

THE
WEDDING
EXPERIENCE

*A Guide for all my
Fabulous Couples*

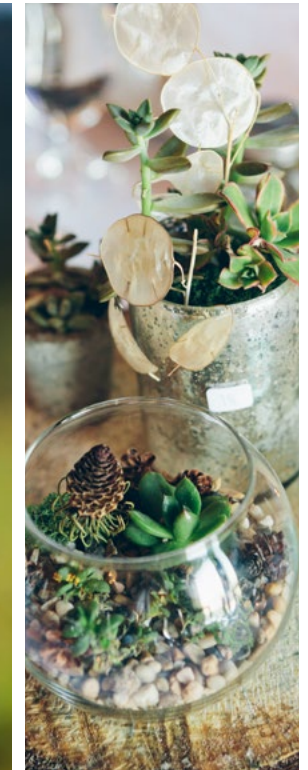
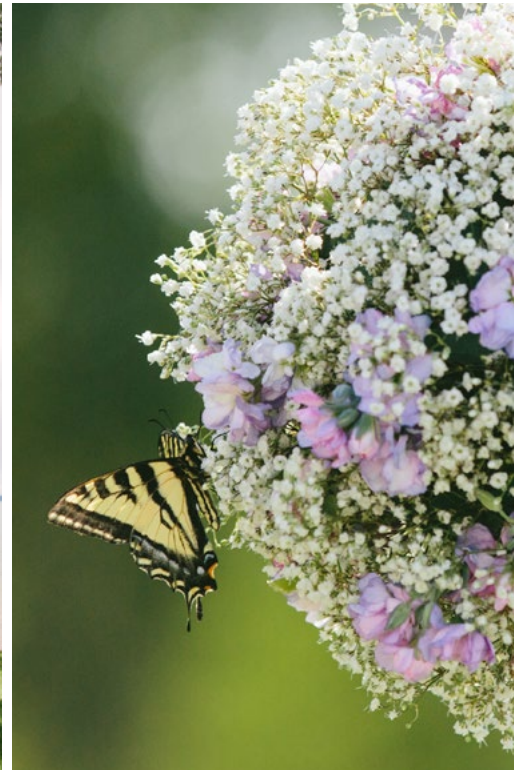




W E L C O M E

Hello Couple-to-Be and welcome! This is such an exciting time for you! I'm sure your mind is racing with all that needs to be planned. It's all very exciting but it can also be somewhat overwhelming. You're planning the day that you've been anticipating for a long time, and yet you only get one shot at it. By the time you get the hang of it, the planning is over. My goal as a wedding photographer is to make this one aspect of the planning process simple. Photography is more than just images, it's a real part of your day. Not only do you deserve beautiful images, you also deserve an amazing photographic experience. The goal of this guide is to help you plan your wedding day in a way that will allow me to provide you with the BEST experience possible. Since we're official, the next step is to plan your engagement session (if you've chosen to have one done) and then start chatting about wedding day details as we get closer to your date. I'm beyond excited to be working with you, and I cannot wait to get to know you two even better!

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YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Now that you have picked a date, a photographer and probably a venue as well, you can celebrate! Those are some of the toughest decisions in wedding planning and you can cross them off your list! Hooray! Now on to the fun stuff... like your engagement session. During your engagement session, you'll have the chance to get to know me, experience how I shoot and how I handle posing and lighting. A bonus about doing engagement sessions is that it will make a positive impact on how the wedding day flows. I'll arrive on your wedding day already knowing how you two interact, what your best poses are and how to photograph you in a genuine way. What I will learn about you during your engagement session is a plus for both of us. You will feel like such a pro on your big day because of the great practice you had during your engagement session and that's how it should be!

Your engagement session can be scheduled anytime before your wedding day. I normally suggest booking it at least 3-6 months in advance to avoid stress. Because my weekends are filled with weddings, I shoot engagements typically on weekday evenings, normally from 5-7pm depending on the light and the time of the year. In the winter months, 3-5pm is a normal time frame for an e-shoot. As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, you will need to start brainstorming about location ideas. I LOVE it when couples pick a location that is special or sentimental to them in some way. If you can't think of anywhere specific that you would like to shoot, I can help you decide on a location. As long as the light is great, I can make ANY location look awesome! I shoot at ranches, campuses, downtown alleys and even junk yards - I'm serious! Do not shy away from ideas you might think are crazy! The more creative, the better! Be sure to keep reading to find out more about outfit ideas and inspiration.

ENGAGEMENT PREP

It's always a little intimidating to have your picture taken. Even if it's just a photo on a cell phone that is taken by a friend, we still want to look nice, make sure nothing is in our teeth and ensure that our hair is behaving! So I realize that preparing for your engagement session can be a little overwhelming. Here are some tips for outfits and accessories that will make the e-shoot preparation a little more manageable.



- Don't try to MATCH...instead try to pick outfits and accessories that coordinate. If you both wore the same exact color at your e-shoot, how boring would those images be?

- Don't be afraid to be BOLD! Accessorize and make your outfits your own! Scarves, bold necklaces and fun shoes are always welcomed.

- MOST PATTERNS are actually ok... however, graphics are not favorable for portraits. If you're wearing a pattern, make sure it's not overwhelming or distracting.

- Be sure to check out engagement sessions on my blog for more outfit inspiration if you're having trouble.

- Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets. (This is for the guys especially!)

- Most often, couples like to have one casual, everyday outfit and then one outfit that is dressier. This will give your shoot two totally different "looks." And if you've brought along multiple outfits and are not sure about what to wear, I'm happy to act as "wardrobe consultant" as well.

