



WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY - BEGINNER'S GUIDE

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For many couples their wedding day is one of the most important of their lives. Don't offer to take official photographs of such a momentous occasion unless you are completely confident of what you are doing – confident of your equipment, the light conditions, what film you should use, your ability to handle people and be able work fast.

Weddings don't have to be frantic photo affairs. Getting great wedding pictures is all down to your personality.

You're dealing with all sorts of generations and need to communicate at all levels. This is why your personality really must shine through. You need to be enthusiastic yet firm, happy yet serious about your pictures. If you are having a hard time of it, you must never let it show.

The secret is in not forcing your ideas on the Bride & Groom but let them think they are directing you - that is the key.

Group shots are the pictures most photographers struggle with. Arranging a large group, sometimes as many as 50, one must work quickly. It takes a clear head and a loud voice. It helps to visit the Church or place where the wedding is to take place prior to the day just to know where the best areas are for the family and group shots. When the guests are milling about after the ceremony and the Bride wants a full group picture, the best way of negotiating with the guests is to say, "the Bride & Groom have asked for you all to be in this photograph." That doesn't give them the option of refusing!

When you have arranged them the best way you can (and you can be sure that there will be someone who wants to hide behind a larger guest.) it again helps to say in your loudest voice, "**IF YOU CAN'T SEE ME, I CAN'T SEE YOU.**" If they still want to stay out of sight then there is nothing you can do. You have done your best for the wedding couple.

For formal shots of the wedding party, you should take the wedding party well away from the guests. Arrange to go to another venue, a park, marina, beach etc. Again, arrange with the wedding couple well before the wedding to name a place they would like their formals to be taken. Check out the area at least a week before about the same time that you would arrive there on the wedding day. This may help with lighting, as you will have an idea what the light might be on the day. If possible, take the couple along with you, so you can go over locations where they would like the pictures taken.

On the day when you leave for that venue, make sure only the wedding party are with you. You don't want any guests with cameras tagging along, as they can cause problems. When you are arranging the party into posing positions they are clicking away and their attention is more on the 'clicker' than on you. When you have your party arranged the way you want and ready to take the shot, these clickers are there saying "look this way." The result is when you get your images back the bridal party or some of the party is looking away from your camera. That is not what you want.

There is one exception to the above. If there are young children in the wedding party, flower girls and pageboys, it is a good idea to take along a baby sitter so they can keep an eye on the young ones while you are with the wedding party. Bring the children into be photographed when needed. Plus you and the bridal party don't have to worry what the children are up to or they aren't getting in to trouble round settings such as fish ponds, the beach etc.

One word of advice: get the shots of the children early, as the day passes they may become tired and cranky. They'll certainly become more precocious. While this also holds true for adults, the older folk generally don't act out as much as children.

EQUIPMENT ON THE DAY

Make sure you have a second camera and second flash. You're no good on the day if either fails. Make sure you have replacement batteries for both your camera and flash unit. Confidence in your equipment is a must for all wedding photographers. It is no good going along to take photographs if you don't know your equipment. On the day, you haven't the time to wonder if your meter is reading right or is your flash working or what fill-in flash will I need for that image? It all must be second nature to you. There is no second chance when photographing weddings. It is not like portraiture, where if you make a mistake you can always go back and do it again.

HINTS & TIPS

Before the wedding day, check out your local library for books and magazines on Bridal & Weddings and check out how professionals go about posing their wedding couples. Make out a checklist to give to the couple to fill out and return to you prior to the wedding.

You will find it will help you on the day.

SAMPLE WEDDING CHECKLIST.

Would you please complete this checklist and return in the self-addressed envelope prior to your wedding day. Thank You.

Name of Bridal Party.....

Address.....

Date of Wedding.....

Time of Wedding.....

Where Bride will Prepare.....

Time for flowers to be at Home.....

Photography to Commence at.....

Ceremony takes place at.....

 Name of person presiding the ceremony.....
 Their Telephone Number (*if known*).....
 Reception at.....Time.....
 Address.....
 Best Man.....
 Chief Bridesmaid/Matron of Honour.....
 Is there any special place where you would like your formal Photographs to be
 Taken?.....

Here are a number of suggestions for pictures. Please tick those you desire, plus fill
 in any special requests you may have.
 These will be covered during your day.

AT THE HOUSE

- Mother adjusting Veil
- Bride putting on garter with brides maids looking on
- Bride in dressing room with mirror
- Bride pinning corsage on mother
- Bride pinning corsage on father
- Flower girl handing bouquet to bride
- Portrait of Bride & Mother/Father
- Portrait of bride with both parents
- Bride with Brothers & sisters

AT CHURCH PRIOR TO CEREMONY

- Groom & Best man
- Groom & Groomsmen
- Best man adjusting Grooms tie
- Groom, Best man & Minister
- Bride being helped out of car by father

DURING THE CEREMONY

- Bride coming down aisle with father
- Father giving away bride
- Shots during ceremony itself
- Signing Marriage Certificate
- Groom Kissing Bride at the alter
- Bride & Groom coming down aisle
- Bride & groom on the steps of church
- Bride Party on steps of church
- Bride & groom with Families

BETWEEN THE CEREMONY & RECEPTION

Outdoor shots of All Bridal party in different poses.
If wet indoor shots of all Bridal Party.

