



STRESS FREE

wedding planning

5 tips to make it down the aisle without pulling your hair out



HEY, I'M JESSICA.

Hi friend! I am so excited that you downloaded this short guide! It has some of my favorite and best tips for taking the stress out of wedding planning! This is a huge day in your life, and I want to help relieve some of the pressure it brings so that you can stay present with a clear head and really enjoy the moments!

I have shot over 80 weddings in the past four years, and have seen a lot of different brides! Each one responds differently to the stress that wedding planning brings. I hope that I can bring some insight so that you can learn from all of their mistakes!

I hope you enjoy this content! If you're still looking for your photographer soulmate, and want someone that feels like a bridesmaid with a camera instead of a stranger - I may just be the perfect fit for you!

XO - Jessica



TIP ONE: *the seasons*

WINTER

Winter weddings are gorgeous! However, they do take some additional planning simply because of the sunset time. The hard part about a winter timeline is the fact that the sun sets around 5 PM. This means that all of your portraits have to be done before then! This isn't a problem if you're having a late afternoon wedding, but if you're having a late evening ceremony, you may have a bit of down time from 4 PM until the start of the ceremony. You will also need more coverage time as well.

SPRING

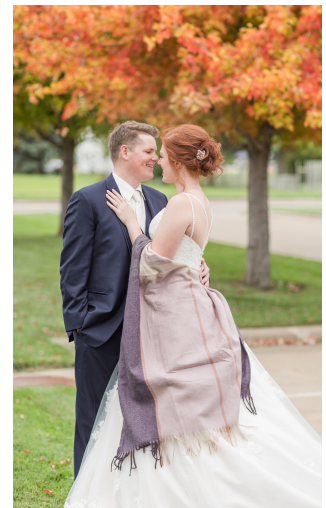
Spring weddings are wonderful because they are the perfect temperature. However, I recommend having plenty of Claritin and Zyrtec on hand just in case allergies start to flare up during portrait time. Spring weddings normally mean the potential for some blooms! If we happen to find any type of blooming tree or plant, it will be worth it to give me a few minutes for portraits with it. You'll LOVE the result.

SUMMER

Summer weddings are amazing! I love that there is so much daylight. In some months, the light will last until 9:00 PM! So, if you're having a summer wedding, you'll need to plan on having a few minutes to slip out during the reception for your sunset portraits. You will NOT regret this. This is the absolute best light of the day and you're going to want to have portraits during this time period. Usually these portraits happen during dinner or open dancing so that no one even notices you're gone for a few minutes!

FALL

Fall weddings are my favorite! I love the temperature and the colors! Most of my fall brides worry about color, and I just want to encourage you that all I need is one tree with some color in order to make it look like fall! A little bit of color can go a long way! Your portrait time will vary depending on the wedding date. We will be sure to discuss this when we approve your final timeline.



TIP TWO: *the details*

The whole day begins with details, and it's my favorite thing to photograph! It allows me to get a vision for the theme of the wedding and get my creative side warmed up. If possible, collect all of your details before I arrive so that I can begin quickly and have more time for some "getting ready" shots of you and your girls!

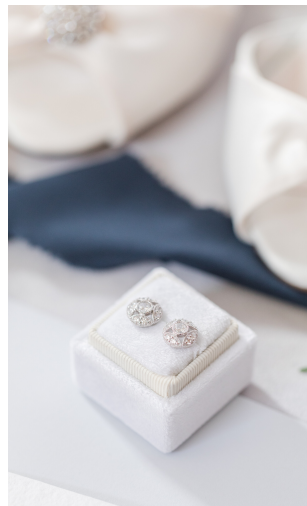
Sometimes, depending on the theme and "look" of the wedding day, there may be some extra elements that you could include when you gather your details. For example, if you're having a country themed wedding, you could include a piece of burlap or lace. If you're having a rustic themed wedding that includes some wooden elements, maybe save a small piece of wood for me to use when I'm shooting your rings and jewelry. This REALLY makes for beautiful, consistent album spreads!

Don't forget the Bouquet! Have the bouquets and bouts delivered to the bride before the first look so that she can have her bouquet in her portraits. No worries, if it's hot, we'll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony!

The most common detail missing when I arrive are the rings! Moms, officiants and planners will tell you to hand over your wedding band to the best man before the day begins. However, it's actually better to hand it over during the bridal party portraits so that I can shoot some great ring shots in the AM! If you forget, no worries, I can always shoot the ring shot at the reception if there is extra time!