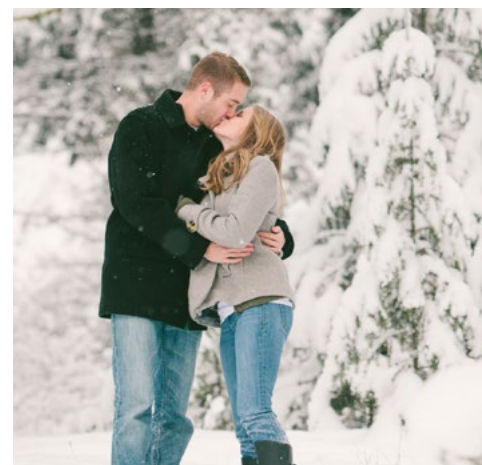
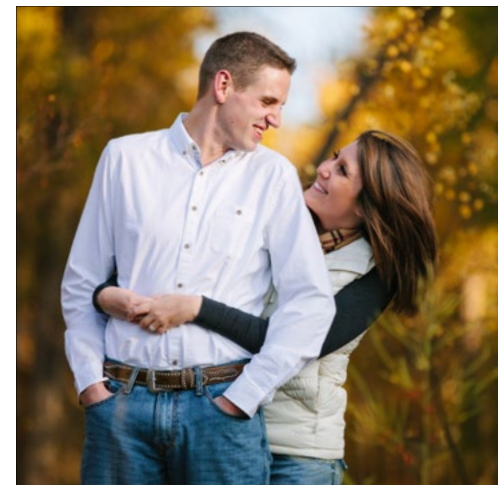
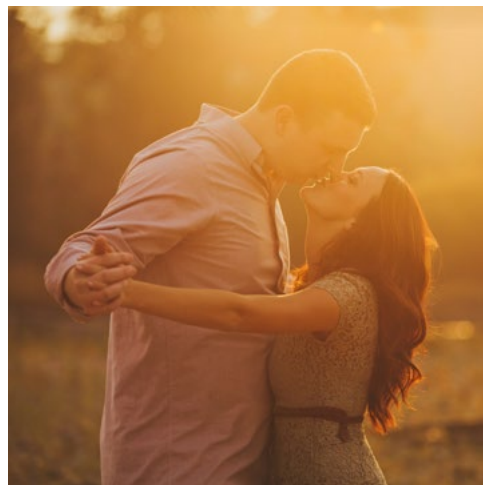
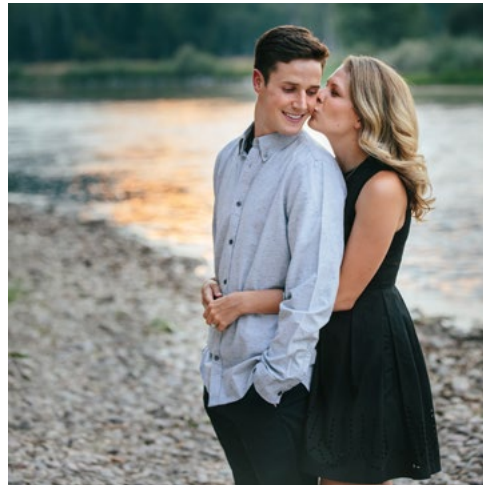
- Make sure you're comfortable in what you're wearing. And ladies, if the top is super low cut, that will limit the amount of angles I can shoot from.

- BE ON TIME - the sun is only out for so long. The later you arrive, the less time we have to shoot, and nobody wants that!

- Relax - you don't have to be a pro at this! I'm going to help you along the way and it's going to be a blast! Enjoy this time together and make a date out of it. Heck, plan dinner afterwards and celebrate!



OUTFIT INSPIRATION





ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Approximate Start Times :

WINTER

Dec-Mar
3-5pm

During December through mid-March you can plan on your engagement session taking place around 3-5pm. However, the time changes in mid-March and so that will make the start time one hour later.

SUMMER

Jun-Aug
6:30-8:30pm

Summer engagement shoots take place as close as we can to sunset - typically around an hour to two hours before sunset. This will hopefully mean that the shoot will be during the cooler part of the day.

SPRING

Apr-May
Varies

The sunset time drastically changes throughout the course of these two months and so our shooting times change as well. You can plan on starting approximately 5:30-7:30 in April and 6:00-8:00 in May.

FALL

Sep-Nov
Varies

The sunset time varies these three months. In Sep, you can plan on starting at around 5:30-7:30 until the third week and then you can plan on starting at 5:00-7:00 until Mid- Oct. After the first week of Nov, 3:00-5:00pm start times are typical.

LOGISTICS:

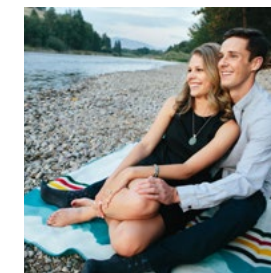
- I photograph engagement sessions on weekday evenings because my weekends are dedicated to photographing weddings.

- I love shooting at gorgeous locations. I recommend two locations max for engagements (and one location is fine, too - we'll typically wander around to create a nice variety). A general rule of thumb is the more locations and outfits, the fewer images you'll receive, but the more variety you'll have.

- If you've got a beloved pet whom you'd like to have star in a few of your engagement photos, that's awesome! Just let me know ahead of time so we can plan out your shoot accordingly and keep it pet-friendly.

- I love to travel to my shoots! However, if I have never been to your desired location, I may need some advice for where to park, depending on where it's located.

PREPARING THE GROOM



PREPARING THE GROOM

If you're a bride that is a little anxious about how your groom is going to react to this whole "picture thing," you're not alone. I hear SO much from brides who are worried that their groom won't be into it, and I have great news for you...you both are more photogenic than you think! I am constantly surprising couples by discovering their hidden modeling skills and my most common response from the grooms I work with is "That wasn't as bad as I thought! It was actually fun." Boom! Mission accomplished! When the groom says that taking pictures was FUN, I have done my job well. Your engagement session is supposed to be fun and relaxed and not forced or awkward. As you prepare for your shoot, there are a few things that you can do to help your groom know what to

expect. First of all, I highly recommend sitting down with your guy and showing him 2-3 of your favorite engagement sessions that I have photographed. Spend some time together scrolling through a few blog posts, this will allow him to gauge what his expectations should be. I also recommend that you allow for plenty of time to get to your shoot. There is nothing worse than when a couple shows up late and they have been arguing in the car, which will definitely put you both in a less-than-stellar mood. Last but not least, remember to have patience with him and don't assume that he's not going to have a good time... I think you'll be surprised how much you will both enjoy your session!

YOUR
WEDDING
DAY



SAMPLE TIMELINE

Bridal Details 2:30-3:15



Beautiful shots of bridal details are an important part of the story and I love having some time to shoot the dress, shoes, jewelry, invitations, etc. These shots allow me to get warmed up for the rest of the big day. I normally like to allow around 45 minutes for this part of the day. While I'm shooting details, I'm also capturing some shots of the bride and her girls getting ready. If the groom is getting ready nearby and wants getting ready images, I will begin photographing the boys about 40 minutes before the first look since it always takes guys less time to get dressed!

After the details have been photographed, it's time for the bride to get into her dress. This is a big moment, and I usually prefer that the mother of the bride and all of the bridesmaids be dressed by the time the bride is ready to get into her dress. This ensures that everyone will look nice in those images. After the bride is in her gown, she can put on her jewelry, veil, shoes, etc. and I will shoot some additional bridal portraits.



3:15-3:45 Bridal Prep

First Look 4:00



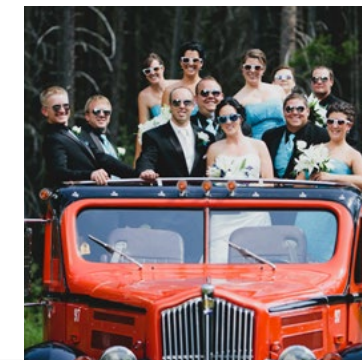
This is definitely a special part of the wedding day if you choose to do one. I typically will find the perfect location for my couple's first look prior to the getting ready portion of the day, so no need to stress about that one bit! I will make sure the location is private and as secluded as possible (unless this isn't something you'd like), and will also confer with you if you have a preference on where you'd like this special moment to take place.

Portraits 4:15-4:45



After the bride and groom take their time with the first look, I will begin taking a few romantic portraits of the two of them while the initial excitement is still present. I will find the locations for these shots as well. Remember, the LIGHT determines where we shoot and so I can't decide on portrait locations until the day-of. As we shoot these portraits, the bridal party can start making their way to us for bridal party portraits.

