

THE ENGAGEMENT SESSION

STYLE GUIDE

For  Brides and Grooms





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GETTING STARTED

“We are so excited for your engagement session! As photographers, we believe your engagement session is one of the most important parts of the pre-wedding process for multiple reasons. It gives us a chance to spend time together and get to know each other better before the big day. You will also have the opportunity to get comfortable in front of our cameras so you’ll know exactly what to do by the time the wedding arrives. Additionally, your engagement session will deliver a set of beautiful images that you can use for save-the-dates, your wedding website, prints to display at the rehearsal dinner and reception, frames for your walls in your home and so much more! Lastly, it provides a way to always remember this special time in your life: a chance to pause, take a deep breath and relish in this season together. You will only be fiances for a short season of life, so with your engagement session, we want to help you slow down long enough to remember this time for years to come.”



CHEERS,

JOSH & ANDREA



SCHEDULING your SESSION

WE PHOTOGRAPH ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS
THE WAY WE LIKE TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED
OURSELVES.

Simply put, we love the natural light of the outdoors because it creates clean, bright, fresh and timeless images that look and feel like you. This is why we begin all of our sessions approximately two hours before the scheduled sunset — during the magical “golden hour” — when the light in the sky is the softest, dreamiest and most flattering.

When scheduling your date, it’s important to remember that the sun sets much earlier during the colder months of the year and much later during the warmer months, so make sure to factor that in when choosing your engagement session date — especially if you’re taking off work or have evening plans afterward. We always recommend going out for a fun date night afterward since you’re already dressed to the nines!

Our weekends fill up fast and far in advance, but our weekdays are much more flexible. If you would prefer to book your session sooner rather than later, scheduling mid-week is the way to go!



1

EXAMPLE TIMELINE NO.

SUNSET 7:00 PM - ONE OUTFIT



5:15 PM	ARRIVE
5:30 PM	PHOTOGRAPH OUTFIT 1
7:00 PM	END OF SESSION - TIME FOR DATE NIGHT!

2

EXAMPLE TIMELINE NO.

SUNSET 7:00 PM - TWO OUTFITS



4:45 PM	ARRIVE
5:00 PM	PHOTOGRAPH OUTFIT 1
5:45 PM	CHANGE OUTFITS
6:00 PM	PHOTOGRAPH OUTFIT 2
7:00 PM	END OF SESSION - TIME FOR DATE NIGHT!

U R B A N

PLANNING your TIME

ALLOW YOURSELF MORE TIME THAN
YOU THINK YOU WILL ACTUALLY NEED.

When you are planning "getting ready" time before your session (scheduling your hair, makeup, etc.) please give yourself more time than you think you will need. Make sure to account for things like traffic, getting lost and parking. In order to prevent unnecessary stress, arrive a few minutes early to your session. We are only able to shoot when the light is still in the sky, so we will want to take advantage of every minute we have together before the sun goes down!



P R I V A T E
R E S I D E N C E





ESTATE

CHOOSING the LOCATION

THE LOCATION OF YOUR ENGAGEMENT
SESSION IS COMPLETELY UP TO YOU!

As you will see throughout this guide, most of our couples love showcasing locations that exude elegance and romance. For most of our sessions, outdoor, open-air environments are always our first choice. We love shooting in wide-open natural spaces because the light is divine, especially during golden hour. There are great options all around, so even if you have never seen us photograph in a specific place before, we are excited to explore a new location together!



BEACH

THINK OUTSIDE the BOX

WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING A LOCATION, DON'T BE AFRAID
TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.

We encourage you to brainstorm unique places that you might have special access to that most people do not. In the past, our couples have secured permission to shoot in some pretty incredible places! For example, maybe you (or someone you know) have access to a location that would otherwise be off-limits, like a beautiful private estate, a sailboat, an exclusive country club or luxury resort. You might also consider Airbnb or other property rental sites. Spend a few minutes thinking about it and checking around with people in your personal and professional network. If something seems out of reach, just remember: you never know until you ask.

If you need some location ideas or inspiration, feel free to peruse our Instagram (@joshandandreaphotography). If there's a certain session you really love, just let us know, and we can travel to one of our J&A Signature Locations!



Destination ENGAGEMENT

Your engagement session includes a travel range anywhere within a 100 mile radius of the zip code 49079. However, if you would prefer to travel even further, we are always up for the adventure! For outside our radius, a travel fee will be applied to account for extra hours of drive time there and back, additional scouting, and potential hotel booking.

WE HAVE BOOKED SESSIONS FROM DC TO CHARLESTON,
CHICAGO TO ATLANTA, AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN!

If we are already going to be in or near an area you have always dreamed of traveling to, we would be more than happy to coordinate our schedules! If you would like us to meet you at a destination for your engagement session where we do not already have plans to visit, simply inform of us your plans and we'll send you a custom quote.



