

how to *totally win* at your  
ENGAGEMENT  
SESSION



# how to *totally win* at your ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Hello Bride-to-be! Congratulations on the engagement and upcoming marriage! This is such an exciting time for you!

One of the first things on the “to-do” list after getting engaged is planning your engagement session! My biggest tip to you would be to have your actual wedding photographer shoot your engagement session. Not only is it a great practice run for you and your fiancé in front of the camera before the big day, but it will also let your photographer know how y’all interact with each other and what poses y’all pull off flawlessly.

This session will make a HUGE impact on how the wedding day flows, so make sure whoever is photographing your wedding is the one to photograph this fun time in your lives, as well. What your wedding photographer will learn about the two of you during your engagement session is invaluable!

After you’ve hired your wedding photographer, you’ll need to pick a date for your session. Most wedding photographers are booked with weddings on the weekends, as most weddings happen then. Knowing that, you’ll want to be prepared to shoot on a weekday, Monday-Thursday.

The engagement session should be scheduled at least 3-6 months in advance. If you’re using these images for save-the-dates, you’ll want to schedule as soon as possible, as the whole point behind save-the-dates is to give loved ones as much advanced notice as possible! The best time for lighting portraits is about 1.5 hours before sunset. This means for summer engagements, you’ll likely start around 7PM. For winter engagements, you may start as early as 4PM. Some couples like to schedule their engagement session in the same season as the wedding, so when they display the engagement images at the wedding, the look is cohesive. Others opt to go completely opposite and do a Spring engagement with a Fall wedding, so their portraits have extra variety. Chat about this with your fiancé and do whatever y’all think is best. There is **no right or wrong season!** Just remember that Summers here in Texas are HOT. Shooting outdoors when the weather is nice is probably the best option. Since this is the most popular time for photos, schedule well in advance with your wedding photographer to get your preferred date.



# your ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Now that you have a wedding photographer and know when you'll be scheduling your session, you need to pick out a location. My favorite thing is when couples pick a location that is unique and special to them in some way. This ensures that their engagement photos will have a more sentimental tie in 50 years than just "I found that place on some list." Choosing your engagement session location is an opportunity to think creatively! I would encourage you and your fiancé to brainstorm different options that are special to you both. You'll find some sweet stories explaining why some of my couples picked the location they did here and on the next page. Hopefully, that will get your creativity flowing and help you think outside of the box!



Kristen and Shane's family went to the lake together every summer. For their engagement session, it only made sense to return to where their love first bloomed: the lake.



Beth and Justin love to explore State Parks together. They even got engaged at a State Park. With that, their engagement photos were taken at McKinney Falls State Park.



Allison and Jason just purchased a 30-acre ranch in the Texas Hill Country. We went there for their photo session, as they'll likely live there for the rest of their forever together.



Luke and Jenna are self-proclaimed "Beach People!" With that, Luke took Jenna to the Beach when it came time to propose. She said yes and that is the same beach we visited for their engagement photos.



Katie and John worked at the same park in high school. He was a lifeguard and she was a camp counselor. This same park was where they recognized each other as something more in college. They spent the afternoon of the day they got engaged at this park. Of course, we shot their engagement photos here.



Mason asked Kelsey to marry him on Easter at his grandparents' house. The arch in the photo is the exact spot where Mason dropped down to one knee for the proposal.

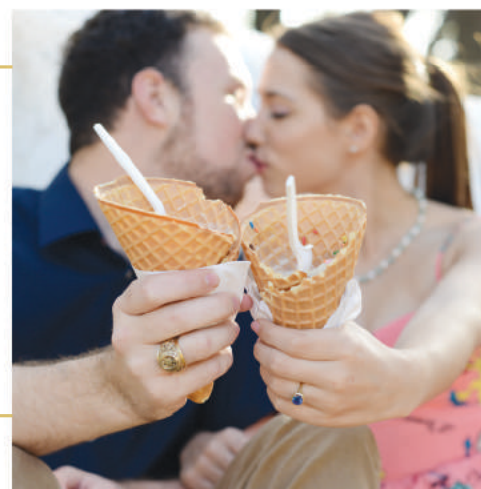


Ashleigh and Manny headed to their wedding venue for their engagement photos. Picking your wedding venue means you'll have less chance of photo-bombers, as you'll likely have the space to yourselves. It also lets you see what backgrounds your photographer is drawn to at your venue.