Bridal Party Portraits 4:50-5:20



Now it's time for bridal party shots! I buffer in extra time throughout the day just in case we have some unexpected things that hold us up. One way to make sure we stay on schedule for bridal party portraits is to have someone put the boutonnieres on the guys BEFORE they arrive for portraits. During bridal party portraits, I will make sure to take some great shots of the guys and girls...

...both separately AND together. After bridal party portraits are complete, the bride will go into hiding so that early guests don't sneak a peek and the ushers will begin their duties.



5:30-6:00 Bride in Hiding

Here's the page that can be somewhat intimidating. The TIMELINE! I know this isn't the most exciting aspect of the wedding day but this is the one thing that can make or break your photography. The next two pages will outline an ideal wedding day working off of a 6pm ceremony timeframe. This ideal timeline is also based off of a wedding day that includes a first look. Many of my couples choose to do a first look and you can read more about that option a few pages over. Remember that all wedding days are different and your timeline may differ due to travel times and unique situations. If your timeline looks a little different from this one, that's ok too - I can be flexible. But please use this as a reference point.

THE TIMELINE CONTINUED...

Reception Details 5:30-5:50

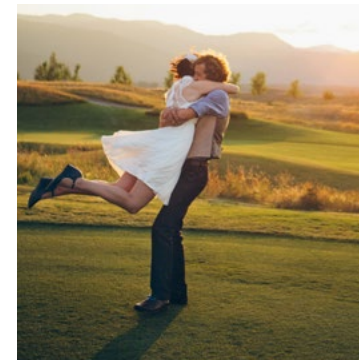


It's time to get married! Most ceremonies are 30 minutes long. If your ceremony is longer than 30 mins, we can make adjustments to the timeline. Cherish these moments. Your ceremony will pass by so quickly!

Family Portraits 6:40-7:10

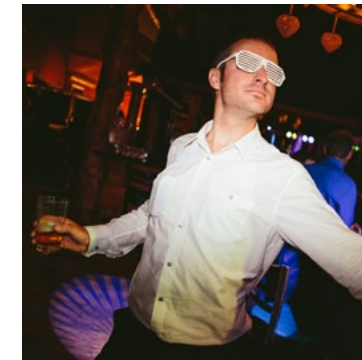
Family formals usually take place immediately following the ceremony because ALL family members will be present at that time. If you'd like to do all family formals beforehand or even just some, I can certainly accommodate that as well.

A Few "Just Married" Portraits 7:15-7:30



Typically around 7:00 to 8:00pm is the BEST time of day for portraits in the late spring, summer and early fall. This is when the sun is glowy and golden. I love having a few extra minutes with the bride and groom to take a few "Just Married" portraits right after family formals.

Reception Begins! 7:30



This is when the bridal party lines up for introductions and the party begins! By this part of the day, my timeline isn't as strict. I work off of the natural light and so after the sun is set, my portrait time is over and I begin focusing on the reception events. However, if the light is looking especially good or if there's an amazing sunset, I might come steal you away again for a few more quick images (but we won't interrupt any major events of the evening).

10:30 The Exit

This sample timeline includes 8 hours of coverage, but we can compact it if you've booked me for fewer hours. All my collections are set up so that I can be present for the main events of the reception and the start of the dancing (if not more!).

If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I will use this time to shoot the reception decor UNTOUCHED. If the ceremony and reception are in different locations, I recommend having a cocktail hour outside of the main reception area if possible so that I can grab some great shots of your reception before the night begins and guests start laying down purses and coats on their seats. I'll also make candid images of your guests arriving and socializing if time allows.



Ceremony 6:00-6:30



We'll need about 30 minutes for family formals and I will send a questionnaire before the wedding where you can list out the shots that you want. I recommend shooting portraits outdoors if possible so that they resemble more natural family portraits, especially if the ceremony location is dark.

APPROXIMATE TIMES:

DETAILS & PREP : 1.5 HOURS

FIRST LOOK & PORTRAITS : 30-40 MINS

BRIDAL PARTY : 30-40 MINS

FAMILY FORMALS : 30 MINS

EXTRA PORTRAIT TIME : AS MUCH TIME AS YOU'LL GIVE ME!



If you're interested in having your exit photographed, there are several options for this. You can either add additional coverage or plan a faux exit with just your bridal party. I have had GREAT success with this and the party never stops! Email me about this if you're interested in learning more.

WEDDINGS & SEASONS



Portrait & Timing Tips for: **WINTER, SUMMER, FALL & SPRING**

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 4pm. This means that all of your portraits need to be done before then. This isn't a problem if you're having a late afternoon wedding. However, if you're planning on having a late evening wedding, you may have a bit of down time from 4pm until the start of the ceremony. You will also need more coverage time as well.

FALL

Fall weddings are definitely a favorite of mine! I love the temperature and the colors we can get. Some 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 your wedding date, but we'll be sure to discuss this when we go over your timeline.

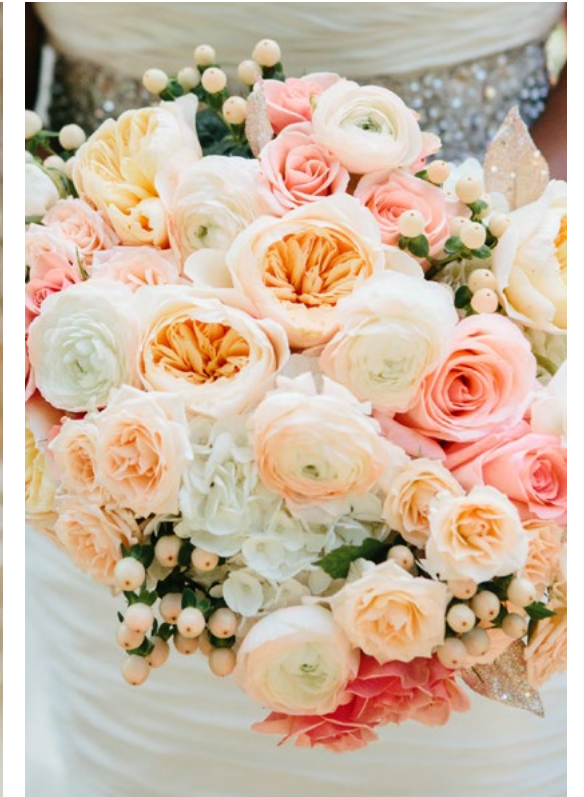
SUMMER

Summer weddings are amazing! I love that there is so much daylight. In some months, the light will last until 8:30 or 9:30pm! So, if you're having a summer wedding, you'll need to plan on having a few minutes to slip out of 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 that you're gone for a few minutes.

SPRING

Spring weddings are wonderful because the landscape is lush and green. However, it may also be a little wet. I recommend having pretty umbrellas handy (clear ones can be fun for portraits if needed!), and plenty of Claritin and Zyrtec on hand just in case allergies start to flare up during portrait time. Spring weddings also mean the potential for some blooms! If I happen to find any type of blooming tree or plant, it will be worth it to give me a few minutes for a few portraits with it. You'll LOVE the result!

PRE- CEREMONY



Let the day begin!

This portion of your wedding day really sets the stage for the entire day. The next few pages will share tips and tricks that will ensure a seamless morning of bridal preparation and beautiful portraits.



