



THE COMPLETE
WEDDING PLANNING GUIDE

Chris David
CD
PHOTOGRAPHY



W E L C O M E

Hello 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 so long 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 your photographer to provide you with the BEST experience possible.



Thank you so much for checking out this guide for planning your dream wedding!
I hope it's a helpful resource for you and if there is anything I can do to help in this process, please don't hesitate to let me know! My hope is that you have the wedding of your dreams regardless of who you choose as your photographer!





YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Once you have picked a date, a photographer and a venue, 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! I include engagement sessions in some of my wedding collections because I truly believe that they are a VITAL part of the entire process. 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. This session will make a HUGE 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 invaluable! 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 weekends are filled with weddings, I shoot engagements 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 engagement 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 farms, campuses, downtown alleys and even parking lots! I'm serious! Do not shy away from crazy ideas! 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 phone that is taken by a friend. We still want to look nice, make sure nothing is in our teeth and that our hair is behaving! I realize that preparing for your engagement session can be a little overwhelming. Over the next few pages, I'll be providing tips for handling nerves and recommendations that will make your shoot the best it can possibly be!



common questions

WHEN SHOULD WE SCHEDULE OUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION?

Many photographers (myself included) love to take advantage of the “golden hour.” This is the hour or so before the sun sets or after the sun rises where the light is just perfect! The light is soft, the sun sits behind you and the golden color brings vibrant colors to your images. Don't worry if it is cloudy during your engagement session! The clouds further soften the light and make for very flattering images.

HOW LONG DOES THE SESSION LAST? WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT?

Engagement sessions should be fun! They're laid back, relaxed and really help to get you comfortable in front of the camera and get to know your photographer. Each session should last no more than an hour and a half depending on how many wardrobe changes you make. The session will consist of putting you in a great spot with perfect light and looking your best!

WHAT SHOULD WE WEAR?

I love to tell couples to stick to their personal style. You look your best when you feel natural and comfortable! An engagement session is also a great opportunity to wear something BOLD! If you love patterns and accessories, wear them! This is your chance to take photos with the two of you looking your best!



selecting outfits

Believe it or not, you have so much control over the outcome of your shoot and what it looks and feels like! What you choose to wear is a big decision that often causes a ton of stress for the bride beforehand. However, my hope is that with a little education, you will be able to determine style and feel you desire for your shoot and then that will make your outfit selection so much easier and less complicated! Let's start by de-bunking some very common outfit myths that a lot of people believe about what they should wear to their session!

OUTFIT MYTHS

MYTH ONE : *Avoid neutrals, they wash you out!* Whoever started this myth couldn't have been further from the truth. Sure, there are some colors that don't work for some people, but the truth is, neutrals are the most photogenic color for portraits.

MYTH TWO : *Always wear black or you won't look thin!* Sure, black is slimming, but it's always very heavy in portraits. There is nothing wrong with black but if you're only wearing it to look thinner and deep down you're hoping for light and airy portraits, it may not be the best choice.

MYTH THREE : *You two need to match!* If you two regularly go out in matching outfits then, by all means, match for your engagement session. But if not, I recommend trying to coordinate! Coordinating is a completely different concept from "matching". Coordination means you are usually choosing different colors that look good together but are not too close to being the same.

MYTH FOUR : *Your location determines your style more than your outfit!* False! Your outfit has way more impact than your location. Your location is just a setting in the background but you two will still be the main focus of the images.

MYTH FIVE : *You have to buy something new!* False! If you know you look awesome in an outfit that you already have and it fits the style you want for your engagement session, that would be the a great choice!