Parker approached Amberley over all the girls at Half Step (a bar on Rainy Street) because she was wearing cute boots! We visited that exact same bar, where they met, to snap some engagement photos for them.



Ben was the manager at an ice cream shop when Malorie started working there. Their freindship started over ice cream cones. They started their engagement session at a local ice cream shop to incorporate the early part of their love story.



# your ENGAGEMENT SESSION



Kyndra and Mike live in Brooklyn, NY. Their apartment features a resident-only 360-view lounge on the roof. They started their session there, with the NYC skyline in the background.

If you're not tied to a certain location with sentimental reasons, we can try to shoot at a location that reminds y'all of this time together. What do y'all like to do for fun? Where do y'all go when you both have a day off together?

Something else to think about is where y'all might be granted special access to that others may not. Does your family have a membership to a resort that would make a beautiful background? Do y'all know anyone that owns a historical estate or mansion or castle that would let you shoot there? Is your best friend the manager at an upscale hotel and could give you private access to a rooftop terrace? Take some time to brainstorm where y'all might have access to that could make for a unique backdrop!



Melissa is from Germany and wanted their engagement session to have a European feel to part of it. She found a vineyard that claims to be "Tuscany in Texas" and secured permission to shoot there!



Brandon and DeAnne love trying the coolest restaurants and local breweries. With that, they asked a cool, downtown bar if they could take their engagement photos there. The owner said yes AND let them have the entire bar to themselves, before it was open for the evening!



Tana and Arick's first date was at a coffee shop. It is also a go-to date for them. For their engagement session, they wanted to share that part of their love story, so we headed to a coffee shop! This was shot inside Woops! in Georgetown, Texas.



Blythe and Cale are city-folk at heart and love to travel to the city for vacation! They really wanted quirky spots that included graffiti and art. For their session, we spent most of the time in the car, but got to include lots of variety of Austin's murals.



Kayla really loved the look of Horseshoe Bay Resort, but they weren't members there. She did some asking around and found out that she had a connection to one of the wedding coordinators at the resort! Through this acquaintance, she was able to snag it for her and Hector's engagement photos!

Kelsey and Cody both attended Baylor University in Waco, Texas. That is where they met, started dating, and got engaged. One of the iconic places of Waco is the Suspension Bridge. They wanted to end their session there to remember the city that held their early memories together.



# Locations

Ok, we tried to come up with a sentimental location, but nothing sparked joy. Then, we tried to think of cool places we might have access to, but nothing that cool came to mind. If that's you, this is your page. If you're still thinking about location possibilities, these last suggestions are for you. In the spirit of sharing, my go-to locations (some have fees) are usually:

- McKinney Falls State Park (Austin)
- Bull Creek (Austin)
- Berry Springs Park & Preserve (Georgetown)
- Sunken Gardens & San Gabriel Park (Georgetown)
- Barr Mansion (Austin)
- Laguna Gloria (Austin)
- Woodbine Mansion (Round Rock)
- Das Peach Haus (Fredericksburg)
- William Chris Vineyards (Fredericksburg)
- The Vineyard at Florence
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (Austin)
- Almost Any Wedding Venue
- Lake Georgetown
- Horseshoe Bay Resort

One place that you'll need no warm-up time to be comfortable in is your own home. Mariah and Ryan live on a farm with chickens, donkeys, and cows. For their session, they just stepped off their front porch and we got to work! It perfectly reflects this season of engagement for them, too, as they spend every day here.



Are y'all planning on taking a vacation to a fun destination that it may be cool to have photos taken at? Photographers usually LOVE to travel, so ask your wedding photographer how much it would be to have them meet you in that destination! This one was taken in Seattle!

