



# THE WEDDING PLANNING GUIDE

MIKEY MORA PHOTOGRAPHY

# *You're about* TO TIE THE KNOT

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Hey there! My name is Mikey and I am a wedding photographer located in Orange County, CA & I'm so stoked for you! This guide is packed with helpful tips that are aimed to assist you throughout the entire wedding planning process along with an outline of a typical wedding day timeline that you may find very helpful! My goal is to be so much more than your photographer. I'd love for you to consider me as your friend because we'll be spending a lot of time together on your wedding day! Over the years, I've picked up a few tricks that will help me ensure that your day runs smoothly and that your images are simply stunning since you deserve nothing but the best! Allow me to give you the lowdown on what you may expect.



# SO WHERE DO YOU START?

## *Get the vision for your big day*

It's your wedding day! You get to plan the wildest and most gorgeous celebration you can think of. Now that you have the opportunity to plan the wedding of your dreams, begin by keeping a journal dedicated only to your dream wedding. Make a note of every little detail you can think of so you have a quick reference and don't forget any of your brilliant ideas! What mood do you wish to convey? What do you want to feel and experience as the bride and groom on the most important day of your life?

## *Set a wedding budget*

Now that you have a vision for your big day, you're already halfway there with your budget. Making a budget will assist you in keeping track of all of your costs and seeing the bigger picture. Budgeting will also guide you in planning the remainder of your wedding as you determine what you want and don't want, where you want to spend and where you want to save a little money. This brings us to your must-haves: the things you will establish as your non-negotiables will receive the majority of your budget so that you can bring your dream wedding into reality.





*This is your* ——— LOVE STORY



### *Pick a location that looks great*

You will save money on rentals and decorative items if you choose a wedding venue that does not require much decorations. Allow nature's beauty to do the work for you in outdoor areas with stunning views!

### *Have everything in one venue*

You won't have to stress about the difficulties or additional costs of getting everyone from the ceremony to the reception.

### *Find a venue that will let you BYOB*

For many weddings, alcohol is a big expense, so keeping control of the cost-per-bottle is critical to keeping that expense in check. Look for places where you can buy and serve your own alcohol so you can keep tabs on the price.



# MONEY SAVING TIPS

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## *Flowers and food in season*

Seasonal and local are two words that will help you save money on catering and flowers. When you buy in season, you obtain food and flowers at their peak of supply when prices are typically lower. Plus, they don't have to be shipped halfway around the world when they're cultivated locally. As a result, you not only save money but also minimize your carbon footprint. Win-win.



## *Make your guest list the A-list*

It should go without saying that a smaller guest list is better for your budget as well as your sanity! Even if it's impossible to reduce your list to 20 people, reducing it from 300 to 150 will help you go from being overwhelmed to feeling it's manageable. An intimate celebration, more often than not, necessitates less money and effort – and it comes with a priceless bonus: more quality time with the smaller group of guests you invited!

# THE WEDDING TIMELINE



While most weddings follow the same format, the order in which these events occur may differ based on your preferences. It's not a one size fits all. Please feel free to talk to me about the specifics of your day and I can help you work it out!

Create a detailed, hour-by-hour wedding day timeline to guarantee your wedding day runs smoothly. This will help you stay organized, stress-free, and on time. Share your wedding day timetable with your wedding party, wedding coordinator/planner, photographer, caterer, florist, and other vendors once you've completed it so that everyone is on the same page.

To help you plan the perfect wedding timeline, here are some suggestions for how much time to give for each event as well as a general order of events.

# SAMPLE TIMELINE

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*10 hours of coverage with a first look*

11:00	Getting ready and detail photos
1:00	First look and couple photos
2:00	Wedding party photos
3:00	Ceremony
3:30	Cocktail hour / Family photos
4:30	Grand entrance
5:00	Dinner begins
6:00	Speeches, first dance
7:00	Cake cutting, bouquet & garter toss
8:00	Dance party
9:00	Grand exit

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Note: Depending on the time of the year, we can plan a quick golden hour shoot for your couple photos.



## DETAIL SHOTS

You have probably spent hours and hours carefully picking various details of your wedding and I enjoy photographing them as part of your day's story! Please gather all of your wedding details and have them available for me to shoot when I arrive. After greeting you, I'll begin taking detail photographs while your hair and makeup are being done. I suggest gathering these items in a box ahead of time.

Quick tip: If you want clutter-free images, designate a room or a section of the room as the bag area and keep most of your belongings there.



# DETAIL BOX

## *For the bride*

- Shoes
- The rings
- All other jewelry
- Headpieces
- Perfume
- Bouquet
- Garters/handkerchiefs
- Pretty Dress Hanger
- Wedding stationery with envelopes i.e. invitations, programs, thank you cards.