ENGAGEMENT SESSION

approximate start times

WINTER

December - March

Sunrise: 6-7am

Sunset: 4-6pm

SUMMER

June - August

Sunrise: 6-7am

Sunset: 6-7pm

SPRING

April - May

Sunrise: 6-7am

Sunset: 6-7pm

FALL

September - November

Sunrise: 6-8am

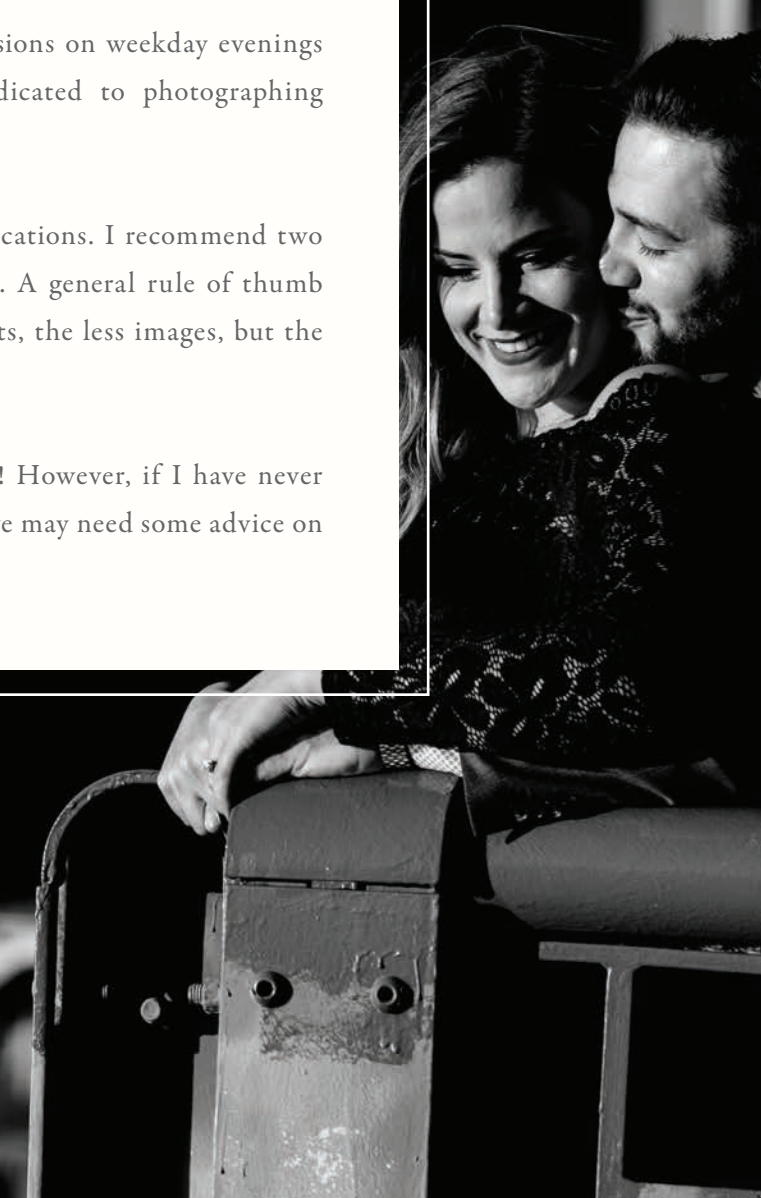
Sunset: 4-7pm

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. A general rule of thumb is the more locations and outfits, the less images, but the more variety you'll have!

- I love to travel to our shoots! However, if I have never been to your desired location, we may need some advice on where to park!





PLANNING YOUR
WEDDING
DAY

SAMPLE TIMELINE

The Groom 2:00-2:30



Every bride loves having those beautiful shots of her bridal details. It's an important part of the story and I love having some time to shoot the dress, shoes, jewelry, invitations, etc. While shooting details I'm also capturing photos of the bride and bridesmaids getting ready!

A lot of times, the guys go overlooked. I enjoy getting photos for the guys that they will love and proud of. I usually do their photos first so that they can get those awesome shots and then relax for the rest of the day. Generally the make up/hair takes a little longer for the bride anyway so this is a great time to get the guys' shots!



2:30-2:45 Details

Bridal Prep 2:45-3:30



After the details have been photographed, it's time for you to get into your dress! This is a big moment! I usually ask the mother of the bride and bridesmaids to be dressed by the time the bride is ready to get into her dress. This ensures that everyone will look their best in those images. After you are in your dress, you can put on your jewelry, veil, and shoes and we'll get some additional bridal portraits!

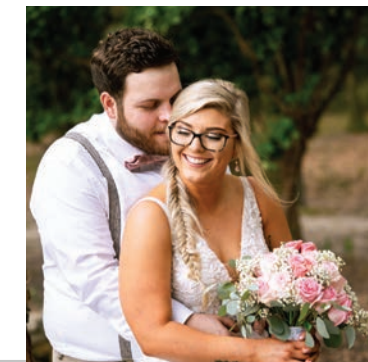
Here's the page that can be somewhat intimidating! The TIMELINE! I know this isn't the most exciting aspect of the wedding day, but this is the one thing that can make or break your photography! These next two pages will outline an ideal wedding day working off of a 6pm ceremony time frame. This ideal timeline is also based off of a wedding day that includes a first look. 90% 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.

First Look 3:30-3:40



This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day! Your photographer will find the perfect location for your first look and get everyone in place. Don't stress about this one bit! This location will be as private and secluded as possible so you can enjoy a few minutes alone before spending the rest of the day with your friends and family.