STYLING your SESSION

GIVING YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION AN EDITORIAL ASTHETIC

If you want your engagement session to look and feel a little more editorial, we recommend bringing a few small props with you such as champagne with toasting glasses or a floral bouquet. Perhaps you have access to some larger props that have a real “wow” factor like a boat, classic car, vintage bicycle or hot air balloon. This is the time to dream a little bit and decide what really feels like you! However, props are not a “must” by any means. Some of our couples love them and go all out, while other stick with just their outfits. The most important things you need to bring to your session are love and laughter. We will take care of the rest.





STYLE TIPS for HER



dress it up

HAVE YOU BEEN EYEING A GORGEOUS DRESS,
BUT JUST NEVER HAD AN OCCASION FOR IT?

The time has finally come. Remember: there is no such thing as “too dressed up” when it comes to your engagement session, so don’t be afraid to dress to the nines! Some brides love having an excuse to go shopping and purchase a new permanent piece (or two) for their wardrobe. If you feel hesitant about a specific aesthetic or style, Andrea is only a quick email away and would love to help you finalize your signature engagement session look.



SAY YES to the DRESS

THERE'S NOTHING MORE ROMANTIC THAN A
LONG, FLOWY DRESS

Dresses and skirts tend to look most stunning on camera because of their ability to flatter the female body — which is probably why the red carpet is always full of so many dresses! We recommend choosing long, flowy dresses or skirts because they're flattering on all body types, look amazing on camera and bring extra movement and dimension to your photos. Floor length skirts and dresses will give the best “twirl factor,” add more romance to your walking photos, and look especially gorgeous when juxtaposed with nature, like the forest, fields or beach. Cute, shorter cocktail-length dresses photograph beautifully as well. Our brides who choose to bring two dresses will sometimes choose one of each! We recommend (but obviously don't require) avoiding pants and shorts for your session, and saying yes to a dress (or two)! You won't regret it.



ONE OR TWO?

We often encourage our brides and grooms to pick two different outfits for their engagement session. This gives you two unique looks to your session, and the variety of photos it gives you for save-the-dates, rehearsal/receptions frames, and future house decor is well worth the effort.

Brides who choose to bring two outfits will often bring a signature dress, and then another shorter cocktail-length dress or midi skirt for a more casual “date-like” vibe. But if you want to bring two stunning dresses and forgo the more relaxed outfit altogether, the camera loves the runway-esque apparel and so do we. However, you don’t have to bring two looks if it is too stressful. If you would rather just stick to one fabulous outfit, that’s perfectly fine as well. Whether you decide on one or two outfits, the decision is truly up to you!

If you are still having a hard time with your final selections, you can always send us an email with your potential options! We’d be happy help you narrow down your choices or give you our opinion about what might look best on camera!



CHOOSING COLORS

When choosing colors for your outfits, we recommend selecting lighter, neutral tones and more muted shades. Bright, bold or neon colors are distracting and take the focus away from where it should be: you. We’ve found that our couples can never go wrong with light neutral colors such as cream, taupe, camel or light gray. The camera also loves shades of soft pinks and muted blues, mixed with sophisticated light-colored neutrals. That softer, more pastel-leaning color palette fits beautifully into almost all environments!

COORDINATING THE LOOKS

AS YOU ARE COORDINATING YOUR OUTFIT WITH YOUR FIANCE'S, KEEP IN MIND THAT YOUR OUTFITS WILL LOOK THE MOST COHESIVE ON CAMERA WHEN THE COLOR PALETTE AND WARDROBE PIECES COORDINATE WHILE NOT "MATCHING."

You should each wear a different dominant color, but stay within a similar color palette. For instance, if you are wearing a blush dress and nude heels (blush being your dominant color), then he might wear a navy coat with light grey pants, paired with brown leather shoes and maybe even a blush pocket square. He now has his own dominant color (navy) while still incorporating a few touches of your color palette. Most of our brides choose their dress first, and then put together their fiance's outfit based on that.





FLATTERING your FEATURES

In our experience, every bride (regardless of her size or shape) has an area of her body that she is self-conscious about. Recognizing the areas you are self-conscious about when selecting your outfits is key. Choosing flattering silhouettes and colors that complement your natural features is the best way to ensure you will 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. If your dress has shorter sleeves (or no sleeves) consider bringing a cute jacket or blazer to incorporate into your look. Skinny straps or strapless dresses have the opposite effect on arms in camera. For most women, skinny straps could make arms look bigger, so we recommend avoiding those whenever possible if your goal is slimmer-looking arms. If it happens to be colder outside, we suggest bringing a warm coat to wear when we are not shooting so you don't freeze in your dress.



the SHOES

For shoes, keep in mind that heels elongate women's legs and force constant tension in the calves — which makes them look more toned. 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, and you can never go wrong with a pair of neutral pumps. 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 toes show. Lastly, make sure to bring a pair of flats to wear when moving from place to place. Your feet will thank you later.