GETTING READY

It's the morning of your wedding! Hopefully all of the little details are taken care of and you're relaxing with your best friends while your hair is being done. If certain items haven't been checked off of the to-do list, it's time to hand them over to someone else. Delegation is a key part of a stress-free wedding day. I know it's hard to hand over the decorating duties and all of the last minute things that need to be done, but it really is important to relax the morning of your wedding. The rest of the day is going to be fast-paced and filled with a lot of emotions so take advantage of this down time. There are a few things to consider about the "getting ready" portion of the day. Do you want to share a "first look" with your dad or any other person who plays a huge role in your life?

Will you and your groom be exchanging gifts during this time? If so, who would you like to deliver them? Are there certain women in your life who would appreciate seeing you get into your gown? Some brides want very few people around for this moment. Other brides love having aunts and grandmas present. It's totally up to you. A few other things to consider...as you get ready to put your dress on, refrain from putting any jewelry on. I love shooting all of those final steps once you're in your gown. Speaking of the gown, if your gown is on a plastic hanger, try to make a note to bring a wooden hanger along for the picture. Keep reading along for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare.

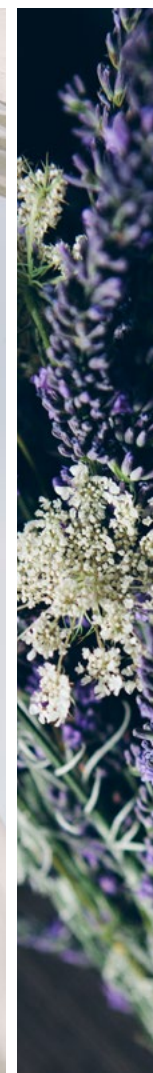
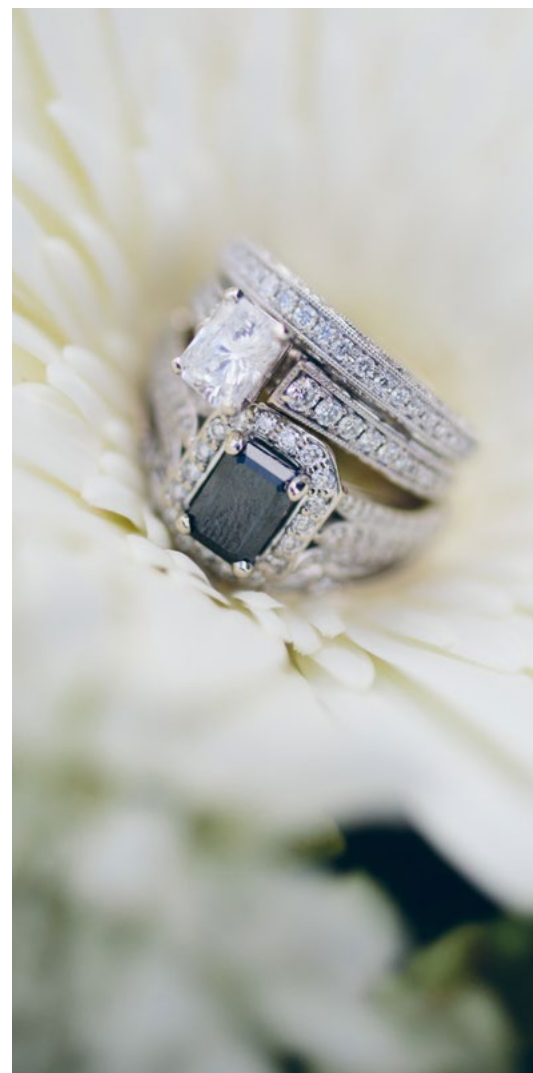
THE WINDOW EFFECT



By having just a simple window in the bridal prep area, I am able to create beautiful portraits with soft light. I prefer natural light so the more windows, the better!



**EVERY
LITTLE
DETAIL**



RINGS, SHOES, JEWELS ...

The whole day begins with the details! This is a great part of the wedding day because it allows me to prepare and get my creative side warmed up for the rest of your celebration. I photograph a bride's details in a way that matches and showcases the style of the entire wedding day. So, in some ways, the details set the stage for the look of the whole wedding and I love having ample time to stylize and shoot everything from the dress to the jewelry to grandma's handkerchief. To the right you'll find a list of the most common details that I shoot. I ask brides to gather any details they have before I arrive so that I can walk in, say hello, give you a huge hug and then begin with all the goodies! (Please ensure your mom that I will take GREAT care of your dress, I promise!)

WHAT TO BRING



- dress
- veil / hair pieces
- rings (all three)
- shoes
- bouquet & boutonniere
- jewelry
- perfume
- invitation suite
- borrowed & blue

DAY-OF REMINDERS



GATHER
the goods.

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.

EXTRA
elements.

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 images.

KEEP
all three
rings.

Upon my arrival, the most common detail missing is 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 at the beginning of the day. If you forget, no worries, I can always shoot the ring shot at the reception if we’ve got some extra time.

BRING
the bouquet.

Don’t forget the bouquet! Have the bouquets and boutonnieres 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.

CEREMONY
background.

Remember to be mindful of what will be in the background of your ceremony - both as you’re looking down the aisle towards the altar, and looking down the aisle away from the altar. You want a clean background not full of parked cars, strange machinery or porta-potties (yep, I’ve seen this!).

When you're planning a wedding day timeline, the best advice I could give is to **ADD CUSHION TIME!** Sometimes the most simple things can take an extra 20 minutes and then all of a sudden, things have really shifted. I have seen "getting the bride in her dress" take almost 40 minutes because of a bodice-lacing issue. It's a smart idea to add in an extra ten minutes here and there so that you have some wiggle room to work with. This way, if one part of the day gets thrown off by 20 minutes, I can help you compensate that time in other areas. There are so many different things to think about when you're planning a wedding day and so here are some tips for the pre-ceremony timeline. I realize that every single wedding day is different and so not all of these tips will apply to every wedding day schedule. Something else to consider is that not **EVERYTHING** will go as planned, and I promise you, that is completely normal!



TIMING TIPS



BOUQUETS & BOUTONNIERES

You will need your bouquet & boutonnières for your first look. Have them delivered to the room where the bride is getting ready.

TRAVEL TIME

Be sure to think about the travel time and **TRAFFIC** to and from your getting ready location and your venue.

HAIR & MAKEUP

I encourage brides to have at least the majority of their makeup done before I start because most people don't want a ton of shots without their makeup.

GROOMSMEN PREP

If the guys are into it, I'll quickly pop in and photograph the gents getting ready if they are getting ready in the same location as the bride (or very nearby).

GETTING IN THE DRESS

I'll instruct you to get into your dress close to a window and it would be fabulous to have your bridesmaids dressed when you're getting in your gown. Don't forget to delegate someone to try to keep the area clutter-free, too!

CREATE A CUSHION

A 10 minute cushion every now and then is a **GREAT** idea! It's amazing how fast time slips away the day of.



THE BRIDAL BOUQUET

There are so many expenses when it comes to wedding planning, so many brides have to prioritize what they want to invest in. I just want to give a little tip that can save money and make a nice impact on the way your images turn out. If you're having trouble making a decision about your florals, here is what I suggest. I recommend making your bridal bouquet a 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. If you've got your DREAM bouquet in mind, I recommend investing less on the bridesmaids' bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much.

