

PHOTOHOUSE FILMS

The
PHF Portrait Guide

SIMPLE STEPS TO PHOTOS THAT FEEL LIKE YOU





Long before the wedding day, there's a season worth remembering — this is where we tell that story.

This guide walks you through the rhythm of an engagement session — how to choose spaces, outfits, and moments that ground the experience and make it feel effortless, intentional, and true to your story.



WHY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS MATTER

1. They tell your story before the wedding day.

Engagement sessions capture who you are in this season—your rhythm, personality, and the way you naturally connect.

2. They build comfort with the camera.

Most couples aren't used to being photographed professionally. An engagement session builds confidence, trust, and ease before the wedding.

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3.They create meaningful keepsakes.

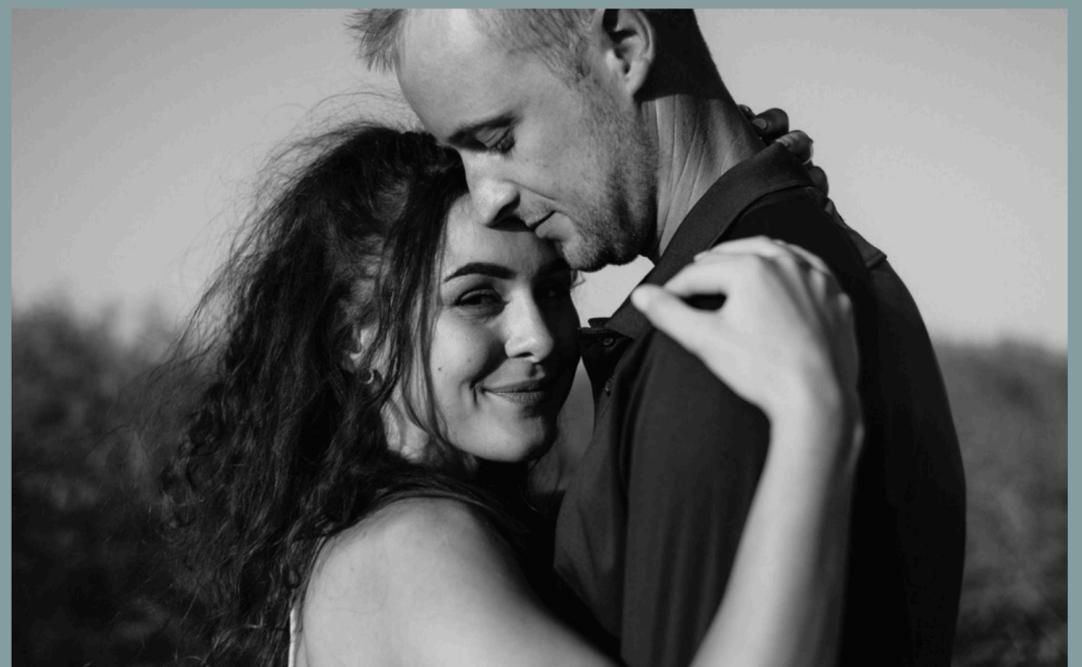
You'll have images for save-the-dates, invitations, displays, and personal use that feel true to you.

4.They deepen your connection with your photographer.

This is where you learn each other's style, communication, and pacing, ensuring smoother moments on the wedding day.

5.They help you discover what you love (and don't love) before the wedding day.

An engagement session becomes a low-pressure trial run: you learn which angles you like, what poses feel natural, how you interact on camera, and what style of photos resonate with you.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT LOCATION



Choosing the right location sets the tone for your entire engagement session. It's not just a backdrop—it's part of your story, shaping the energy, colors, and mood of your images.

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- Pick a place that reflects your vibe. Urban, nature, beach, moody, modern, vintage —choose spaces that naturally match your personality as a couple.
- Consider sentimental spots. First date locations, favorite cafés, neighborhoods, or shared hobbies can anchor your photos in genuine meaning.
- Think about light. Soft sunrise or golden-hour glow transforms even the simplest location. Let light guide your choice as much as scenery.
- Look for variety. Select a location with multiple textures — open fields + wooded trails, or city streets + rooftop views—to maximize your gallery in one shoot.

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ENGAGEMENT LOCATIONS IN AUSTIN

We've gathered a few of our go-to engagement locations in Austin — beautiful spots we adore and that might be perfect for you too.



