4:00–6:00... and toward the end of February, expect 4:30–6:30. In mid-March, daylight savings time begins, making the start time one hour later: from 5:30–7:30.

SUMMER

*June–August 6:30–8:30pm*

Summer engagement sessions, just like all engagement sessions, take place two hours before sunset. This will also hopefully mean that the shoot will be during the cooler part of the day, and it may also be easier to travel to your session after work.

SPRING

*April–May: Varies*

The time of the sunset changes drastically throughout the course of these two spring months—so our session times change as well. You can plan on approximately 6:00–8:00 in April, and 6:15–8:15 in May.

AUTUMN

*September–November: Varies*

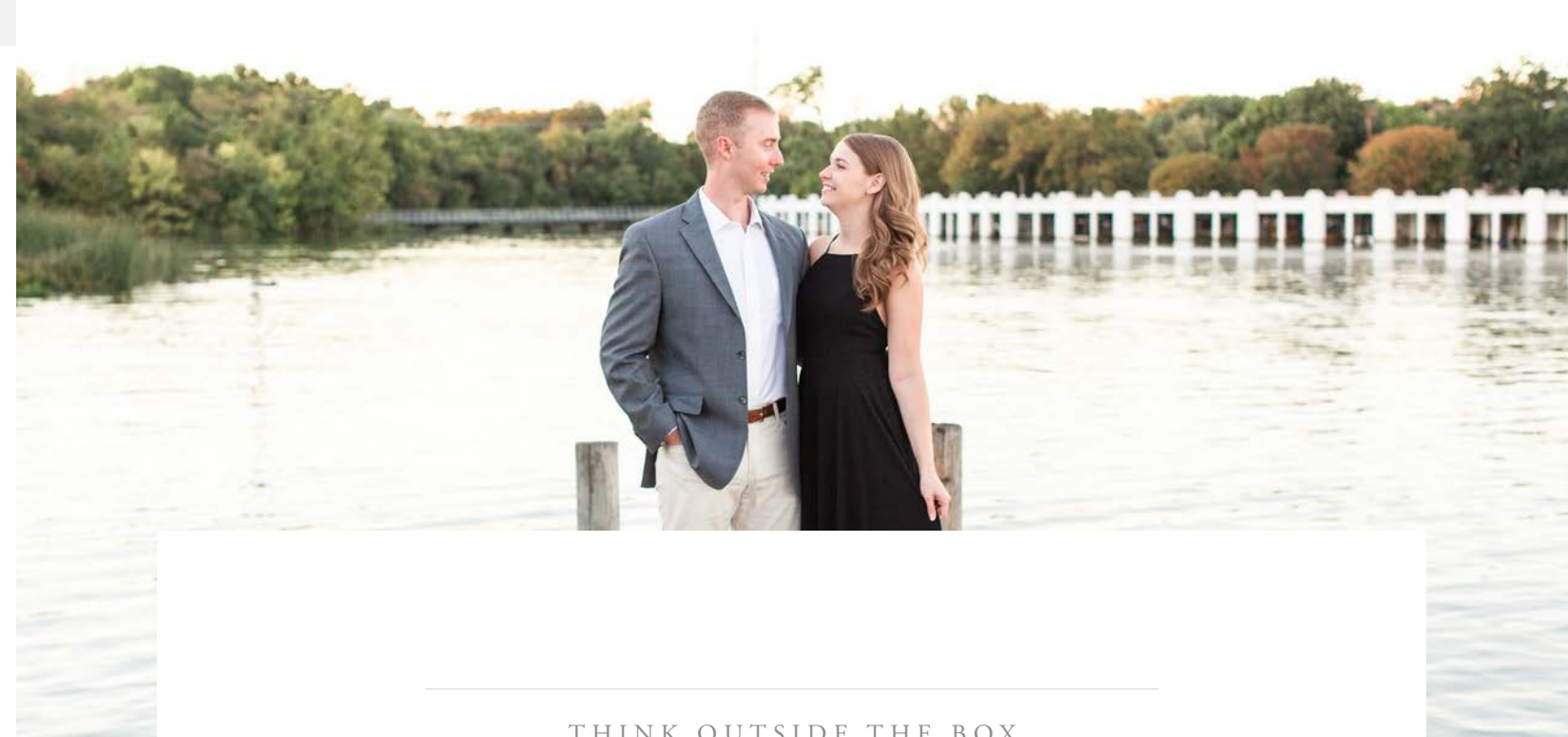
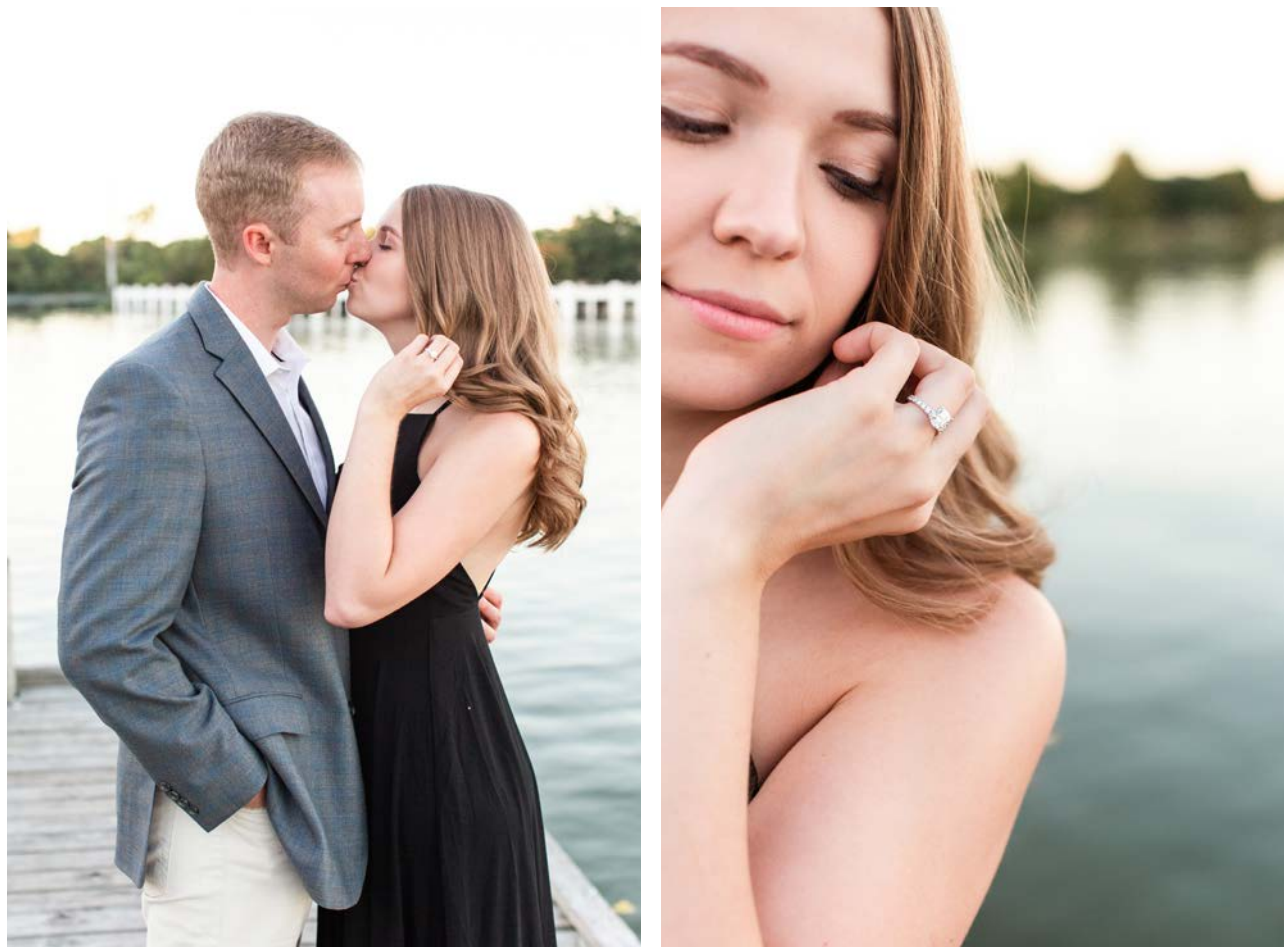
The time of the sunset changes drastically during these three months. For the first three weeks of September, you can plan on 5:30–7:30. After that, you can plan on 5:00–7:00 until mid-October. After the first week of November, expect 3:30–5:30.