Note: - If it is raining on the day and you would like some out-door shots taken, I will at no extra charge do some shots at a time that is convenient to both parties after your Wedding.

AT THE RECEPTION

Wedding cake prior to it being cut
Mock cutting of cake.

Special Requests

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POSING TECHNIQUES

When doing formals and candid where you have some control over the situation, there are three ways to help people pose the way you want: **Talk, touch, and show.**

Talk posing involves giving verbal directions to your subjects, requesting them to move their hands slightly, or tilt their heads etc.

Touch when using this method; always ask before you move someone physically, as some people are well, “touchy” about being touched.

Show posing is the quickest way to get your subjects into the position you want because you actually assume the pose you desire.

ENHANCING THE PORTRAIT WITH LIGHT

Portrait is a subtle art that requires the eyes to see the light and its effects on the subjects portrayed.

You must utilize the light so it enhances the subjects in a way that brings out that character and beauty to their best advantage, whether the light is natural or artificial or a combination of both.

ENHANCING SUBJECTS THROUGH POSING

As we get on in years, life gives our faces certain character, such as smile lines, furrowed foreheads and unfortunately, double chins.

So watch for these when setting up your groups’ pose so you don’t enhance these features. A small tilt or a turn of the head can overcome them.

Reflections from glasses can be controlled by asking the person to just lift the frame slightly above where it rests on his ears.

CONTROLLING THE “FRAME” OF THE PHOTOGRAPH

There are basic rules of composition intended to keep the viewer’s eye in the picture and have the eye travel to the main subject matter. You should not have **a bright highlight, or a mass of white, leading out of the borders of the print.**

USING FILL FLASH OUTDOORS

Fill flash is one of the most effective ways of balancing foreground and background light outdoors, especially when the subject is strongly backlit or when heavy shadows are cast on faces. Along with balancing light, the fill can also make the subject stand out “three dimensionally” from the background by allowing you to shoot at a reading that is stopped down more than what the natural light indicates. Some wedding photographers use fill flash for all their outdoor shots.

DEALING WITH UNRULY INDIVIDUALS

Unfortunately, people who over-indulge sometimes attend weddings. As a result, they may behave belligerently towards you, refusing to co-operate for pictures or just cause mischief. Others may have a sudden artistic impulse and decide they have to direct every shot you take, while others may be avid photographers and trail you asking constant questions about technique.

You must be very firm with these individuals, inform them you’re working, and ask if they would like someone to harass them on their job.

Tell them the bride and groom want the best pictures you can take of the day’s events and that they’re interfering with the process. Be polite. Don’t raise your voice, but be firm. Going along with their interference will encourage them.

AUTOFOCUS CAMERAS

Most Auto focus cameras lock onto anything in the target area, usually found in the center of the frame. To overcome this problem, frame the shot with the bride in the center of the frame, wait for the lens to focus, and lock the focus setting into the camera. Then recompose the shot with the bride of to one side of the frame, with the original focus setting locked into the camera.

LOOK RELAXED

The friendliest and outgoing you can be with your wedding party; the more relaxed they are likely to look in the resulting pictures.

Talk to your subjects about their interests and try to get them to respond to your questions. Once they start talking and asking you questions, the more animated and natural they will look in their pictures.

OUTDOOR SETTINGS.

If you are using a public place, do any necessary housekeeping before you take the shot. Even if a small piece of paper or a discarded cigarette is visible on the ground it will be very distracting and spoil the picture’s impact. Look carefully through the camera viewfinder before shooting and make doubly certain that no litter can be seen anywhere in the frame.

Be prepared for a sudden change in weather conditions. Always have large golfing umbrellas with you that all can stand under if you are shooting far from the shelter of cars. Also, carry a ground sheet that the bride can sit on so that her wedding dress doesn’t become dirty. Make sure it is arranged out of sight through the viewfinder.

BEFORE TAKING THE SHOT.

Check out the subject's dress. Make sure that the men's ties are straight, jackets are all done up or if it's a causal look, then all jackets are undone. It could be distracting if some are in a state of undress!

Have the bridesmaids make sure the bride's dress is arranged the way it was designed, no bra-straps showing, the train flowing correctly and spread out on the ground to give the best impact for the shot.

GETTING THE BACKGROUND OUT OF FOCUS

If you are worried that the background to the picture may be too intrusive and compete for attention, try selecting a large lens aperture. The larger lens aperture, the more likely the background will appear soft and out of focus in the resulting print.

If you choose a large lens aperture to show the background out of focus, make sure that you pose your subjects a long way in front of the background. If they are too close to it, the background may also appear sharp.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

There is no second chance when photographing weddings.

- Know your equipment & be confident
- Check and recheck you're equipment
- Communicate
- Pay attention to detail
- Be enthusiastic yet firm

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