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1. Laguna Gloria

A beautiful art-filled estate with European vibes— think dreamy pathways, elegant architecture, and lakeside views. Perfect if you want something polished, romantic, and a little more elevated.

2. Sekrit Theater

A magical, hidden gem with a whimsical, vintage feel. Its iconic glass greenhouse, overgrown greenery, and eclectic props create a dreamy, cinematic backdrop. Perfect if you want something artistic, romantic, and totally one-of-a-kind.



3. Downtown Austin

Perfect if you love an urban vibe — textures, glass buildings, alleyways, rooftops, and busy city energy. Stylish, modern, and great for couples who want something bold and editorial.



4. McKinney Falls

For couples who love adventure and nature. Expect waterfalls, rocky terrain, tall trees, and a more rugged, outdoorsy feel. Great for sunset light and dramatic scenery.



5. Auditorium Shores

A breezy, open park with skyline views and tons of space to move. It's casual, bright, and fun—perfect if you want playful photos with the city in the background.

6. Mueller Lake Park

Clean, modern, and super accessible. You get a lake, boardwalks, colorful walls, and pretty landscaping — great for couples wanting a fresh, bright, modern look.





7. Zilker Botannical Garden

Lush, peaceful, and full of gorgeous scenery. From koi ponds and waterfalls to bamboo paths and floral gardens, it offers tons of variety in one place. Perfect for couples who want something soft, romantic, and nature-filled without venturing too far.



Your Wedding Venue

Choosing your wedding venue for your engagement session is a beautiful way to tie everything together. It gives your photos a cohesive look and adds meaning — capturing the place where you'll actually say "I do." You also get to explore the property without wedding-day pressure, which helps you feel familiar and relaxed. If you love your venue, this is an easy, sentimental choice that makes your photos feel extra personal.

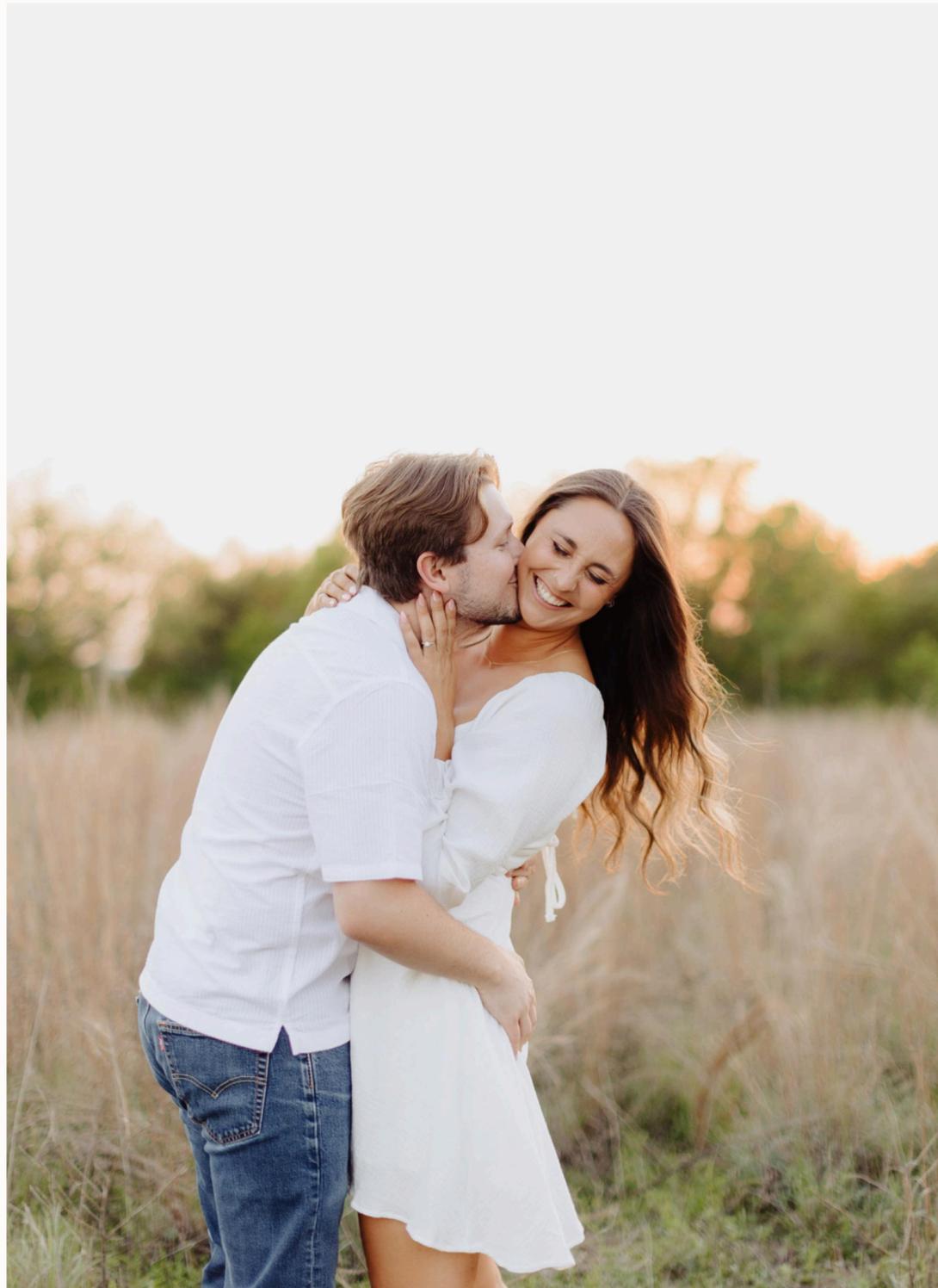
NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT OUTFITS

