

How do I get the best from my wedding photography?

Be prepared for the unexpected as everything is possible during a wedding. Don't worry about incidents and enjoy your day! Weddings are very complex events and unexpected events will occur. These are common mishaps I have experienced or heard about: the hair/makeup is late or the bride does not like it. The flowers arrive late. Cake is damaged or the wrong cake is delivered. The bridesmaids take longer to get ready. The groomsmen are not ready or under the influence from the previous night. The best man cannot find the ring or he/celebrant drops the rings. Babies cry incessantly during the ceremony. The veil is blown away by the wind.

Please tell us who and what is important to you so that we can focus on those aspects/people/details

Planning

From a photography standpoint, **the best time for outdoor ceremonies is 1-2 hours before sunset during the golden hour.**

The worst time to photograph is between 12pm – 2pm. When you create your itinerary, please keep that in mind. Avoid 12-2pm for the outdoor photo shoot or outdoor ceremony. The light is very harsh and the boys will broil in their black tuxes if you are getting married in the summer.

Lighting is the most important ingredient in photography. For **Indoors receptions**, the more lighting you have the better. Up lighting makes a banquet hall look stunning, the most beautiful up lighting is purple, blue or orange. The candles on the tables, chandeliers and market lights add to the mood and will make your photos look even better. Please refrain from having green lighting, it just doesn't look good. For **Outdoor receptions**, please add as much lighting as possible. Strings of lights, candles and lanterns are great sources of lighting that create a romantic atmosphere

Location shots – We are often asked “can we take a photo under that gazebo or by the fountain?” While we understand you might be drawn to a location, photography is about the light, not about location (Photography literally means painting with light). If the light by the fountain is bad, you will look bad, unless we use artificial light which takes time to set up and time is a luxury on the wedding day.

It is better to have 1-2 great locations than to drive to several locations....you will spend more time in the limo than taking photos and we will waste a lot of time packing and unpacking.

Plan to have the bridal party around for 30 minutes, then allow them to leave. By doing this you warm up for your photo shoot, we want them to enjoy the day and they can leave once they are done, and it is difficult for the groom to be romantic when the boys are around and make humorous remarks.

Winter/Autumn/Spring weddings – please wear warm jackets. Sometimes the girls pick up dresses in summer and completely forget how cold it can get. Also, if you are planning a winter wedding, have blankets ready and hot cider!

Wedding Details: Hall, tables, favours, sweets, cake etc takes a lot of time as the light has to change very often. Budget one hour for this. If there is something you want us to capture and emphasise, please advise us.

Church/Temple rules: Please ask the priest/officiant about any rules with regards to photography. Please inform me in advance so we can prepare accordingly. Having the right equipment is key in such situations. Among the most common rules: no flash photography, no movement and even no photos during the ceremony. It is better to ask before booking a church only to find out later that you will not have any photos of the ceremony.

Please also confirm that you can take group photos after the ceremony if you are planning that. Sometimes they have back to back weddings and there is no time for group photos. Check with the venue if they have a designated space for group shots (in case it rains).

Group photos: often I see the couple ambushed by guests who want to take photos with them, often right after the ceremony. My advice is to have a list of group photos and stick to it, or you might miss the creative photo shoot. Please inform your family about the formal photos so that they are ready. We like to work with an MC or someone who is familiar with most of the family/guests and can wrangle them together to save time. Give them a list before hand.

Ask the DJ to avoid laser lights, especially during the formal dances (or you will look like a SWAT team is following you.)

We will need a meal, so plan that in and somewhere to eat it. We do not watch the time as we want to capture the emotions of your wedding day instead of checking our watches every five minutes. As such, please tell your DJ or MC to give us a heads up when a major event will happen – 5 minutes notice is good.

Build time buffers....plan for delays....expect delays...99.99% of the weddings I have photographed did not go to plan. You want to enjoy the day, not be stressed out on the best day of your life.

A good photo takes time to set up and refine. Be prepared. For great wedding photos, please allow up to 2 hours with the bride and groom and bridal party, 60 minutes for the boys preparation and 2 hours for the brides preparation (after your hair and makeup is completed). Two hours on the timeline sheet become one on the wedding day. Leonardo da Vinci painted Mona Lisa between 1503-1517. A vogue cover takes a full day to create and the participation of professional models, makeup artists, and controlled lighting scenarios (a studio) and taking over 1000 photos. To create a great photo, a photographer needs time: the more time the better the result. Unless it is a real moment (your father shedding a tear), it is common for a good complex photo with a few people involved to take 5-10 minutes to create. Unless you are an actress, it might take you some time to get the right expression.

Finalise your timeline/itinerary as soon as possible and email it to me so I can give you feedback and tips to reduce the stress on your wedding day.

Using **Pinterest** – these photos are other photographers ideas and now not unique. Everyone follows the same boards, so your wedding will look like that of a million brides. When asked to recreate a particular photo it feels like we are ripping off another artist's idea and might not be our style either. You have hired us because you like our work and we are inspired by you, the light, location, and occasion to create original works of art for you that someone else can pin on their board!