Another option is asking your wedding photographer if they have any trips planned and would be willing to photograph y'all at that destination. You get a cool destination engagement session and may not have to pay for their travel. I shot this wedding in Cabo, Mexico and would have LOVED to add an engagement session, too!



Ask your wedding photographer for suggestions. Tell them the style or feel that you're going for and see what options they come up with. Sometimes, photographers want to shoot at a certain location and just need a couple to take that chance with them.



If you're willing to brave photo-bombers, one option may be to find landmarks of the city you're shooting in. Paul and Aislyn are showing off the Austin skyline, since that is where guests will fly into for their wedding weekend.

A great option for your engagement session location can always be your wedding venue. You picked it for a reason and it's probably pretty. Shooting at your wedding venue also (usually) means you'll have the space to yourself without photo-bombers. This image was taken at Barr Mansion in Austin, TX.



# THE OUTFITS

## WHAT TO WEAR

Don't be too nervous about your engagement session! Your wedding photographer should be able to coach you through it step-by-step! Since most couples don't have their photos taken on the regular, here are some helpful pointers to keep in mind when planning what to wear to your session!



- The goal is COORDINATING outfits instead of matching. Navy and Blush is such a pretty combination! I also recommend avoiding both of you wearing white as a top, as it doesn't allow any contrast in your images.

- Show some personality with your accessories! Accessorize your outfits with scarves, bold necklaces and fun heels!

- Graphics and neon colors are not favorable for portraits. You'll also want to avoid distracting or tiny patterns and prints.

- Longer sleeves have an awesome slimming effect on all arms. (Sleeveless tops have the opposite effect.) Knowing this, don't be afraid to try something with sleeves!

- Leave the cell phones and wallets locked in the car, as they add weird shapes through pockets. (This is especially true for the grooms!) You also don't want to accidentally forget you set them down.

- Sessions are usually timed to include two outfits. Most of my brides will bring one "wow" dress, and then another shorter cocktail-length dress or midi/maxi skirt for a more casual "us on a date" feel.

- Please pick outfits that you're comfortable and CONFIDENT in! You don't want to have to worry and constantly adjust part of your outfit that you're not fond of.

- BE ON TIME! Your session can't be extended if you're late, as the light (sun) will be gone. The later you arrive, the less time we have to shoot! And nobody wants that!

- Skip the spray tan. Even when done subtly and professionally, most spray tans photograph orange or leave streaks. Your natural skin tone will photograph most beautifully!

- Have the engagement ring cleaned. I'll photograph detail shots of it as the two of you change into outfit number two, so make it shiny!

- There is no such thing as "too dressed up," so don't be afraid to have some fun! This would be a great excuse to rock a sequined gown or flower crown if you've been looking for an excuse to do so! Some of our brides have had great success with Rent the Runway, if you don't want to add a permanent piece to your closet.

- Jackets on guys photograph REALLY well! For your fancy date night (cocktail) outfit, don't forget about your man! Let him have a James Bond moment! Solid shades of gray or navy are strong complements to most other colors (read: whatever your outfit is).

- Heels elongate women's legs, making them look fabulous. If your toes are showing in a peep-toe heel, you might want to schedule a pedicure with that mani (since we'll definitely be showing off that hand with the bling) before your session. Just make sure the color you pick matches both of your outfits!

- Schedule your trial run with your Professional hair and makeup team for your engagement session! This will ensure that your hair is amazing and removes the stress of getting ready on your own. You'll get an extra confidence boost in front of the camera and it will photograph like a dream! When in doubt, say yes to lash extensions and go for a wear-all-day lip color.

- In my experience, every woman, regardless of her shape, has an area of her body that she's self-conscious about, so recognizing what that is in advance is key. Choosing flattering, timeless silhouettes and colors that complement your natural features is the best way to ensure you'll love the way you look in your photos.

- Long, flowy dresses look amazing on camera and bring extra movement to your photos. Floor length skirts will give us the best "twirl factor," add more romance to your walking photos, and look especially gorgeous when juxtaposed with The Texas Hill Country.

