



*nicole kirk*

**HOW TO PLAN YOUR TIMELINE**  
on your wedding day





**I have been to many weddings and I've seen what works!**

Over the past seven years, I've been to so many weddings that I have a good idea of what works well for a timeline. I'm not a wedding planner, but I think it's helpful to share what works well for a timeline from a photographer's point of view. I love to help brides out with their timeline because, in my experience, everyone benefits... With a good timeline, the day will run smoothly and the bride and groom will enjoy their special day and you will end up with amazing photos to document your day.

**This guide was lovingly put together to outline some key points to keep in mind when planning your wedding day timeline. I hope you enjoy!**

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## Things to Consider...



There are so many variables that make each wedding unique so there's no simple answer that will work for all weddings. Some things that you should take into consideration when developing your timeline include: sunset time, location/weather, ceremony length, transportation time, the type of reception you want and any cultural traditions or entertainment that makes your wedding special.

**Each wedding is unique!**

However, there are general guidelines for timing that I ask couples to keep in mind when they are planning their big day.

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## Some rules of thumb for the time needed on your big day.

For each section of the wedding day, I require a minimum amount of time to capture to capture the moments effectively. Listed below are some general guidelines for timing requirements on your big day:

Getting ready photos - 1 hour

First look photos - 15 minutes

Bride and Groom Portraits - 30 minutes - 1 hour

Bridal Party Portraits - 30 minutes

Family Photos - 30 minutes for standard family photos

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Here's an example where the ceremony starts at 5pm:

1:30-2:30 – Getting ready photos

2:30 – Bride & groom's first look/ portraits

3:30 – Bridal party portraits

4:00 – Family portraits

4:30 – Completely done with portraits – bridal party freshens up while guests arrive

5:00 – Ceremony (perfect light for an outdoor ceremony is one hour before sunset)

5:30 – Cocktail hour (If you do your portraits before the ceremony you can enjoy your cocktail hour with your guests or take a few more portraits. It's up to you!)

6:30 – Dinner reception



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Receptions can have lots of different variables, but here's a good starting point for a timeline:

- 6:45 – Grand entrance/ first dance/ blessing
- 7:00 – Dinner (allow guests to eat without interruption for 45 minutes)
- 7:45 – Toasts/ special dances
- 8:00 – Open dancing
- 8:30/9 – Cake cutting/ more open dancing

All together this example would include 8 hours of photography coverage (from 1:30-9:30), which is generally a good amount of coverage for a wedding. This would ensure that I would capture everything from the getting ready portion of the day until the beginning of the dancing.

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## Things to Keep in Mind...



When you are planning your photographer's start time, count backwards from the first look to arrive at the getting ready start time. Make sure to include enough time for transportation, as well as: makeup, hair, time to get into your dress, and relaxation time.

A general rule of thumb is that it's always better to plan in more time than not enough. It's wise to add a buffer of time in various areas of the day to leave room for the unexpected. So make sure you start early, to avoid any unnecessary stress!

**Pro tip:** Add extra time in your timeline for some relaxation. You will appreciate having a little break on your big day.

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So, there you have it! These are some tips that I've learned over the years that help to achieve an ideal wedding day timeline. I hope my experience with weddings is helpful when planning your wedding day.

Happy planning!

xo,  
Nicole

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