The guest's requests: often guests or family have requests that contradict the couple's instructions. I hope it is alright with you for me to ask them kindly to discuss the matter with you, after all you hired us.

iphoneography: On your wedding day, kindly ask your guests to be considerate and not jump in front of the photographers, especially during the ceremony and formal/group portraits. Often I have to wait for the guests taking photos with their phones or tablets to finish so I can document that day. While I understand they are eager to have their own photos, it is advisable for them to stand beside me and not in front of me so we can move fast. Some brides have walked up an aisle of ipads as guests hold them up at face level to record the moment. I have seen a photo of a couple taking a selfie of themselves with the couple in the background as they walk back down the aisle. I myself experienced a "wall" of ipads behind me at one wedding, who got upset when I got up from kneeling down to photograph the signing table. We advise you to have an MC make an announcement before the ceremony begins, to be aware of the photographer, be discreet and to sit on ipads at least until the ceremony is over. Phone or ipad cameras while really great these days still can't compete with the cameras we use that cost thousands of dollars, not to mention lighting, composition, talent, post processing etc that you are paying for. **A lot of couples mention that they never get the photos taken by guests**, not even through social media. I have been a guest at a wedding where this was made to be a big deal, I didn't feel I could take any at all and therefore didn't enjoy the day as much, so I completely understand the desire of the guests to take their own images; it just needs to be dealt with in a gentle manner. Some couples even have a statement on their website of events etc. You may also not like to have any photos up on social media until our photos are up which will need to be made known as well – we usually get them up within 1-2 weeks.

Provide your guests accurate driving and parking directions so they can arrive on time for your wedding or the formal photos session

Create a list of emergency phone numbers where vendors or guests can call if something intervenes. This will save you a lot of time and headaches.

Preparation

Do not tan with tan lines 1 month before the wedding.

Some brides whiten their teeth before the wedding.

Film your dress being bustled/tied up otherwise you will waste plenty of time on the day. If you forget, there are videos on YouTube.

Ask the guys to learn how to tie a tie/bowtie. There are videos on line for this as well.

Both sides need to learn how to pin a boutonniere

Wedding gowns are made using multiple layers of fine fabric, crinoline etc so they **tend to get HOT**....remember how cold it was in the store you bought it from? Plan to apply some baby powder on your thighs before putting on the dress, if you will not be wearing a bra with your dress, don't wear one on the day as you will have crease marks on your shoulders

Ask the **venue** to show you the bridal room and pick one with natural light.

Pick a large room for your bride preparation, the larger the better. First it will allow us to shoot from various angles, and secondly, we can use long lenses that have a flattering/slimming effect.

If possible, choose a room facing South so that the light will be very soft/flattering.

Photography in general is about lighting and good lighting is the main ingredient for great photos.

Clean the preparation room from non-wedding related clutter. If the room has no windows, think romance/candles – be careful not to ruin your dress.

If the bride and bridesmaids wear robes, it will look very cute. Sweatpants or pajamas will not look that good in your wedding photos.

Hair and makeup

Do yourself a favour and book a trial makeup and hair session (not just discussion) before the wedding to avoid unnecessary stress on the day.

If you wear your hair down, your face will be covered in many of the **candid photos** where you are turned away from the camera. The solution: pull your hair back to the sides.

Double the amount of time you think you need for hair and makeup (trust me). It always goes longer than planned and if you/they are late or you don't like the result, there is still a chance to make it to the ceremony on time.

Hire the best makeup artist you can afford! A good makeup artist will enhance your natural beauty and you will look amazing in your wedding photos.

Window light is the best! Bride's makeup should be done by a window. Please ask the makeup artist and hair stylist to do her/his magic next to a window with natural light as opposed to a room with no windows or in a bathroom. Ask us where we would prefer you get your makeup done for the best results. If the makeup is done in a room with artificial light, the makeup will look different in your images.

Have a mirror available (I didn't on my own day and didn't notice the hair style was different to what I requested)

Tips on the day

GETTING READY

To save time, please have ready and unpack: the rings (wedding bands and engagement ring), shoes, dress and any accessories.

Place the flowers in vases – do not leave them in the cardboard boxes from the florist.

Have a pair of flats handy I know your stilettos look smashing, but walking on the grass will be a bit problematic in those Louboutins. Unless we photograph your shoes and depending on your wedding gown design, be comfortable and wear flats or running shoes.

Cellphones, it is a good idea for the boys to leave theirs in a bag, they look bad in their pockets, along with keys.

CEREMONY: Hold your flowers at your waist (so people can see your bodice). **Walk slowly down the aisle and do not look down.** We will be able to take more photos of you and if you walk slowly almost to a point where you lose balance, you are forced to walk like a model, almost crossing your legs when you walk, which accentuates the curves of your body, the same applies to your bridesmaids.

Your first kiss should last at least 3 seconds! Practise before hand (shouldn't be too difficult). A lot of first kisses are so short that they get missed by everybody including us, the photographers. If the light in the church/temple is dim, even the best cameras have a tendency to "hunt for focus" (take a bit of time to focus).

Please look at the love of your life not at the officiant/priest....your photos will look weird....after all you are not marrying them, it is a normal reaction, as the officiant is often the one running the show.

Let me know if you have planned any surprises ie: a plane descending to pick you up right after the ceremony, a special surprise for your other half etc.

Ring Exchange: **Please do not cover the wedding ring/band with your hand** or body. I won't be able to capture the ring exchange if your hands are not visible.

Pay attention to your better half signing the certificate of marriage, please stay close to each other and if possible pay attention to the process or leave some time at the end to fake sign it. That is if this is a moment you want properly documented.

After the ceremony, plan for 15-20 minutes of family time (congratulations, kisses, greetings, selfies.)

RECEPTION: Speeches: please **try not to eat during speeches** or plan speeches between courses. Otherwise your photos will show you eating while your parents and best friends are addressing you.

First dance – if you are shorter than your fiancé and you hug during the first dance, we will not be able to see or photograph your face.

Please enjoy the day and **do not worry about the camera**. Your photos will look so much better.