- Relax! The best way to make sure you love your photos is to have fun and enjoy the afternoon! Make a date night out of it! Since you'll already be dressed up, plan dinner afterwards and celebrate!!



# faq's

when in doubt

## THE FEMININE SHAPE

You'll want to emphasize your feminine shape, not hide it. There are a few things that make us ladies look different than men, so emphasize those! V-necks are great options! You can also add a long necklace to create that V of the hour-glass figure. Also, don't hide your waistline. Belting with skinny/thin belts helps emphasize how narrow your waist is.

## SILHOUETTE

When in doubt, opt to wear something more classic in style. There is a reason wrap dresses and A-line dresses are considered the most universally flattering on all body-types.

## SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Others tend to give compliments on things that are remarkable. Choose to add one remarkable detail to your outfit. Be it super fun heels or a pair of earrings that dazzle, add something fun and unique to your outfit. This will also boost your confidence level!

## COLOR

If you're not sure what color to wear, lean towards jewel tones. Don't be afraid to wear and play with colors! Emerald, sapphire blue, raspberry, and amethyst purple are great go-tos!

# faq's for him

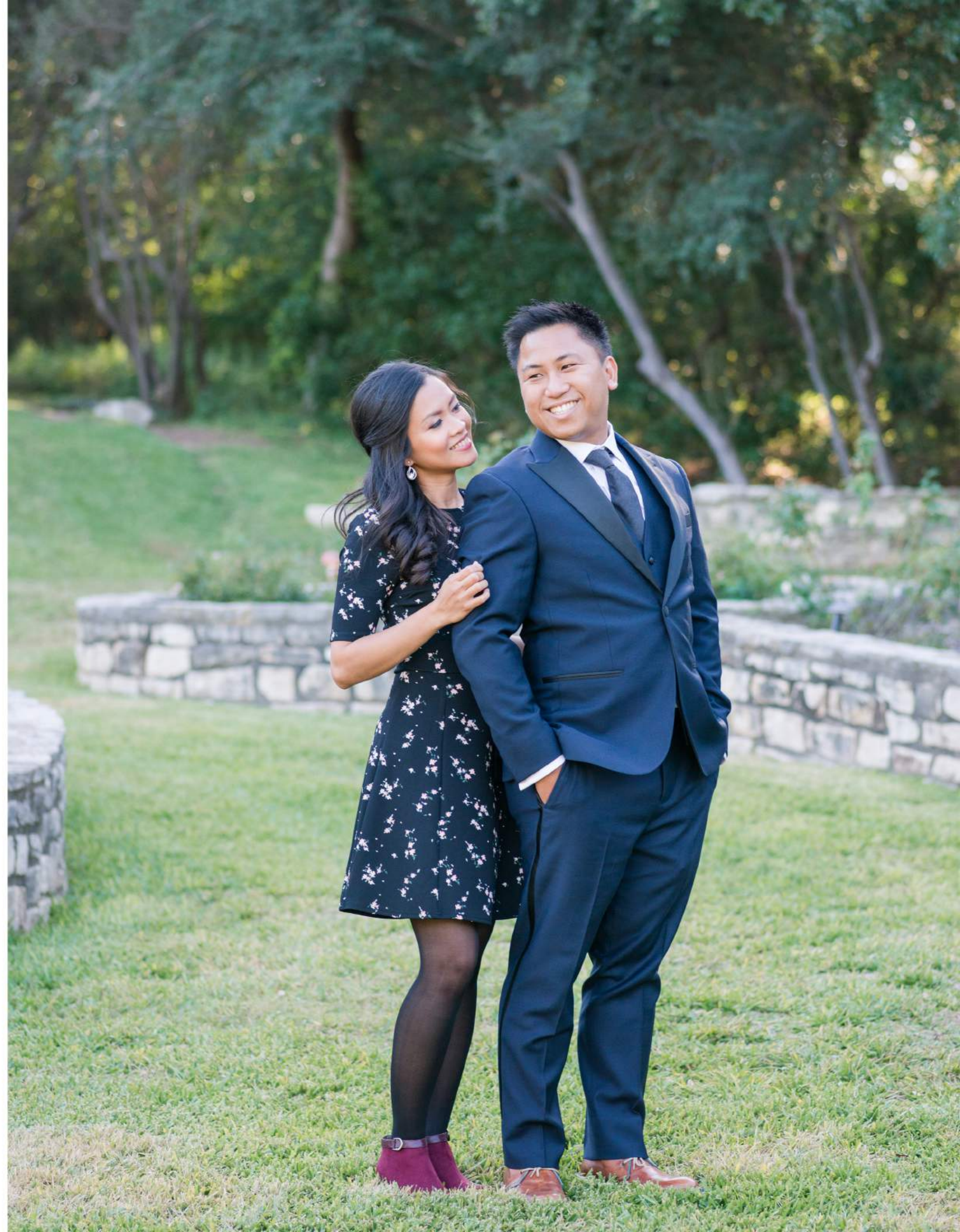
A blazer, sport coat, or suit jacket is the most flattering look for men. You can't go wrong with a dress shirt, slacks and a blazer, or a well-tailored suit. To avoid wrinkles while driving to your session, put on your dress shirt and jacket after you arrive at your engagement session location.