*Don’t worry! I’ll be in touch with you to set a specific time based on the sunset for your engagement session—this is just a good place to start so you have a general idea of what to expect! I begin all engagement sessions two hours before the scheduled sunset during “the golden hour,” when the light is the dreamiest. If you’re wearing two outfits, save your favorite one for the second half, and if you’re wearing only one, arrive in that!*

*Selecting the Right*  
LOCATION

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The location of your engagement session is up to you!! The first thing to decide is what type of environment you'd like to showcase in your engagement photos! Most of my couples opt for a park or nature-like location. I'm always up for exploring new locations, or, if you'd like to hear places I love shooting, just ask!



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THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

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Think outside the box for the location of your engagement session! Your engagement session includes travel time anywhere in the DFW area. If you'd like to go somewhere outside the city, I'm up for the adventure! Just let me know, and I can send you a custom travel quote!

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ENGAGEMENT PROPS

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Want your engagement images to look more editorial? Bring a little extra something with you! A freshly-picked bouquet for you to hold, or fresh flowers to put on something else, like a bicycle basket, tree swing, picnic basket, car bumper or rowboat, is a fun way bring a little extra romance to everyday objects. Whether it's larger items like classic cars, or smaller ones like blankets or hats, even incorporating just one extra styled item could be a fun way to make your session more unique.



*Deciding on*  
YOUR STYLE

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*What style do you prefer?*

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BOLD *or* NEUTRAL

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DRESSY *or* CASUAL

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CLASSIC *or* TRENDY

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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 color 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!

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## Things to Avoid

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Here are some general “rules of thumb” 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 “rules of thumbs” 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!

- 1. Colors to avoid:* Bright reds, neons, bright oranges (they reflect color onto skin and can be difficult to edit!)
  - 2. Avoid patterns smaller than a quarter:* Tiny patterns cause something called “Chromatic Abberation” in digital images. Men’s checkered shirts are fine if the “checks” are on the larger side.
  - 3. Alternate Heaviness:* If one of you is wearing very dark jeans, the other may want to wear lighter pants. If one of you is wearing a navy top, the other shouldn’t wear a dark/heavy colored top. To a certain degree, alternating the “heaviness” of your outfits can make your images look more balanced.
  - 4. Avoid one of you being casual while the other is more dressy:* This can look a bit awkward in photos. If one of you is dressed up and the other is casual, it can look a little odd in your images.
  - 5. Other things to avoid:* Tennis shoes, graphic tees, bold logos on shirts, sunglasses & baseball hats.
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*Romantic*  
STYLE RECIPE

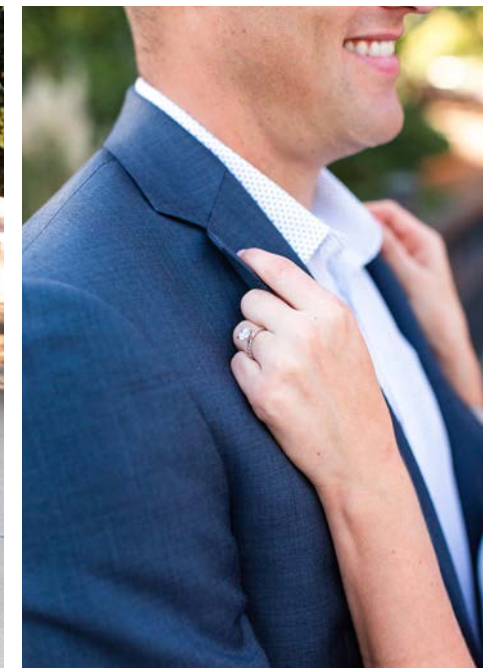
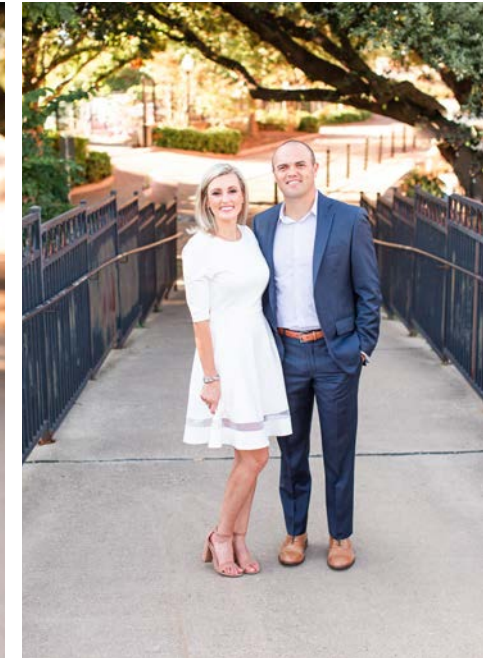
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If you're hoping for a more romantic style of shoot that includes "light" and "airy" colors, you can actually make outfit choices that will lend your images to turn out brighter, softer and extra photogenic! Here are some ingredients that go into creating a romantic styled shoot. It's important to note that you do not need to choose all of these ingredients in order to have a light and airy style to your images, but the more ingredients you include, the more romantic it will be:

*Neutral Colors:* Blushes, tans, light pinks, faint blues and light minty teals, creams, grays and whites will always result in more of a light and airy look in your images. These colors photograph softer and more romantically!

*Long, Flowy Skirts/Dresses:* Dresses and skirts with feminine ruffles, multiple layers of fabric and the ability to blow and move in the wind will always photograph beautifully! You would be amazed at how impactful moving fabric softens 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.





## *Bright & Bold*

### *Style recipe*

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Just like the “Romantic” recipe, you don’t have to apply all of these “ingredients” to get a perfectly BRIGHT & BOLD look to your engagement session. These ingredients include:

*Only one wears a pattern:* If one of you has a bold pattern, it’s very important that the other doesn’t. The more bold the pattern, the more important this rule is!

*Bold Backgrounds:* A lot of time, if my couples are going for a bold and bright look, I will notice solid colored backgrounds to use for part of their engagement session! It’s a double win if the background coordinates with their outfits!

*Only one bold color:* If you really want a bold and bright look but you want to do it well and tastefully, I would suggest that only one of you have a bright and bold colored outfit and the other stay in a solid neutral to avoid over-doing it!

*Large Patterns are Preferred:* If you really want to wear a pattern, my only request is that your pattern is on the larger side. Patterns that are smaller than a quarter can be difficult to photograph. This isn’t true of all patterns but it’s a good general rule to go by!

*Don't be afraid to*  
DRESS IT UP

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Have you thought about rocking a romantic gown, tulle skirt or flower crown but just never had an occasion for it? This is your chance to do it up! Remember: There is no such thing as “too dressed up” when it comes to your portrait session, so don’t be afraid to have some fun! If you don’t want to add a new permanent piece to your collection, a lot of our clients love Rent the Runway for their session because it’s such an affordable way to feel like a million bucks. Other clients love having a great excuse to bring a new permanent piece (or two!) into their closet!

*There's no such thing as too dressed up.*





*Say yes*  
TO THE DRESS

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Long, flowy dresses and skirts look amazing on camera because they bring extra movement to the photos. Especially when juxtaposed with nature, like the desert, forest, plains or beach. Cute, shorter-length dresses photograph beautifully as well. Dresses and skirts tend to look most stunning on camera because they really flatter the female body—which is probably why the red carpet is always full of so many dresses and not very many pantsuits! I recommend avoiding pants and shorts for your session, and saying yes to a dress or two!

*\*A little extra polish:*

Don't forget, your ring will be center stage, so give yourself permission to get it cleaned and treat yourself to a manicure too!





*Go Pro*  
HAIR AND MAKEUP

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Professional hair and makeup is on top of most of my brides' checklists because it looks amazing and removes the stress of getting ready on your own. From lash extensions to blown-out hair, professional hair and makeup will give you an extra boost of confidence in front of the camera, and it always photographs like a dream. If you're working with a makeup artist, have her apply your makeup in natural light, if possible, so that it looks fresh and not too heavy. Plus, that's the type of light we'll be shooting in, so it'll give you the best expectation of how it will translate on camera. Many brides feel like their makeup is "too much" at first, since it's more than you would wear on a normal day, especially when it comes to false lashes, so if you feel that way at the beginning, don't worry! Good makeup artists know how to get it just right for the camera — and my brides always love the final result.