Choosing the right outfits can elevate your entire engagement session — they shape the mood, help you feel confident, and give your photos a sense of who you are together. What you wear is one of the easiest ways to tell a story: you can keep it fun and playful, go polished and romantic, or choose pieces that reflect your everyday vibe as a couple.

When you love what you're wearing, you move more naturally, connect more easily, and your photos reflect that ease. Think of your outfits as part of the story you're telling together: simple, intentional choices that make your images feel timeless and true to you.



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- Prioritize comfort and movement.

If you can't walk, sit, or hug comfortably, it will show. Flowing fabrics and well-fitted pieces photograph beautifully.

- Choose timeless over trendy.

Engagement photos are long-lasting—neutral palettes, classic silhouettes, and clean lines age well.

- Avoid loud logos or busy patterns.

They distract from your faces and emotions.

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- Bring two outfits if possible. One dressy, one casual. This gives your gallery range and helps tell a fuller story of your relationship.
- Think about your location when choosing colors. Soft neutrals look beautiful in parks and gardens, while richer tones pop in urban or architectural settings. Let the backdrop guide what will complement—not compete with—your surroundings.
- Keep accessories simple and intentional. Minimal jewelry, clean shoes, and subtle details help keep the focus on your connection. A hat, jacket, or bouquet can add personality, but avoid anything that becomes the star of the photo instead of you two.



PROPS THAT ADD MEANING



- Keep props intentional. Use items that reflect your lifestyle or shared memories—books, flowers, a picnic set, instruments, or even your pets.
- Avoid clutter. Props should enhance, not overwhelm. Choose one or two thoughtful items rather than a full setup.
- Think in actions, not objects. A blanket to sit on, a coffee you share, or a bike you ride together creates natural movement and genuine expressions.



COMFORT IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

- Be confident in who you are together. The more you relax, laugh, and let your personality show, the more your photos will feel authentically you.
- Trust collaboration. Bring ideas, but stay open to your photographer's direction—the best sessions blend your story with creative vision.
- Have fun with it. Play, explore, move, and interact naturally; the more you enjoy the moment, the more effortlessly beautiful your photos will be.

MAKING IT MEANINGFUL

- Start with who you are as a couple. Are you playful? Quiet? Adventurous? Let that guide mood, location, and pacing.
- Weave in your story. Inside jokes, shared routines, or symbolic elements (e.g., letters, maps, heirlooms, your favorite hobby) can turn simple photos into personal narratives.
- Choose spaces where you feel something. Comfort leads to authenticity—if the location feels like “you,” the photos will too.
- Focus on connection, not posing. Real laughter, real conversation, real interactions = images that carry emotional weight.



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Your engagement session is more than a photoshoot—it's a chance to slow down, be present, and celebrate the season you're in. Whether you choose a park, a downtown spot, or a place that means something to you, the most important part is showing up as yourselves. Relax, trust the process, and let your connection lead the way.

At the end of it all, you'll walk away with images that feel honest, joyful, and uniquely yours—little reminders of a chapter you'll never get back, but will always remember.

If you'd like to
explore how this
applies to *your day*,
we're *always happy* to talk.

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