Portraits 3:40-4:30



After you two take your time with the first look, we will begin taking a some romantic portraits while the initial excitement is still present! Your photographer will find the perfect locations for these as well! Towards the end of these portraits, the bridal party can start making their way to us for bridal party photos.

4:30-5:00 Bridal Party Photos



Now it's time for bridal party photos! I typically buffer in a little extra time here in case we have some unexpected things that get us a few minutes behind. One way to make sure we stay on schedule is to have someone put the boutonnieres on the guys BEFORE they arrive for portraits. We'll get shots of guys and girls both separately and together. Afterwards, bride and groom go into hiding and take a break while guests arrive.

THE TIMELINE CONTINUED...

Reception Details 5:00-5:30

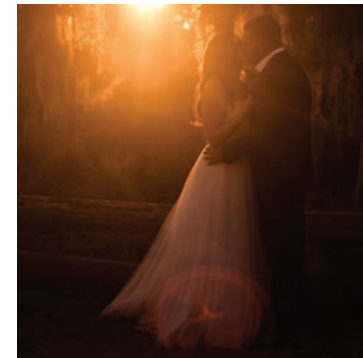


It's time to get married! Most ceremonies are no longer than 30 minutes long. If yours is longer than that, we'll make adjustments to the timeline. Cherish these moments! The ceremony will go by so quickly!

Family Portraits 6:00-6:20

Family formals normally take place immediately following the ceremony since all family should be immediately present.

Sunset Portraits 6:20-6:40



Sunset 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. Since sunset times change throughout the year, we may need to do these photos after the reception has begun.

The Party Begins! 6:45



I love capturing the moments when you leave your wedding to begin life as husband and wife. The exit is a great time to be creative! I've seen everything from sparklers to bubbles to glow sticks and everything in between!



If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I use this time to shoot the reception decor.



Ceremony 5:30-6:00



We'll need about 20 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!

This is when the bridal party lines up for introductions and the party begins!! By this part of the day, the timeline isn't as strict. After introductions will be dinner, first dance, parent dances, and any other reception events you may have planned. Then it's time to dance!



Grand Exit! 10:30

APPROXIMATE TIMES:

DETAILS & PREP : 1.5 HOURS

FIRST LOOK & PORTRAITS : 45-60 MINS

BRIDAL PARTY : 15-20 MINS

FAMILY FORMALS : 15-25 MINS

EXTRA PORTRAIT TIME : As much time as you'll give me!



BEFORE
“I DO”



Let the day begin!

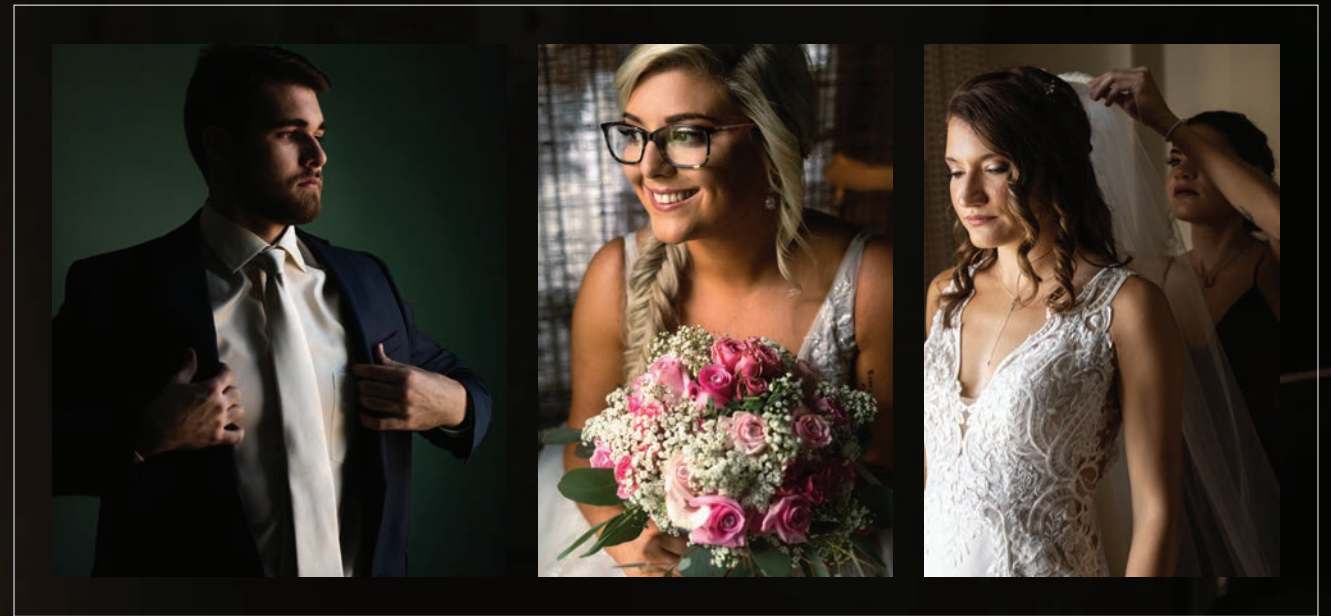
This portion of the guide really sets the stage for the entire wedding day. The next few pages will share tips and tricks that will ensure a seamless morning of bridal preparation and beautiful portraits!



