

SARAH *Goodenzi*
WEDDING GUIDE



GETTING READY

/ Couples often devote a significant amount of time to planning their wedding ceremony and reception venues, but they often overlook the importance of choosing a suitable location for getting ready. The moments spent preparing for the big day are truly special and having beautiful images of this time can set the tone for the entire wedding story. Therefore, it's crucial to consider whether the getting ready location aligns with the overall theme of your wedding and pays attention to two key aspects: the venue itself and the lighting.

While hotels may seem luxurious, they are not always practical for getting ready. They can be too small, difficult to access, and often have unattractive signage that doesn't contribute to the aesthetic of your photos. That's why we highly recommend considering alternatives such as renting a bed and breakfast that matches your theme or opting for a stylish apartment through platforms like Airbnb. Not only are these options more cost-effective, but they also provide a better environment for capturing stunning photographs. It's truly the ideal scenario for your getting ready moments.

If you choose to get ready at home, it's essential to tidy up and remove any clutter or items you don't want appearing in your wedding photos. Minimizing distractions in the background will ensure that you and your loved ones stand out in the pictures. One major culprit in this regard is television sets. Although many people have them in their living rooms, TVs can be eyesores in photos, drawing attention away from the beauty of the surroundings. Consider temporarily removing the TV and replacing it with a lovely vase of flowers to enhance the visual appeal and earn extra points for a cleaner, more elegant look.



IGNORE ME

/ Instead of fixating on where the camera is all day be present and shift your focus to the individuals surrounding you. I will keep you informed if there are any specific tasks I need you to undertake, but I encourage you to fully embrace the company of your loved ones. Laugh, cry, hug, or engage in playful moments just as you would without a photographer present. Be authentically yourself, as the more you let your true self shine, the more exquisite and genuine your images will turn out to be. During the portrait session, I will provide some gentle guidance, but the key is to have fun and stay true to who you are.

STRAY AWAY FROM THE TRENDS

/ Sure, Pinterest has some fantastic ideas, but remember, you don't have to try every single one of them. If you've come across a particular shot, like the robe shot, or any other popular trend that feels overdone, there's no pressure to include it in your wedding. In fact, it's often better to steer clear of overly trendy ideas. However, if you stumble upon something that genuinely resonates with you, feel free to share it with me, and we can work together to give it your unique touch.





THE FIRST LOOK

/ Many couples nowadays choose to have a first look session, which is a wonderful option if you want to break away from tradition and enjoy some intimate moments together before the busy festivities begin. If you opt for a first look, here are a few things to keep in mind. During the summer months, the sunlight can be quite harsh between 10 am and 3 pm, resulting in unflattering shadows and intense lighting. It's ideal to have access to shaded areas or interiors with appealing spots for your portraits. Additionally, consider the potential heat, as a lengthy photo session might be challenging if you have to walk long distances in hot weather. Lastly, if you love those beautiful sunset shots captured by your photographer, it's a good idea to allocate around 20 minutes later in the evening to slip away and capture some of those magical moments in the stunning golden light.

For winter weddings, it's worth considering taking your creative portraits before the ceremony. Doing so provides ample natural light for your photos and allows you to have a later ceremony time. This way, you can feel more relaxed and less rushed both before, during, and after your ceremony.

CEREMONY

/ Summer can bring intense heat, and having an outdoor ceremony in the middle of the day may result in sweating for you and your guests. Additionally, the high position of the sun during this time can cause squinting eyes and dark shadows. To enhance the lighting quality, it's worth considering the timing of your ceremony in relation to sunset. Working backward from sunset can help you plan your schedule effectively. Opting for a later ceremony in summer allows you to avoid the heat and harsh light, while still having plenty of daylight for all your wedding activities due to the longer summer days.

I highly recommend having an unplugged ceremony, meaning no cameras, phones, or iPads, especially as you walk down the aisle. Countless times, guests have unintentionally obstructed my shots or ruined a photo while trying to capture their own “winning” shot. Trust me, you’ll be more impressed by the professional photos you receive, and your guests can fully enjoy and be present during the entire ceremony. It’s truly delightful to witness the genuine happiness on their faces instead of seeing big, unsightly iPads obstructing everyone’s view.