## *For the groom*

- Shoes
- Pocket square / Tie / Bowtie
- Belt
- Socks (If patterned)
- Cologne
- Cufflinks
- Watch

## *Other*

- Vow Books
- Ring Box
- Any other special details

# GETTING READY

I'd like to capture your excitement and emotion while you prepare – those priceless moments with your bridesmaids, mother, sister, or anyone else who is assisting you. These photographs usually end up being my favorites. There's something about the jitters leading up to the wedding, the small moments of “this is it,” and the often booze-induced chuckles with your best friends.

This part is primarily candid. However, I try to make sure everyone is mostly ready before I start photographing them. You probably don't want a photo of yourself with half-done makeup or hair.



# WHAT TO WEAR

You'll want to ensure that you're getting ready in a way that you'd want to be captured in photos. It's absolutely up to you how you go about doing so. For some brides, having their bridal party wear matching outfits is the way to go. Others would think of it as giving everyone a customized shirt or robe to wear while getting their hair and makeup done. After all, you're not just making memories on your wedding day; you're also preserving them. By the time I enter the room, you should all be looking and feeling fantastic!



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## THE SPACE

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After your venue and ceremony area, the getting ready space is the most important location on your wedding day. It's where you'll spend the morning with your wedding party, get ready and have photographs taken. When picking a location for getting ready, look for an open space with plenty of natural light. Consider renting out a lovely Airbnb or boutique hotel room if the space provided by your venue does not seem to be a suitable fit.



# FIRST LOOK

Let's face it: your wedding is both the best and one of the most stressful days of your life. I usually advise my couples to do a first look since it allows you to have a quiet moment with your partner away from the crowds at the ceremony. You get to take a break from the hustle and bustle to spend some quality time with each other and soak up the love and excitement.

You want to see that teary, emotional reaction from your partner when you first see each other. However, when you're up in front of a large crowd, it's difficult to concentrate on anything other than the faces staring at you.

What I've discovered is that having a first look gives you a safe space to be emotional and enjoy the moment. After seeing each other for the first time, you can hug, kiss, twirl, and get a good look at each other without feeling rushed. First-look photos give you a moment in your crazy day to tell each other how much you love each other in private.

I'm a sucker for first looks, so it goes without saying that I adore them. But this isn't about me, so if you prefer to stick to the traditional way, that's fine! I never want my couples to feel like I'm pressuring them to have a first look, but I do want you to be informed!

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# COUPLE'S PHOTOS

After the first look, we'll capture some photos of just the two of you. I suggest you ask your friends and family to give you space during this part. Most people find it easier to relax when they aren't in front of an audience. But hey, if you prefer to have your own personal hype team with you, go ahead! We'll do this section straight after the ceremony if you don't do a first look. In either case, you're overflowing with joy and love, and these images will prove it!



*but we're awkward in photos..*

That's one of the most common worries I hear. When this concern is brought up, it typically means "I've never had professional photos taken before" or "I'm awkward/nervous in front of the camera" and it's one of my favorites to answer because I always say, "It doesn't matter!"

You won't be stiffly posed or nervously standing in an uncomfortable position long enough to wonder what your hands are meant to do. I'm sure you've had enough of that with school photos. Expect to be reminded of the power and beauty of your love story by laughing until it hurts and running around like weirdos. I will never try to change you into something you aren't; instead, I will give you the freedom to be the fullest version of yourself because I believe that's where beautiful imagery emerges. This isn't a photo shoot for Vogue, you're much more interesting than that.

You'll leave with hundreds of photographs capturing your love for each other. Believe me when I say you're going to look amazing!

# THE WEDDING PARTY



It's time for the wedding party after your first look and couple's photos. I'll take some shots of just one partner's side, then the other's, and then a group shot of everyone. I'll also make sure to grab individual shots of the two of you with members of your party. If you don't want to do a first look, we'll do this section after the ceremony.

I know you want your wedding to be a blast for all of your best friends. So, like with the couple's shoot, I avoid stiff poses. One of my favorite wedding party prompts is to have the couple kiss while everyone else cheers loudly!

Get everyone's bouquets ready and boutonnieres on!

# THE CEREMONY



And we're finally here! This is the moment you've been looking forward to. It's easy to get caught up in all the preparations and stress but remember the most important thing is that this is the beginning of your lives together. Savor this moment!

The usual ceremony lasts approximately 30 minutes, but if you want to include any specific traditions, I'd recommend giving yourself an hour.

Two important tips that I have are asking your officiant to move out of the way before the first kiss so they aren't in the background of the photo and holding your kiss longer than usual for lots of shots!

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# THE FAMILY

## *Let your family know*

Make sure the family members who will be in your group shots are aware ahead of time. You can also have your officiant make an announcement asking family members to meet for photos after the ceremony in a designated location.

My goal is for you to have the most enjoyable and efficient family photos possible! While they may appear daunting, I am here to make them go smoothly. Here are some tips:



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### *prepare a shot list*

Before your wedding, I will request a shot list so that I can get all of the family photo combinations you want. This way, I can have my assistant or a friend of yours call out who is up next and we won't forget any shots that you listed.