If you need a recommendation for hair and makeup, I work with the best in the business and have a great go-to team! They're sweet as pie, talented as heck, unbelievable professionals and wonderful people. You'll LOVE them! Just let me know and I'll send you their information. I know they'll take good care of you!



*Flattering*  
YOUR FEATURES

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In my experience, almost every woman (regardless of her shape), has an area of her body that she feels self-conscious about... so recognizing what area that is in advance is key.

Choosing flattering silhouettes and colors that complement your natural features is the best way to ensure you'll love the way you look in your photos.



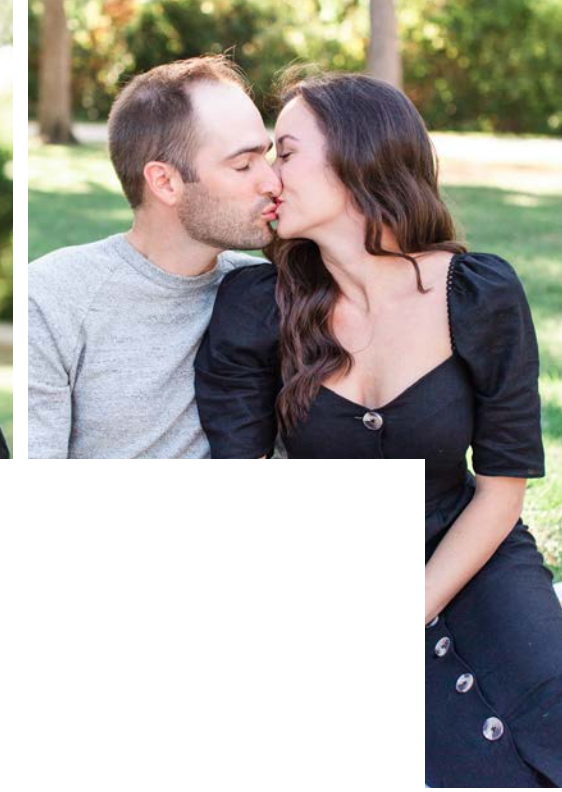
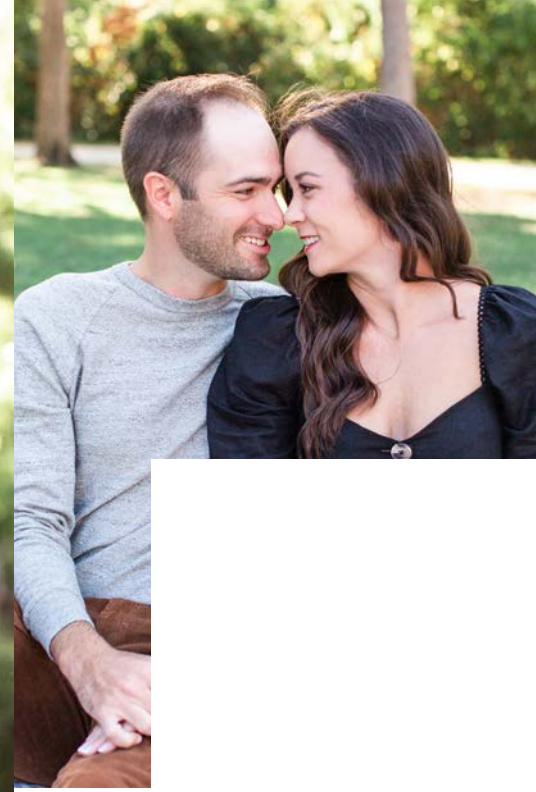
Three-quarter length sleeves create an awesome slimming effect on all arms, so be on the lookout for an option with a longer length sleeve. You could also bring a cute jacket, blazer or cardigan along, too. Skinny straps or strapless dresses have the opposite effect on arms on camera, so I recommend avoiding those whenever possible if your goal is a set of slimmer-looking arms.

Heels elongate women's legs, making them look fabulous. Closed-toes heels in particular look great on camera because they carry out the line of your leg all the way down to your toe. If your toes are showing in a peep-toe heel, you might want to schedule a pedicure before your session so you don't regret letting your feet show. These little tricks make all the difference!