MAKE a STATEMENT

PAIRING AN ACCESSORY OR TWO WITH
YOUR OUTFIT CAN HELP BRING SOME
EXTRA DIMENSION TO YOUR IMAGES.



Whether it's a necklace, bracelet, earrings, or hat, bringing an accessory or two can bring great visual interest to your photos, so choose one or two that do not compete for attention when paired together. For example, if you decide on bolder earrings, you might want to choose a more humble necklace, or maybe even no necklace at all. Fresh florals in a crown or bouquet can create a romantic touch as well!



GO PRO: hair & makeup

PROFESSIONAL HAIR AND MAKEUP IS AT THE TOP OF MOST OF OUR BRIDES' ENGAGEMENT SESSION CHECKLISTS.

It looks amazing on camera and removes the stress of getting ready on your own. You will have these photos forever, so what better time to pamper yourself! Whether it's lash extensions or 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 are working with a makeup artist, have her apply your makeup in natural light (if possible) so it looks fresh and not too heavy. That natural look is the type of light we will be shooting in, so it will give you the best expectation of how it will translate on camera. Most of our brides feel like their makeup is "too much" at first, since it's more than they would wear on a normal day, 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 our brides always love the final result.



CLEAN your RING

Your ring hand will be featured in a lot of the photos, so if you have time before your session, we recommend getting your ring cleaned and treating yourself to a manicure.

SKIP the SPRAY TAN

Although it might seem counter-intuitive, we highly recommend that you do not get a spray tan before your session (even a few days prior) because it tends to photograph orange even when it is applied subtly and by a professional. Your true skin tone will photograph most beautifully.



FALL and WINTER SESSIONS

When seasons change and temperatures drop, sometimes it is just too cold for a dress and heels by themselves (no matter how warm your overcoat is). In those instances, we have some suggestions for late fall and winter that will still help you be fashion-forward and keep your color tones camera-friendly.

First, let's talk about color palettes. Just like in warmer weather, we recommend muted hues over bold, primary colors. During fall, warm neutrals like camel, taupe, cream, champagne, and gray are still going to appear stunning. If you would like to incorporate color, choose sophisticated jewel-toned versions of bright primary colors such as, mustard over yellow, crimson/burgundy over red, camel over orange, sage/emerald over green, and powder blue/navy over blue. These jewel tones will photograph beautifully in any season.



SNOW or cold SESSIONS

An engagement session in the snow creates a beautiful white backdrop, so even though it might seem counterintuitive, soft pastel, muted colors like soft pinks and powder blues still look great! Regardless of the setting, you can never go wrong with neutrals. In colder weather, you might also consider adding a peacoat, tights, scarf and heeled booties to a form-fitting cocktail dress. For sessions in the snow, add a statement coat with scarf and gloves, or a warm, oversized, snuggly sweater with tall boots and a hat for even more options.





FASHION TIPS for HIM

TOPS & BOTTOMS

The same way that a dress is the most flattering silhouette for the female body, a blazer, sport coat or suit jacket has the same flattering effect for men. You can not go wrong with a dress shirt, slacks and a blazer, or a well-tailored suit.

COLORS

For that timeless yet classic look, a complete suit and pants set in either black, navy, or grey is a stunning combination for any groom. If you choose to go with a two-tone color palette, we recommend neutrals and soft, warm tones that complement your bride's look. When selecting your pieces, choose a different "weight" for the pants and coat. So for example, navy pants (darker) and a heather grey coat (lighter), or grey pants (darker) with a soft powder blue shirt (lighter) can both create a perfect balance for your outfit.

SUITS

When selecting a suit for photos, the most important part is not the price. It's the fit. For men, it is critical to have a suit jacket that fits snugly (but not too tight) and pants that are the correct length without too many breaks. Just like high heels make women look taller than they are, bunched up fabric stacked on top of a man's shoes makes him look physically shorter than he really is. If you already have a suit that you like and want to wear at your session, make sure to try it on a few weeks beforehand (with the shoes you will be wearing) so you have time to make alterations if needed.

If you don't have a suit, now is the perfect time to invest in something you will wear for the rest of your life. 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, so stay away from too strong of prints, and opt for solids instead.



LAYERED LOOKS

The next time you walk by a store like J. Crew or Banana Republic, you will notice the male mannequins and models are always wearing several layers at once. Layers on men look great on camera, so even when it's hot outside, it's worth an hour or two of discomfort for photos that will last you both a lifetime. Adding extra layers will bring additional dimension and visual interest to your photos. If the temperature permits, you could even consider adding a sweater with a pop of color from a long-sleeved collared shirt underneath.