### *person in charge*

It can be a huge help to have a friend or family member who knows your families to assist in making sure everyone in the family photos is there and ready to go.

### *big to small group*

I suggest starting with the largest group and working your way down to smaller groups so that any visitors who are no longer required can be dismissed. I also recommend taking photos of grandparents or older guests first so that they can be dismissed earlier as well.

### *avoid phone photos*

When a guest takes a photo over my shoulder, it can confuse folks as to where to look and slow down the process. Please ask guests to refrain from taking photos with their phones.

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# THE RECEPTION

You've done it! Woohoo! You're married, it's time to celebrate! I'll shoot some candid and group shots during the reception, so if you have any friends or extended family members you need photos with, now is the time! During the reception, a lot of things happen and I'll photograph everything. You have the freedom to make the reception your own! The possibilities are endless!

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*Here are the usual reception events:*

- grand entrance
- toasts
- first dance
- parent dances
- bouquet toss
- garter toss
- cake cutting
- grand exit



# UNPLUGGED WEDDING

When you marry the love of your life, you ask all of your closest friends and family to be there to rejoice with you and witness your union. You want them to be there to share this special moment with you; you want to see their faces, their grins, and their tears of joy and excitement as you walk down the aisle. You don't want to glance back down the aisle and find people taking shots of you with cameras and phones covering their faces.

I've witnessed many situations where a guest's phone is sticking out into the aisle, obstructing not just the moment but also the images I'm capturing as your photographer. I strongly recommend having an unplugged ceremony to avoid phones dangling down the aisle and to allow guests to be more present.

There are a few ways to inform your guests if you decide to have an unplugged wedding. Tell them early through the invite by adding a line that says, "We would love you to be there, but we are having an unplugged wedding, please don't take any photos during the ceremony." You can also request that the officiant make a brief announcement requesting guests to turn off their phones and refrain from taking photos or having the guests take a couple of brief photos while the wedding party is at the altar, then quickly put their phones away before the officiant resumes with the ceremony.

# SELF CARE



Don't forget about the most important person in your wedding – you! Wedding planning isn't simply time-consuming; it can also be intimidating at times. You might be stressed, overwhelmed, and spread a little (or a lot) too thin as your big day approaches.

Self-care is a very vital aspect of wedding planning, as well as life, that many people overlook. No matter how overwhelmed you are with wedding planning, your physical and mental health should not be taken for granted.

Sure, there may be snags along the way or even on the big day, but the most important thing is that you're being married and all of your friends and family will be there to celebrate with you! The couples that have the most fun during their weddings are those who focus on the important things and don't sweat the small stuff.

# PREFERRED VENDORS

## *planners.*

@weddingsbyleslye  
beccabishoppevents.com

## *videographers.*

@1moment.film  
@diannanguyenfilms  
@visualsbyjd.co  
@shotsonus.sd

## *venues.*

@lapetiterosevenue  
@rancholaslomas  
@innatthemissionsjc  
@talegaweddingsandevents

## *miscellaneous.*

@dj.escence  
@coppercloudcreativeco  
@itsdjbmo  
@itsallaboutcake

## *florists.*

@angelpetalsflowershop  
@bloomsbyjle  
@bloomnstrike

## *hair & makeup.*

@\_beautybyaliacero\_  
@makeupwithfran  
@stylingwithjena

# THE PERFECT DAY



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# MY SHOT LIST

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## *getting ready*

dress  
suit  
shoes  
jewelry  
bouquet  
boutonnieres  
rings  
invitations  
getting makeup done  
putting on wedding  
attire  
putting on jewelry  
putting on shoe  
candid photos of everyone

## *reception*

grand entrance  
cake  
decorations  
guests interactions  
toasts & speeches  
first dance  
parent dances  
guests dancing  
cake cutting  
bouquet toss  
garter toss  
grand exit

## *bridal party*

each side  
separately  
individual photos  
entire party

## *the couple*

shot of rings  
individual photos  
couple together

## *ceremony*

ceremony site & details  
everyone walking down the  
aisle  
each partner's reaction  
exchanging of rings  
reading of vows  
first kiss  
guests

## *family*

Every family situation is different. Please prepare a list of family combinations that you want photographed.

# YOUR SHOT LIST

*Please write your must have shots here. You can  
send me a photo afterwards and we can brainstorm!*

*family*

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## MIKEY MORA PHOTOGRAPHY

Hey thanks for checking out my wedding planning guide & I hope that you have found this super helpful! I am a couples & wedding photographer in Southern California and if you are having your wedding here, I would love to help out and even potentially be your wedding photographer! For a FREE wedding photography consultation, please fill out my short contact form at [mikeymoraphotography.com/wedding-contact-form](https://mikeymoraphotography.com/wedding-contact-form) and we can chat about your wedding planning process and wedding photography!

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else I can do to assist you beyond this guide!

*Peace & Love,  
Mikey*



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LET'S GET YOU MARRIED!