For colors, I recommend neutrals and soft, warm tones that complement your fiancée's look. When selecting your pieces, choose a different "weight" for the pants and coat. For example, navy pants (darker) and a heather gray coat (lighter). Or gray pants (darker) with a soft powder blue shirt (lighter).

When selecting a suit for photos, the most important part is the fit. You want a suit jacket that fits snugly (but not too tight), and pants that are the correct length and don't have 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. Solid shades of gray or navy are a strong complement to most other colors (read: whatever your fiancée is wearing), whereas pinstripes or plaid patterns tend to distract the eye, so stay away from too strong of prints, and opt for solids instead.

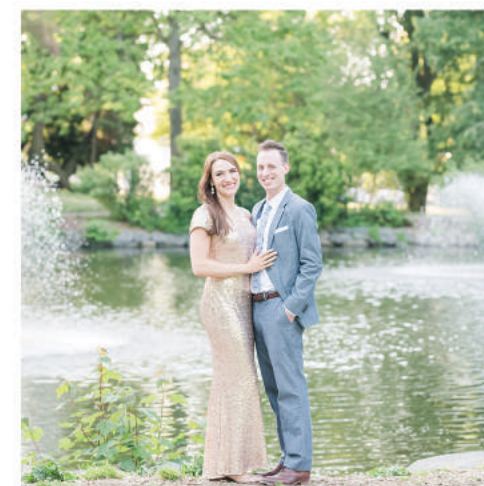
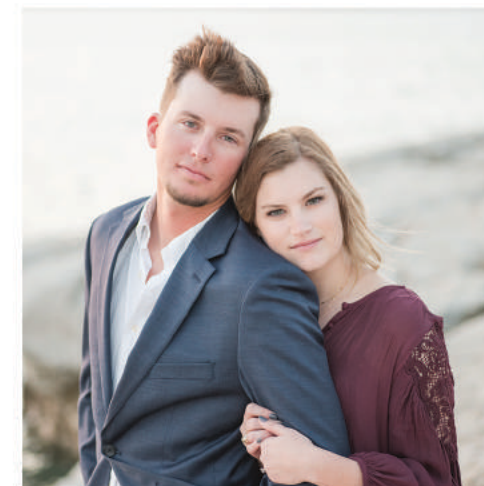
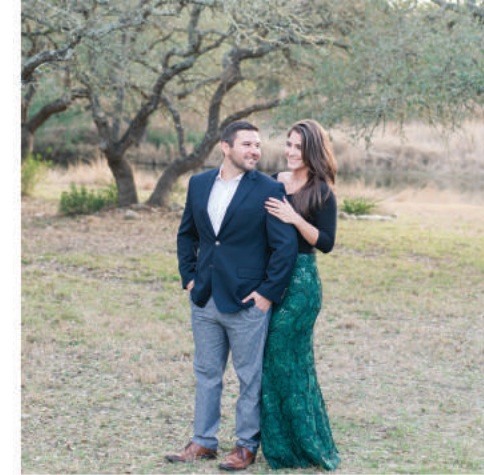
The next time you walk by a store like J. Crew or Banana Republic, you'll notice the male mannequins and models are always wearing several layers at once. Layers on men look great on camera, so even when it's hot outside, it's worth an hour or two of discomfort for photos that will last you both a lifetime. Adding extra layers will bring additional dimension and visual interest to your photos.