VEIL OPTIONS

Since many of my couples opt for a first look, we have options for the bridal veil. I recommend that the bride only wear her veil when she comes down the aisle and I recommend this for three different reasons. 1. This is something new for your groom to see when you're walking down the aisle. 2. A lot of times, during a first look, the groom is so excited to see his bride that he accidentally pulls the veil out when he throws his arms around her. And 3. Saving the veil for the ceremony ensures that I will get some "Just Married" portrait time with the couple because we've got to make time for that "Veil Blowing in the Wind" shot, right?! If this isn't your jam, though, this certainly isn't a hard and fast rule - it's simply a suggestion that I make after photographing many, many veiled brides.





YOUR FIRST LOOK

Your first look is an amazing part of your wedding day! If you aren't sure about this tradition, the next few pages will explain why it would be a romantic addition to your wedding day celebration that not only adds to the experience but also reduces stress. Please know that I would never want any of my couples to feel pressured to go with this option. However, I do want to make sure that I share all of the benefits of a first look because there is a reason so many of my couples do it and LOVE it!



THE FIRST LOOK *explained*

I'm definitely a fan of first looks. There is a reason for this. They're AWESOME. However, not everyone is aware of how awesome they are because they get caught up in how "non-traditional" it is and often-times write it off, one of the main reasons being that the bride or groom wants the REACTION of walking down the aisle and seeing each other for the first time there. And who doesn't want that reaction, right? I'm here to tell you though, that so many couples who do a first look get to experience the best of both worlds. Couples get to have that special moment between the two of them, but then ALSO get that reaction walking down the aisle, too!

After shooting so many weddings.... I've come to this conclusion. Some brides love "traditions".... but what a bride REALLY wants when it comes to her groom seeing her for the first time is a REACTION. Those who are not interested in a first look usually think that by seeing each other beforehand, they will lose part of that reaction. They also assume that it will not be as emotional or as intimate as it would be if they were coming down the aisle. What I have found (this is starting to sound like a research paper!) is so ironic. Everyone knows that wedding days are a bit stressful for the bride and groom.

The whole day is focused on them, they need to look their best, they need to be on time, the groom has no idea what side the boutonniere is supposed to go on and little by little... the nerves increase.

It's before the ceremony and the gravity of what is about to happen starts to sink in and the calm, collected groom who was playing golf just a few short hours ago is now starting to feel a little anxious. So what happens next? The groom waits in a little room somewhere for his cue from the coordinator. It seems like it's taking FOREVER. Finally, the coordinator leans her head in and hurries the groom to get ready. With clammy hands, the groom enters the ceremony and what does he find?he finds anywhere from 80-300 people and they're all looking where? Right at his face... because everyone has expectations and anticipation about his first reaction. This is the farthest thing from a private, intimate moment. Sure, it's SO powerful and SO wonderful, of course! But when brides walk down the aisle after having a first look, their groom typically isn't a nervous wreck since he has spent the morning with his bride and their best friends and the pressure is OFF. By the time the ceremony rolls around the groom is ready to ENJOY the beautiful day and ENJOY seeing his bride walk down the aisle towards him!

The nerves are gone - and when the nerves are gone true emotions are free to be expressed. And OH are they expressed sometimes! So if I were to condense what I just wrote... basically, grooms normally become incredibly nervous on wedding days, too.... even if they seem cool and collected.

For most grooms, the nerves kick in before they see their bride because when they see her, everything becomes VERY real! So when the nerves start creeping up, instead of keeping the groom in a secluded space until his time to enter the ceremony, what if you took him to a private place... no people, no on-lookers, no distractions.... and you let his beautiful bride, the love of his life, quietly call his name and have him turn around to see her for the first time. He would turn around and finally get his first look at his stunning bride and not only would he get to see her... he could embrace her... cry with her.... kiss her... and ENJOY that moment with her for as LONG as they wanted. As she shows him her dress, twirls a few times and then asks him what he thinks... his nerves start to diminish. After all, she's the one who can make him most comfortable anyway.

Because they aren't on a time crunch... they casually move into their romantic portraits. No one is around, the coordinator isn't announcing "15 minutes left", and there is no pressure. It's just the two of them and their photographer... capturing the excitement and the joy of their wedding day. This is their time to be TOGETHER...and to be ALONE. When does that happen on a wedding day? Without a first look.... it sometimes doesn't. After their romantic portraits are done, they meet up with their best friends. Their bridal party joins them and because they still have plenty of time to spare the bride touches up a little makeup while the boys act like boys. After a few minutes the bridal party portraits begin and they're FUN. They're FUN because there is time to make them FUN.

There aren't any guests waiting impatiently at the cocktail hour and there isn't a DJ coming to find the photographer to get a time check. It's wonderful!

After portraits are done, the girls and guys separate and prepare for the ceremony. The guests begin to arrive and the ushers are in place. Pretty soon it's time for the processional music to begin and one by one, the bridesmaids make their way down to the front of the ceremony. As the groom clasps his hands... they are clasped out of excitement, not nervousness. The music builds, the mother of the bride stands and all of the guests follow her lead. The groom looks up and here comes the BRIDE! His best friend, his companion, his sweetheart.....she's stunning.... ABSOLUTELY stunning. The closer she gets, the bigger he smiles.

Now let me put a disclaimer on here before we continue...my clients are not required to do a first look by any means. I used to feel bad for sharing this option with couples who were against it because I didn't want to push anything on them. However, I've seen the benefits of a first look over and over again and so I only share this because I want the BEST for my couples. It's totally ok if couples choose not to share a first look. - it's just a great benefit to everyone if you do! Keep reading to find out more of the bonuses of sharing your first look privately. For brides not interested in a first look, lets start chatting soon about how we'll create a timeline to ensure we can fit everything in.



FIRST LOOK | *Why it's Worth It*



40% MORE PORTRAITS

You're investing a lot into your wedding photography. With a first look, you'll receive 40% MORE portraits of the two of you... and those are the images you will decorate your first home with. With a first look, you make the most out of this large investment and get the most for your money.

ENJOY THE SURPRISE FREELY

You actually get to have intimate time on your wedding day with your man. Most brides don't realize that when you come down the aisle and totally SHOCK him with your gorgeous-ness... he can't even tell you how amazing you look. He can't touch you, embrace you or even SPEAK to you. You have to wait until 30 minutes later when the ceremony is over for him to react and tell you how amazing you look. And after 30 minutes of the ceremony, the reaction isn't quite the same as the initial first glance.

EXTEND YOUR DAY BY 3 HOURS

First looks allow you to extend your wedding day. Normally the wedding day would start when you come down the aisle, then the ceremony would end, you would rush through portraits so that you're not late for the introductions and then it's reception time. With a first look, your wedding day is extended by almost 3 hours! Instead of being rushed for your bridal party portraits... you actually get to enjoy them and have fun hanging out with your BEST friends on your wedding day.