ALL IN THE DETAILS

Long pants and closed-toed shoes are the most sophisticated and masculine looks for men. They draw attention away from his legs and feet, and place it where you want it: on the face you fell in love with. For your session, it is best to leave the shorts and sandals at home. Suit pants, dress pants or colored pants work best. Brown leather dress shoes complement almost every look, whether he's wearing a full suit, or a blazer and colored pants. Ties, bowties, belts, tie clips, and watches are sharp complements to any suit. If you bring two suits to the session, you can start with a traditional necktie and belt, then switch to suspenders and a bow tie for your second look. If two suits are too stressful, one look will do the trick. Many of our grooms wear one suit and just change their dress shirt and/or pocket square/tie, while others wear one pair of pants and change their jacket.

HOW TO prep YOUR MAN

EVEN THOUGH TAKING PHOTOS MIGHT NOT BE HIS FAVORITE
THING, *YOU* ARE.

Most men are not overly excited to take photos for 90+ minutes, mostly because they don't have an expectation of what is to come and why it is so important to you. This is why we recommend sitting down together for a few minutes to educate and empower your man.

Remind him why you chose us and our style of photography. Show him your favorite photos on Instagram from our other sessions, explain why you love the photos so much and express to him how much this session means to you. The most common thing we hear from grooms before engagement sessions is this: because of a bad experience in the past, they don't like taking photos or do not feel like they will be good at it. By the time the session is over, most guys cannot believe how fast it went and how much fun they had!



AFTER the SESSION



Don't forget to plan a dinner date for after your session. Since you are already going to be dressed up, why not take advantage of it? The wedding planning process can feel all-consuming, so take some time after the session to relax, have some fun together and celebrate this season of your life!

Even though we are excited about your wedding, the thing we are most excited about is your marriage. One of the best pieces of advice we can give you is this: never stop dating each other. If you ask us, your engagement session is a great excuse to plan a date night!

PHOTO DELIVERY TIMELINE

1

ONE WEEK - SNEAK PEEK

In the week following, we will be sending you a sneak peak of a few images from your session. We do not believe in having you wait to catch a small glimpse of the beauty that was created.

3-4

THREE TO FOUR WEEKS - FULL GALLERY

In three to four weeks, we will send you a link to your online gallery with all of your final, edited, high-resolution images. You can share the link with your family and friends, post to social media and more! (We recommend changing the lock screen on your phone first!) Your gallery comes with unlimited downloads for you and anyone you share the link with, as well as the option to purchase prints from our professional lab and have them drop-shipped straight to your door.



ONE final NOTE

We know we just gave you a lot to think about. Just take it one step at a time. We provided an Engagement Session Checklist for you on the next page to help you stay organized, but if you have any questions at any point, please know we are here for you. If you're deciding between two dresses and can't commit, we love helping you make the final call. If you love two locations but can't make up your mind, we can guide you through that as well. If you need a recommendation of any kind, remember, we are just one email away.

At the end of the day though, the location you choose and the outfits you wear won't matter nearly as much as the fun we have together and the memories you make as a couple. The style choices you make will certainly enhance your photos, but the most important accessory to bring with you is joyfulness. You do not need to have prior experience in front of the camera. Just show up with a smile and we will take care of the rest.

Above all else, we want you to know that you (as people) are the most important thing to us. Your marriage matters most. So if there is ever anything we can do to serve your relationship today, tomorrow, before the wedding or years down the road, please know that we are here for you and our door is always open. Our own marriage is one of the biggest blessings of our entire lives, and even though we don't know everything, we have learned so much in the past years that have helped us have a healthy, intimate, thriving, fulfilling, adventurous marriage — and we are passionate about helping other couples have that too. Marriage isn't the ball and chain that our current culture parodies it to be. It is the best thing you will ever do...because it causes you to be the best "you" you will ever be.

We can't wait to see you soon!

J&A

ENGAGEMENT

session CHECKLIST

- ☐ Email Josh and Andrea to schedule a date, time and location
- ☐ Schedule hair and makeup appointments
- ☐ Review the Style Guide for outfit inspiration
- ☐ Choose your outfits (drop off at dry cleaner if needed)
- ☐ Get your nails done
- ☐ Clean your ring
- ☐ Pack a bag with:
 - ☐ Flats or flip-flops for walking between photo spots
 - ☐ Outfit #2 (including shoes and accessories)
 - ☐ Touch-up makeup
 - ☐ Props
 - ☐ Water bottle
 - ☐ Coat or cover-up (for colder sessions)
- ☐ Choose a post-session date night spot and make a reservation

(PRINT ME)