Long pants and closed-toed shoes are the most sophisticated and masculine looks for men. Brown leather dress shoes complement almost every look, whether you're wearing a full suit, or a blazer and colored pants. Ties, bowties, pocket squares, belts, tie clips, suspenders, vests, 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, no problem! One look will do the trick! A lot of my grooms wear one suit and just change their dress shirt and tie. Other guys wear one pair of pants and change their jacket. You can still mix and match accessories to complement your fiancée's outfits without doing a full change during the session. So, either way, you win!





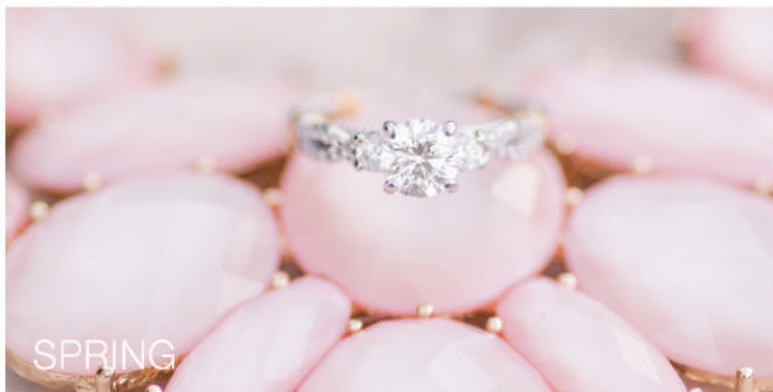
*outfit*  
INSPIRATION



# THE SEASONS

## WHAT TO WEAR

Before you have your heart set on what you'll be wearing to your engagement session, make sure you keep the season in mind! You don't want to wear a sweater to a Summer engagement or a short dress when it's 40 degrees outside in the Winter. One of my biggest pieces of advice would be to dress comfortably for the season that your engagement session is taking place in!



- If you want to wear pastel colors to your session, Spring is the perfect opportunity to do so! Pastel & neutral colors give images a more romantic feel.

- Florals, white pants/dresses, and water color prints are all popular in Spring!

- If you're wanting to include some of the Texas wildflowers in your photos, be sure to bring an extra pair of shoes that will allow you to comfortably walk into the field of wildflowers. You'll also want to make sure the outfit you wear in the flowers won't get caught or stained easily (like a tulle skirt or white pants).

- Bluebonnets generally bloom starting in late March to mid-April.

- If your location allows, chilled champagne toasts could make cute props! So would a beautiful bouquet of flowers!



- One of Texans' favorite things to do in the Summer is to spend time at the local swimming spot. With that, don't be afraid to end your session in the water. It could fun to have a "water fight" or include some time on a boat in your session!

- It's more common than not to have the weather up over 100 degrees here in Texas, so be prepared to sweat! Bring a sweat towel or rag to make sure neither of you are glistening with sweat. It's also a good idea to wear an under shirt that will soak up the first layer of sweat, so what the camera can see doesn't have any sweat stains. Do a "water test" - if your outfit changes color when it's wet, it will absolutely show sweat at your session, so you may need to pick a different option.

- If I'm being honest, you probably don't want to have your session shot in Texas in the Summer. If this is the last option, though, or you want to take them on a special day, definitely opt for airbrush make-up, as it's more sweat-proof than traditional make-up. You may also want to go for an up-do with your hair to keep you cooler.