SAVOR SOME ALONE TIME

First looks allow you to be TOGETHER and alone on your wedding day. Not only is it intimate, it is sometimes your only time to be alone the whole day. Many couples cry and laugh and cry some more... and then that puts them in the PERFECT mood for more romantic portraits. Sometimes portraits are a little rushed after the family formals and it can be hard to really get back into that "lovey dovey" mode.... especially with family around. When you have just shared your first look, you're READY to love on each other and I always capture some super sweet images during those moments.

DIMINISHES NERVES

You get rid of your nerves! I'd say, literally 1/2 of my couples who have decided to do a first look, the grooms were not fans of it at first. However, because they have never experienced their wedding day before, they didn't know how nerve racking it can be. I have heard from so many couples where the groom wasn't initially a fan of the first look... but afterwards admitted to being SO much more relaxed and ready for the ceremony.



FOR THE BRIDE

FIRST LOOK EXPECTATIONS

Brides, if you have never seen your man cry or get emotional, you can't expect him to be overly emotional on your wedding day. Some guys just embrace their brides and never cry...and that's totally OK. Some guys show very little emotion when their bride is coming down the aisle and that's ok too. Just enjoy this amazing day and try not to put any expectations on him. If you take this advice to heart, I could potentially be saving you a lot of disappointment on your day. One thing I have noticed after shooting so many weddings is that the stress and nerves that come with a wedding day can sometimes make it hard for some grooms to truly express their emotions. It's just a lot to take in all at once. This is a great reason to share a first look and also a great reason to give some grace to your guy. Sure, you deserve to feel beautiful, but my encouragement to you is to enjoy this time together, no matter what his reaction is like.



The Daddy / Daughter

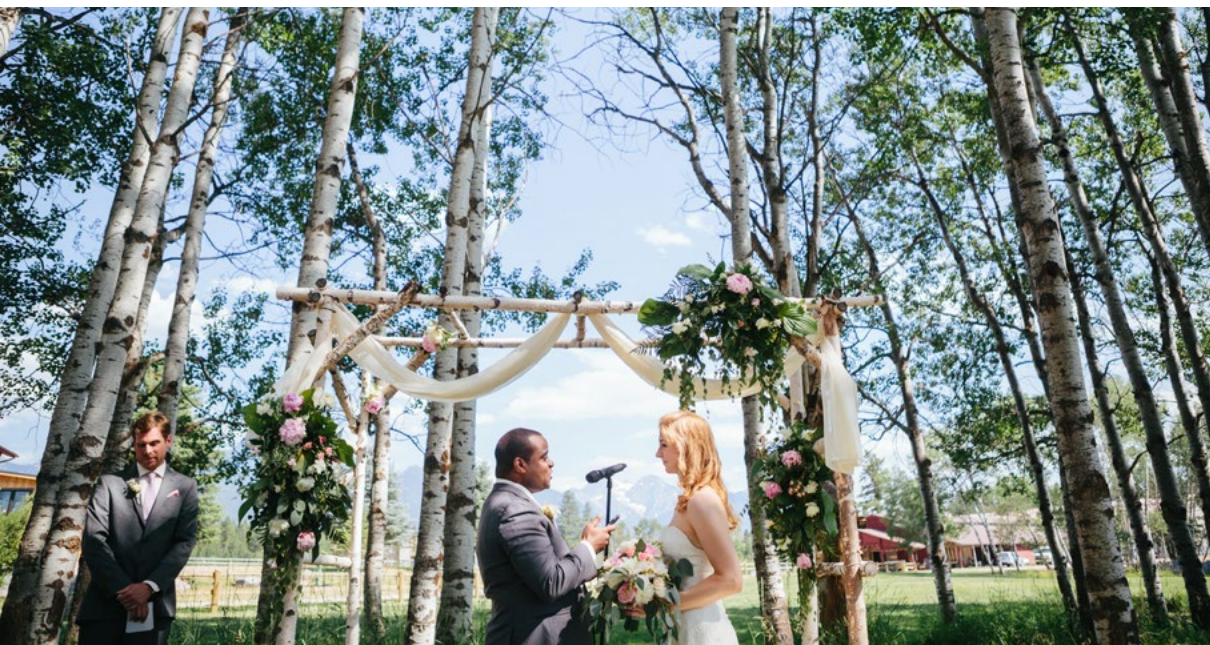
FIRST LOOK

This is for all of the brides who have a sweet spot in their heart for their dad. I have to admit that Daddy/Daughter first looks make me a little teary. For a lot of dads, this is when everything feels real and it hits him... "My baby girl is getting MARRIED!" These are precious moments to photograph and I highly encourage any daddy's girl to make time in their timeline for this moment. It doesn't take long at all. The hardest part is making sure dad shows up on time. If dad doesn't show up on time, the whole timeline can get thrown off or we'll need to skip the daddy/daughter first look. Another sweet idea I've seen is having the father of the bride escort the bride to her first look.



THE CEREMONY

Here it is - the moment everyone has been waiting for! The music is playing and the guests have been seated. Ushers make their way to the back of the ceremony space and the coordinator is lining up the bridesmaids while giving the musicians a 5 minute warning. The bride is about to walk down the aisle to the love of her life... and if she's like many girls, she's dreamed about this moment for a long time. Vows will be shared and promises will be made in front of the people you love most... this is what it's all about! In a world full of wedding blogs, Pinterest and bridal magazines, it's easy to be overwhelmed and consumed by the "prettiness" of the event. While details add beauty, and planning is necessary, it's important to never lose sight of the real purpose of this amazing day - you love one another and are sharing it with your favorite people!



LIGHTING

Ceremony lighting is really important. If you get married outdoors at 12pm, the lighting will be extremely harsh and not only will there be harsh lines of light on your faces, you will also be squinting. I suggest planning an outdoor ceremony 2 hours before sunset if you are having a first look. If you are not interested in sharing a first look, then I would suggest having your ceremony 3 hours before sunset to ensure that you will have plenty of time for all of your portraits afterwards. The lower the sun, the more romantic the lighting. Even if you plan for ideal timing with the sun, it's still important to pay attention to where shadows will fall. Dappled light (through trees) is not ideal, and shadows cast from poorly-placed arches can be unflattering, so keep that in mind. If you are having an indoor ceremony, it is always best to have EVEN lighting at the altar. If there are two spotlights on the bride and groom, I will not be able to expose the rest of the bridal party. It is better to have soft, even light across the whole altar.

ORDER OF SERVICE

I have seen so many couples do so many AMAZING things during their ceremony. I've photographed couples washing each other's hands, symbolizing that they want to serve each other for the rest of their life. Some couples share in communion while some light a unity candle or plant a tree together. I've seen sand ceremonies, paint ceremonies, rope ceremonies and the signing of the Ketubah. The options are limitless! As you plan your ceremony, make sure you design it to be exactly what the two of you envision it to be. This is your day! If you have the freedom to be creative, then by all means, be creative!

PROGRAMS & DETAILS

The BEST advice I have for the program making process is to remember that not EVERY guest needs a program. At many weddings, programs are printed for everyone in attendance. However, most families only take one or two. Because of this many couples end up with oodles and oodles of extra unused programs. Yikes! Also, before ordering your programs, have SEVERAL people check it for spelling and grammatical errors. Programs and the ceremony decor are things that the bride can plan in advance but then delegate the actual job of setting it up to a friend or coordinator. The last thing a bride needs to be doing the morning of her wedding is running around setting up floral arrangements. This leads me into my next column...