DETAILS TO PACK

- dress
- veil and hair pieces
- rings (all three)
- ring box
- shoes
- bouquet / loose florals
- jewelry
- perfume
- invitation suite
- family heirlooms / traditions
- sentimental items
- koozies
- vow books



TIP THREE: *the timeline*

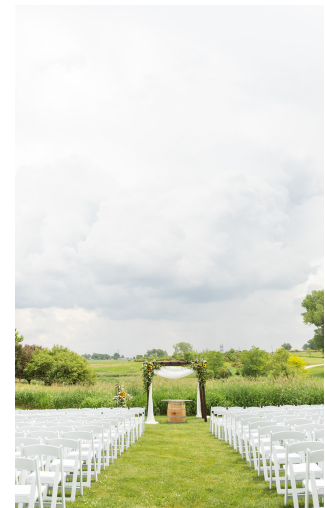
Of course having a schedule can't guarantee a day without hiccups, but a clear timeline of events will set your mind at ease & keep your guests informed. It's a good idea to have two separate timelines for the day.

Create a detailed timeline for the wedding party and anyone else involved in the wedding, providing an hour-to-hour outline of all of the wedding day events. Type it up as a one-pager that includes church, venue and salon addresses, important contact phone numbers, and a small list of what everyone (*groomsmen*) need to remember to bring with them.

Then make a more simplified itinerary for guests, to include on the wedding program. This might cover the locations and times of the ceremony, cocktail hour and reception. These two timelines will ensure that everyone knows where they should be and what they should be doing throughout the wedding day... without you having to point them in the right direction.

Your wedding planning, venue coordinator, or photographer will assist you in designing a timeline for your wedding day. If you want to take it on yourself, here are some things to include:

- Bridesmaid arrival at breakfast.
- Bridesmaid arrival at hair & makeup.
- What suite the groomsmen go to and when.
- When snacks/lunch will be provided and where.
- When parents need to be at the venue.
- When grandparents need to be at the venue (and who is bringing them).
- When children need to nap.
- When children need to arrive for photos.
- When each vendor arrives to setup.
- First look.
- Bridal party portraits.
- Family portraits.
- Ceremony start time.
- Party bus or social hour.
- Grand entrance/supper.
- First dances.
- When music begins.



TIP FOUR: *high impact planning*

There are so many expenses when it comes to wedding planning. Many brides have to prioritize what they want to invest in. Over the last 12 years of photographing weddings, I have found that there are certain things to avoid investing in and other parts of the day that a little extra investment will go a very long way! My hope is that this list will help you invest in the parts of your day that will be high-impact and will help you avoid spending money where it doesn't matter.

1. Invest in your bridal bouquet over other florals. Make your bridal bouquet a big priority! When I'm photographing a wedding, if the bride has a gorgeous bouquet, I can make the entire day look like there were beautiful florals everywhere! I can use the bridal bouquet to spruce up bridal details, reception details AND even bride and groom portraits as well! The bridal bouquet is a focal point for me when it comes to your photography and so I highly recommend getting your DREAM bouquet and investing less on the bridesmaids bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much!

2. Go with greenery over blooms. Greenery is beautiful and photographs well but still can be half the price as blooms! I recommend actual flowers for your bridal bouquet but then decorating other aspects of the day with greenery to save money while still making a huge visual impact!

3. Have one well-done installation instead of a lot of small tables of decor. If you're hoping for a heavily detailed reception but the cost is adding up, focus on one focal point instead of trying to decorate everywhere. For example, invest in a beautiful, large, hanging chandelier or unique lighting elements but do shorter, simpler floral centerpieces on 1/2 of your tables and candles on the other 1/2.

4. Double purposes for decor. Maybe you choose to have an epic, well-styled entryway at your reception that also doubles as an amazing photo booth later on throughout the evening once party dancing has started!

5. Avoid spending money on tiny details. Customized favors, personalized koozies, etc.... it all adds up and at the end of the day these tiny details can often be overlooked.



TIP FIVE: *breathe & enjoy*

Wait, what? You don't believe when everyone tells you that a wedding day is a total whirlwind? Well, it is.

You need to intentionally remind yourself to enjoy the day, otherwise it will completely get away from you!

Plan an EASY morning. Yes, photos, hair and makeup may start very early. But wake up with enough time to eat breakfast slowly, get your favorite coffee or tea, and sit with your girls. Remind yourself that this entire day is for one important reason, and give yourself time to have a calm mind.

Remember to delegate! This is one of the hardest things for brides to do, especially if they're type A like me! Your wedding day is the time to make everyone else jump and run to get things. You do not need to be running half dressed down a hotel hallway to check that the tablecloths are pinned up correctly! Let the Moms, the personal attendant or the wedding planner take care of everything for you.

Once you've done your first look, make sure to take moments where you and your hubby stop, hold each other's hands, and intentionally be present in the moment. When I shoot portraits, I make sure that it's private and I tell the bride and groom that it's not just for photos, but so that you have some time alone together. Talk, cuddle, kiss a little longer, Make some time in the day to pull away and simply be. You won't regret that time, I promise!

As difficult as all of this seems, make plans ahead of time so that you can be intentional about being present in the moment. Make your lists, charts, and maps ahead of time. Communicate with everyone weeks in advance. Give everyone a bridesmaids phone number instead of yours. You don't need to worry about things on your day!