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QUICK TIP: *Bring a pair of easy-to-kick-off flats to wear when moving from place to place in between photos. Your feet will thank you later!*

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## *Preparing* YOUR GROOM

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If you're a bride that is a little anxious about how your groom is going to react to this whole "picture" thing, you're not alone. I receive so many emails from brides who are worried that their groom won't be into it and I have great news for you... you both are more photogenic than you think! I am constantly surprising couples by discovering their hidden modeling skills and other most common response from my SKP Grooms is "That wasn't as bad as I thought! It was actually fun." 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 things that you can do to help your groom know what to expect. First of all, I highly recommend sitting down with your guy and showing him some of your favorite engagement sessions that I have photographed. Spend some time together scrolling through my website or Pinterest, which will allow him to gauge what his 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 your groom in a bad mood! Last but not least, remember to have patience with him, and don't assume that he's not going to have a good time... I think you'll be surprised how much you will both enjoy your session with me!



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*for Him*

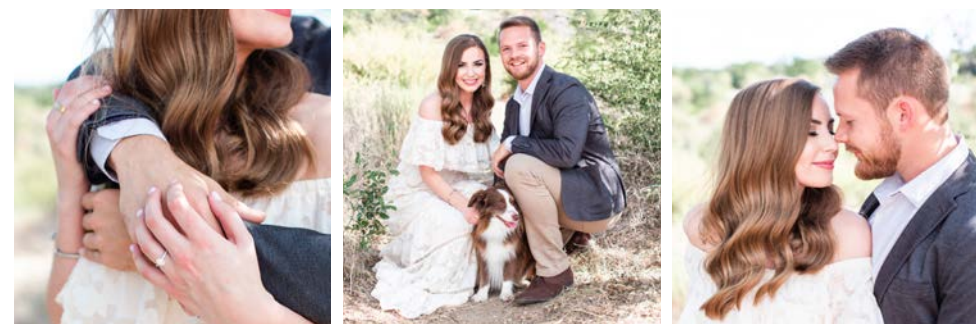
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## SUIT AND TIE

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A well-tailored suit is always a good idea. If he doesn't have one, now's the perfect time to invest in something he'll wear for the rest of his life! The best part? It's a lot less expensive than you might think! While custom suits can cost thousands of dollars, some of the most well-known brands have off-the-rack suits in their stores for a fraction of the price. Solid shades of gray or navy are a strong complement to most women's outfits, whereas pinstripes or plaid patterns tend to distract the eye.

Long pants and closed-toed shoes are the most sophisticated and masculine looks for men. So, for your session, it's best to leave the shorts, sandals and jeans at home, too. Suit pants, dress pants or colored pants work best, especially when paired with closed-toe shoes. Brown leather dress shoes complement almost every look, whether he's wearing a full suit or a blazer and colored pants.



## MIX IT UP

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Many grooms love to mix a suit coat, blazer, or sport coat with a different pant color. It adds some extra visual interest, and can be more fun than wearing two full suits in a row. I'm a big fan of this fresh take on a timeless classic!

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## PHOTO DELIVERY

2 WEEKS

*Social media sneak peek with one of my favorite photos*

4 WEEKS

*Blog post with some highlights of our time together*

4-6 WEEKS

*Online gallery with all of your final retouched high-resolution images*

## *Engagement Session* CHECKLIST

- SET DATE, TIME AND LOCATION WITH SKP
- REVIEW GUIDE FOR STYLE TIPS
- SCHEDULE HAIR AND MAKEUP APPOINTMENTS
- CHOOSE YOUR OUTFITS
- GET YOUR NAILS DONE
- CLEAN YOUR RING
- PLAN A FUN POST-SESSION DATE NIGHT
- PACK A BAG WITH:
  - Flats or flip-flops for walking between photo spots*
  - Second outfit, including shoes and accessories*
  - Touch-up makeup and mirror*
  - Water bottle (for warmer sessions)*
  - Coat or cover-up (for colder sessions)*



*One*  
FINAL NOTE

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I know I just gave you a lot to think about! I created this guide to help make your engagement session experience something you'll look back fondly on for years and years to come. At the end of the day, though, the location you choose and the outfits you select won't matter nearly as much as the memories you make together. Your future marriage is the most important thing to us, and I want your engagement session to be a time for you to just be yourselves and enjoy it. Have fun together. Laugh a lot. And I'll take care of the rest!