COORDINATION

Hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator really is worth the investment! Brides realize very quickly that if they do not have someone in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility 99.9% of the time automatically falls on the mother of the bride (which is really unfair to her - she deserves to enjoy your day too!), the photographer or the BRIDE! When a photographer is in charge of the timeline and the coordination of the day, it can be difficult to give the creation of images the priority it needs and deserves. All of my most challenging wedding situations were caused by a lack of organization and coordination. It's so important to make this a priority if you can. If you need any recommendations on wedding coordination services I would love to share some of my favorite vendors with you. And if having a coordinator isn't in the cards, please, please, please delegate someone else to do this for you.

DESTINATION *Weddings*

If you are planning a destination wedding, a lot of the details in this guide will not apply to you. Your details, your timeline and even your preparation for the big day will be much simpler. However, it is a good idea to start thinking about a few key components of the day such as: your ceremony time and your ceremony/portrait locations (some destination weddings require some planning to find portrait locations without tourists in the background). Be sure to check the sunset time at your wedding location before settling on your ceremony time. As your wedding day draws closer, we'll begin to chat about the timeline of the day and the travel arrangements. Get excited! This is going to be amazing!



Sample List for

FAMILY FORMALS

I absolutely love meeting my couples' families on the wedding day. Family formals are normally my first interaction with them and so I love to have a game plan for this part of the day. Before the wedding, you'll receive a questionnaire from me that will ask you to list out the family formals you want me to capture. Here is a sample family formal list to help you start choosing the shots you'll need. I do have to limit the family formal time in order to ensure that we have plenty of daylight for your romantic portraits. However, any large family group shots that we don't accomplish during family formals can certainly be captured at the reception. Also, remember to let your family know they need to stay close for their photos - the number one delay that happens during family formals is having to chase someone down who wandered off to say hi to somebody, grab a cocktail, etc. Keep them close and keep things efficient! It also helps to delegate someone who knows your family members to help "wrangle" people for photos, get the next group "on deck" and ready, and keep things moving quickly.

- B&G with Bride's Immediate Family
(Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Nieces, Nephews)
- B&G with Bride's Parents
- B&G with Bride's Siblings
- Bride with her Parents
- Bride with Mom, Bride with Dad
- B&G with Bride's Grandparents
- B&G with both sets of Parents
- B&G with Groom's Immediate Family
(Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Nieces, Nephews)
- B&G with Groom's Parents
- B&G with Groom's Siblings
- Groom with his Parents
- Groom with Mom, Groom with Dad
- B&G with Groom's Grandparents
- B&G with all family members if time and space allows



ROMANTIC PORTRAITS

If we're being honest, all of the wedding day images are important but the real favorites are almost always from my time with the bride and groom. These romantic portraits of just the two of you will be the images that you frame beside your bed or over your mantle and they will also be the images that will fill your album for generations to enjoy. These images are always my favorite not only because of their beauty but because this is such a sweet portion of the day. For this brief moment in time, you will be alone with each other on your wedding day. You will have a chance to love on each other and really connect before the craziness begins. Romantic portraits are normally done before the ceremony (after the "first look"), and then I LOVE shooting a few "just married" portraits after the ceremony as well. This is when the light is low and golden and is such a romantic time for bride and groom portraits. If time and lighting allows, I'll also quickly steal you away for sunset photos if things are looking especially amazing. If you're not interested in a first look, we will make sure to include a lot of time after the ceremony for these portraits, have no fear!





TRUSTING PORTRAIT LOCATIONS

One of my favorite parts of my job is taking something so ordinary and making it look absolutely amazing! This happens most often when it comes to picking portrait locations. If there is one thing that I love and appreciate about my couples, it's that they trust me. Sometimes I select portrait locations that most people wouldn't consider attractive. For example, I've shot images on the sides of roads, near garage doors, at the edges of dams, in pastures, on stairways in parking garages - you name it! Typically the light calls my name or the background in the distance does. But usually, these locations don't scream "beautiful" and can appear grungy and seemingly "ugly" from everyone else's point of view except mine. However, because my couples trusted me and they were willing to go with what I was suggesting, they now have the most amazing portraits. So my encouragement is to just trust me! You don't have to worry about a thing - trust my locations and I promise you, you'll LOVE the results!

Case in point - in the image on these pages, it was bitterly cold, but my couple loved Glacier and trusted me that this location would be worth trekking to, shivering a little, and braving the wind! They threw on jackets right after this, and we all laughed our heads off about what we'd do for some awesome images. It was their absolute FAVORITE from their wedding day and they were so glad I convinced them to go for it!



THE THREAT OF A **RAINY** WEDDING DAY

One of the most frequently asked questions that I receive during wedding season is: "Soooo, what do you do if it RAINS?!" I want to reassure you that even if it rains, you will still have beautiful portraits and BRIGHT colors in your images. Overcast skies mean vibrant colors. I know that rain isn't ideal and no couple would wish for rain on their big day but if it happens, it happens...and it's going to be JUST fine. Some of the most unique wedding images have been created on rainy wedding days. Here are a few things to remember:

1. All I need to create natural light portraits on a rainy wedding day is a porch - just one porch!
2. Let me worry about the pictures. You have enough to think about. If there is a chance of rain, I'll be sure to do some extra scouting to find a covered location or two for us to use for your first look, romantic portraits and bridal party portraits.
3. Take it one step at a time. Don't think about your entire day and what will happen if it rains. That will only overwhelm you. Definitely have a rain plan for your venue but then let your vendors do the work of handling the rest of the day if rain is in the forecast.
4. If you want to brave it in the rain, that's cool too! I've had some couples who were adamant they get married outside, whether it was raining or not, and not a single one of them regretted it. They may have gotten a little wet, but it was them, and they loved it.

CASE IN POINT

The image below was taken during a wedding day where it rained, poured and drizzled the ENTIRE day, but I love it because it so perfectly shows that the rain can't keep us from taking beautiful images! (Those misty layers of mountains would never have happened without the rain!) Please don't let the fear of rain steal your joy. You can't control it and I promise we will absolutely make the best of it!





your bridal party.

Let's chat about your bridal party! This is when the fun REALLY begins! I know from experience that all brides want their closest friends to have an AMAZING time during their big day and I will make sure that happens. Bridal party portraits should be a ton of FUN! After you share your first look, depending on the locations and the timing of the day, your bridal party will join us for portraits. If all goes well, we will be able to accomplish ALL of your bridal party portraits BEFORE the ceremony. This means that your guys and gals will be free to mingle at cocktail hour if they wish. If there are flower girls and ring bearers involved, they can either join us for the pre-ceremony portraits or we can take one final group photo after the ceremony, before family formals. Be sure your groomsmen arrive with boutonnieres and your bridesmaids arrive with bouquets.