- With all seasons, you'll want to dress with colors that are appropriate for Fall. I immediately think of eggplant purple, burnt orange, mustard yellow, and maroon. Think of the colors of the trees when they start to turn.

- Boots and booties are a popular shoe choice for Fall!

- Bring light layers to your session to add personality to your outfit. Scarfs, beanies, and boot socks, will all be cute and weather-appropriate in the Fall.

- If you want to add a cardigan or some type of sweater to your outfit, make sure to belt the bottom layer with a skinny belt. This will make your waist look super tiny (only what's visible between the sweater opening at the front)!

- Make sure you plan for traffic during any season, but especially the Fall! With Sunset being earlier in the Fall, you'll want to make sure you account for rush hour when driving to your session.



- We'll want to watch the weather closely in the Winter. If it's too cold, you'll have a red nose and red ears (and maybe a running nose) and I don't think you want to look like Rudolph during your engagement session. Know what your comfort level is and dress appropriately. If you're uncomfortable because you're cold, it will show in your facial expressions.

- If you've checked the weather, but can't move the date and are shooting in the freezing cold, anyway, you need to plan on a few things. You should bring a huge jacket or blanket to warm up in between photos (or use in your photos). You should also plan to spend a few minutes inside your car with the heater running or running indoors to enjoy the warmth between photo sets.

- If it will be cold, think about bringing hand warmers. Some of my couples have even put them in their shoes and it helped them get through the session, despite the cold.

- Bring a thermos of hot coffee or hot tea! It'll do wonders!

# tips for including your *fur-baby* at your ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Most of my couples ask if they can include their sweet fur-babies at their engagement session! The answer for me is absolutely! I would LOVE to meet your four-legged baby, as I have two Great Danes myself! There are some suggestions, however, that I want to share with you before you bring them to your session.

First, know that your pet won't be in all your portraits. Knowing this, you'll need a safe place for them to go when we shoot without them. The number one thing I've seen is bringing a trusted friend with you to your session that will either puppy-sit for you or that can take the pet home when their portrait time is over. This friend (mom, maid of honor, roommate) should be self-entertaining and not want to "watch" us take your engagement photos. It will be awkward to have

spectators, so they will need to be free to walk your dog on their own or take them home. Some couples even start/end their session near their home, so they can quickly pick up or drop off their fur-baby back to its safe place (home). I don't want to see your beloved pet left in a car or tied to a tree. That's not fair to your pet and is not safe.

Secondly, it would help me to get their attention if I have a treat for them or a special toy. Make sure you bring a toy for them or a treat they can have.

Feel free to bring pretty collars, bow ties, or floral leashes for your fur-baby and let them have a dress up day, too! They can also be used as part of y'all's save-the-date announcement by holding a sign with your wedding date.

Of course, make sure you bring water for your furry friend, as well!



# Thank You

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS GUIDE AND GOT LOTS OF GREAT INFO FROM IT!

PLAN AND PREPARE, BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THE MAIN GOAL OF YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION SHOULD BE TO HAVE FUN AND ENJOY AN AFTERNOON WITH YOUR FIANCEE! THAT'S ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS! IF YOU'RE WILLING TO HAVE FUN, YOU'RE GOING TO GET BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS!

CONGRATULATIONS, AGAIN, ON YOUR ENGAGEMENT!

BE SURE TO VISIT THE BLOG TO VIEW MY MOST RECENT ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS!

Love,  
Mylah

[www.MylahRenae.com](http://www.MylahRenae.com)

Hi! I'm Mylah and I'm the lead photographer, editor, & blog writer behind Mylah Renae Photography! I serve the Texas Hill Country, Austin, & Waco areas, based out of Salado. Seattle, New York City, and Belize are a few of the places I've photographed. If you're looking for a wedding photographer outside of Texas, I do travel, so just ask! I hope you found this guide useful! Follow along on the blog for more tips and tricks about your engagement session, bridal session, and wedding day!



For daily inspiration, follow along on Instagram: @MylahRenae