ALLOW TIME

/ Weddings are often delayed around 10 to 15 minutes, even under the best circumstances. It’s important to keep this in mind when creating your schedule. I recommend allocating time immediately after the ceremony for your guests to offer their congratulations. This is a precious moment that you wouldn’t want to miss out on. If possible, give yourselves a minimum of 15 minutes to truly enjoy the presence of your loved ones during this special time.



FAMILY + GROUP PHOTOS

/ Family photos can sometimes be a bit chaotic, as it can be challenging to gather excited loved ones into a group. This is completely normal, and that's why I ask that you assign someone as my assistant to help with organizing the groups. Provide them with a copy of the group shot list you've prepared, and they have my full permission to take charge and be bossy! While I stay in one spot, the two of you can also stay in one spot, and the groups can come and go smoothly. This approach saves a significant amount of time and allows everyone to quickly return to the festivities. Depending on the number of group shots you desire, we may need approximately 30 minutes. Let's discuss this in more detail to ensure we allocate sufficient time for these photos.

Personally, I view the traditional "group photo" of the whole guests list as a process similar to herding cattle, and it has become somewhat cliché. It can take away from the enjoyment of the celebration and often impacts the candid and authentic photos of you mingling with your loved ones. Please let me know if you still desire this shot, as it does consume a considerable amount of time.





BRIDAL PARTY SESSION

/ Now, let's move on to the exciting part: the bridal party photo session! This usually takes place right after the family shots, unless you've chosen to do them before the ceremony, which is also a great option. During this session, we'll likely explore different locations for a change of scenery. It's a time for you to unwind, relax, and have a great time with your friends while capturing some amazing photos.

To make the experience even more enjoyable, I suggest having someone from the group prepare a small hamper of snacks or some celebratory drinks to bring along. This way, you can nibble on some treats while we're shooting. All the excitement and emotions of the day can work up an appetite, and you may not have a chance to eat again for another hour or so. Having some refreshments on hand ensures everyone stays energized and satisfied throughout the session.

I typically recommend allocating at least 30 minutes for the bridal party shoot, but this can vary depending on the size of the party and your personal preferences. It's important to have enough time to capture beautiful photos while still allowing for a relaxed and enjoyable experience.

COUPLE PORTRAITS

/ The most ideal time for couple portraits, unless you have a first look session, is during the “golden hour” - the hour right before the sun sets when the lighting is soft and golden. If this timing doesn’t work for your schedule, any time from 4 pm onwards, as the sun starts to lower in the sky, can still provide great lighting for your portraits.

During the summer months, it can be beneficial to split the portrait session into two parts. You can have a one-hour session that includes the bridal party (if applicable), and then another 20-minute session when the sun is setting later in the evening. Consider this when planning your wedding day timeline. Additionally, if you are surrounded by mountains, keep in mind that the sun may go behind them before technically setting. Feel free to discuss this with me in more detail, and we can plan accordingly.

Having some dedicated time for couple portraits is truly wonderful. While I understand that you don’t want to be away from your guests for too long, allowing yourselves some time for these portraits can actually help you feel more relaxed. It’s also the first time the two of you will be alone (except for me capturing the moments), and it’s a beautiful opportunity to take a moment, chat, and reflect on the events that just unfolded - you just got married! So, take the time to truly enjoy yourselves. If possible, allowing one hour or more for this session would be ideal, but we can discuss and customize the timeframe based on your preferences and schedule.



RECEPTION

/ Choosing the right lighting for your reception venue is crucial to creating the desired atmosphere. Lighting preferences can vary greatly from couple to couple and venue to venue, but I often recommend opting for a natural lighting approach. Large festoon lights can be a fantastic choice for outdoor locations, as they not only illuminate the space but also add a visually pleasing aesthetic to the background of your photographs. They provide a natural light quality without being overly warm or cool. It's generally best to avoid excessively colorful lighting, especially cool tones, as they can create an unnatural or distracting ambiance. While fairy lights can be a wonderful addition to complement other lighting sources, relying solely on a few fairy lights in a large space might result in a darker atmosphere.

In terms of photography, I prefer to shoot as much as possible without flash until the dancing starts. This allows me to capture the genuine atmosphere of the evening in an authentic manner. Flash can sometimes interfere with the ambience created by the venue's existing lighting. By utilizing available natural or ambient lighting, we can capture the true essence and mood of your reception, showcasing the beautiful lighting setup you have chosen.