RECEPTION DETAILS



The party is here! Receptions can be a blast! However, it's important to make sure that you have your event well thought out. This is the job of your coordinator and your DJ/Band. Your caterer will also play a big role in the design and set up of your event. Every aspect of your reception affects the overall outline of the evening. For example, if you're not having a plated meal, your reception will need to be set up in a way that allows movement (and don't forget about movement between dinner tables, too!). Guests will need to be able to find the food stations easily and there will be a mixture of dinner tables and hightop cocktail tables. This will encourage guests to mix and mingle. If you are having a plated dinner, you will more than likely need escort cards, full place settings and space for all of your guests to be seated comfortably. Whatever the style of your event, make sure that you plan out all of the aspects of the evening. Your coordinator and DJ can help you set up the evening so that guests won't leave early or experience long periods of waiting for the next thing to happen.

Much like the ceremony, you have the freedom to make your reception your own. It's your party - it should be exactly how you want it to be. Here is a list of some key events that happen often at receptions:

- *Bridal Party Introductions*
- *First Dance*
- *Daddy-Daughter Dance*
- *Mother-Son Dance*
- *Anniversary Dance*
- *Money Dance*
- *Traditional Religious Dances*
- *Welcome by Father of the Bride*
- *Blessing*
- *Cake Cutting*
- *Toasts*
- *Bouquet and Garter Toss*
- *Large group portraits with friends*
- *The exit of the Bride and Groom*

RECEPTION TIPS

The fun has begun! It's time to relax, dance and celebrate! Your reception should be a BLAST! The last thing you need to be worrying about is your timeline. Your coordinator and DJ should take care of making sure that everything stays on schedule so that you can enjoy your night. Here are some helpful tips that will help your reception flow smoothly.

- **GUEST CONSIDERATION** : *Take your guests into consideration when planning your timeline. If you have a lot of elderly guests that will not be staying until the very end, make sure you schedule the cake cutting at a relatively early time so that they can be a part of it. Grandmas love seeing this sweet tradition!*
- **KEEP IT MOVING** : *Chat with your coordinator about how you can plan your reception in a way that will keep guests engaged and moving all night.*
- **MAKE IT YOUR OWN** : *If you want to have a special dance with your grandparents, do it! Make your reception a reflection of who you are and don't feel tied to traditions. Also, make sure you give your DJ or Band a "Do Not Play" list if there are some songs you really don't want to hear during your reception, or songs you'd prefer to be played later.*
- **DON'T GET CAUGHT UP** *in the formalities and the details. Sure, details are pretty and fun to photograph, but they can steal the joy of the day if you get too caught up in them. Plan your centerpieces, welcome table, etc. well before the wedding date and teach your coordinator or family friend how to set them up so that you aren't even thinking about those things the day of.*
- **RECEPTION COVERAGE** : *If you haven't purchased enough coverage time for your photography to last until the exit, that's ok! I've got several options. (See next page.) I recommend planning your timeline so that you can have at least one hour of dancing photographed. The guests who dance during the first hour will still be dancing in the third hour. One hour of dancing will be enough time to really capture the joy of your reception.*





RECEPTION:
CONTROLLED
EXITS

Exits! If your coverage ends before your exit, you have the option of planning a faux exit with your bridal party. This is more common than you may think. While I love capturing real exits, faux exits are great too, and instead of saving your exit until the very end, you can plan a faux exit with just the members of your bridal party and a few family members. This allows me to have more control over these shots and the party NEVER has to stop. In most cases, no one even notices that the bride and groom are missing for a few minutes. Also, it's almost impossible to tell that the whole wedding guest list isn't there waving sparklers and sending off the happy couple. This idea allows our couples to save money and still have all of the shots that they dreamed of.



HEIRLOOM ALBUMS



I have always said that I would grab my pets and my photo albums if my house were on fire (knock on wood that doesn't happen!). Printed albums are something to be treasured, are beautiful and tangible. Having digital images is wonderful too, of course, but having a printed keepsake that tells a visual story of your wedding day is priceless, and there's something about being able to hold your album in your hands that's simply satisfying. I'm not a photography business that pushes product sales at all. However, these albums are important not just for my couples to have...but for their grandchildren to enjoy as well. They're a worthy investment!

SIZE OPTIONS:

8x8, 10x10, 12x12

SAY THANK YOU WITH A PARENT ALBUM:

A lot of my couples don't have any trouble picking out their parents' Christmas gifts the year they get married! So many couples' parents do so much to make their wedding a dream come true and so many couples decide to surprise them with their very own albums on Christmas morning. After the wedding chaos is over and life returns to normal, or if you want to surprise your parents with their very own albums from your wedding for Christmas, let me know before October 1st so we can get them planned and ordered.





YOUR ONLINE GALLERY

Years ago you had to order prints of the images that you wanted to have forever. That isn't how I work around here! I want you to have ALL of your memories in your possession forever and ever! I also want you to share your images freely and without any hesitation. This is why I deliver your images via an online gallery. This means that you don't have to wait on a package in the mail and you'll have access to them wherever you are. On the next page I've listed some important information that will help you understand your online gallery and all that it can do. Enjoy!

DOWNLOADING PHOTOS:

Once you approve your final album design, you will be able to download your edited images directly from your online gallery and they will be high resolution. This process is very simple. Once I have downloads set up for you, all you have to do is click the "downward-facing arrow icon" and you will be prompted to enter your email. Once you enter your email, you will be asked if you want to download just your favorites or if you would like to download all photos. You will be notified via email when your entire download is ready, and your photos will download directly to your "Downloads" folder. It takes a few minutes to prepare for hundreds of images to be downloaded, but it's a super easy process!

ACCESSING YOUR PHOTOS ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE:

The online gallery system that I use works on mobile devices too! You just log in like you would on a computer and will have access to your images that will be optimized for your device.

ORDERING PRINTS:

You can actually order professional prints from within your online gallery and have them shipped directly to your house. Prints are made in a professional lab to ensure color and contrast accuracy. You are more than welcome to print images on your own once I release your files to you; however, I would warn you to avoid Walmart, Target and Costco. If you print at those stores I cannot promise that your colors will print true-to-life and true to how I've edited them, as their color management typically varies widely from day to day and isn't all that accurate. Many of those stores also often use inks that will fade over time.

GALLERY EXPIRATION & SAFE KEEPING:

Your gallery will typically be available until the end of the year of your wedding (December 31st). Once I've released your images to you for download, I recommend saving them in multiple places for safe keeping. (You can never have too many backups!)

SHARING, WATERMARKING & EDITING:

You have the freedom to share your images in any way that you choose. These are your images and I want you to love them so much that you can't help but share them! The images that you receive as high-resolution downloads will not be watermarked. You can still share these images, but all that I ask for is some type of credit whenever you use an image on social media or a website or blog. I only have ONE rule when it comes to what you can and cannot do with my work, and that's the encouragement that you not re-edit your images. I'll have already done that hard work for you. :)



THANK YOU!

Last, but certainly not least, **THANK YOU** for trusting me with your special day. I am so honored to be the one capturing your memories and I cannot **WAIT** to celebrate alongside you! Enjoy this season of planning but also remember that your **MARRIAGE** is more important than the wedding. The wedding will come and go in a matter of hours but your marriage needs to stand the test of time. Continue to make time for one another, even with all that needs to get done. As you continue to plan, please feel free to contact me with **ANY** questions you may have along the way. I hope this guide has been helpful as you continue to plan and prepare for your wedding day!

Cheers!

-Kristine