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! 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. These final steps make great photos 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 picture sake. If you forget, no big deal! We can still make it look amazing! Keep reading along for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare!



THE WINDOW EFFECT

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



RINGS, SHOES, JEWELS ...

The whole day begins with the DETAILS! This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day, because it allows me to prepare and get my creative side warmed up for the rest of the day! 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, and then begin with all the goodies! (Please assure your mom that I will take GREAT care of the dress, I promise!)

WHAT TO BRING



dress
 veil / hair pieces
 rings (all three)
 shoes
 bouquet & bouton
 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 album spreads!

KEEP all three rings.

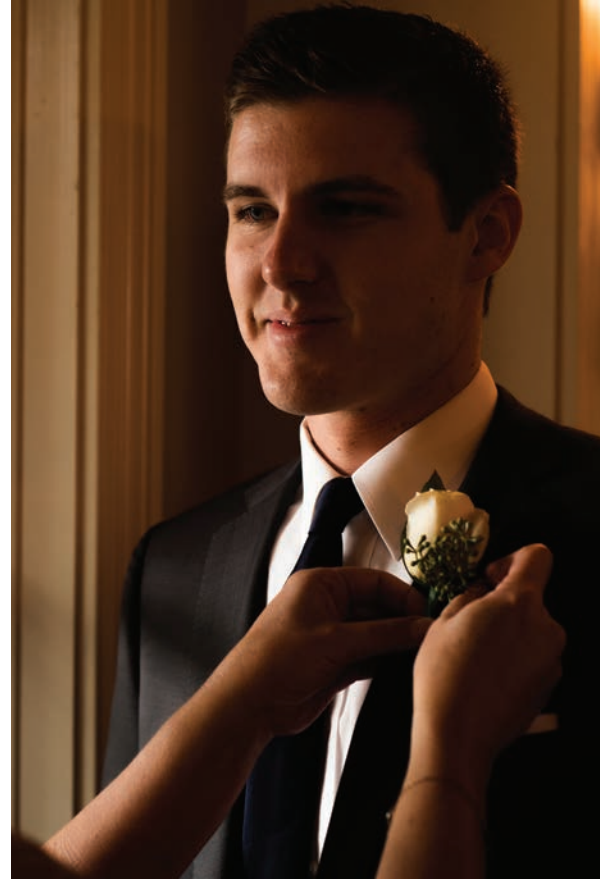
The most common detail missing when I arrive are the rings! Moms, officiants and planners will tell you to hand over your wedding band to the best man before the day begins. However, it’s actually better to hand it over during the bridal party portraits so that I can shoot some great ring shots in the AM! If you forget, no worries, I can always shoot the ring shot at the reception if there is extra time!

BRING the bouquet.

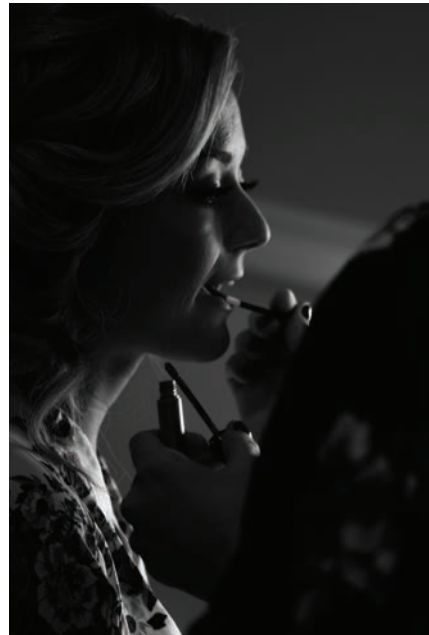
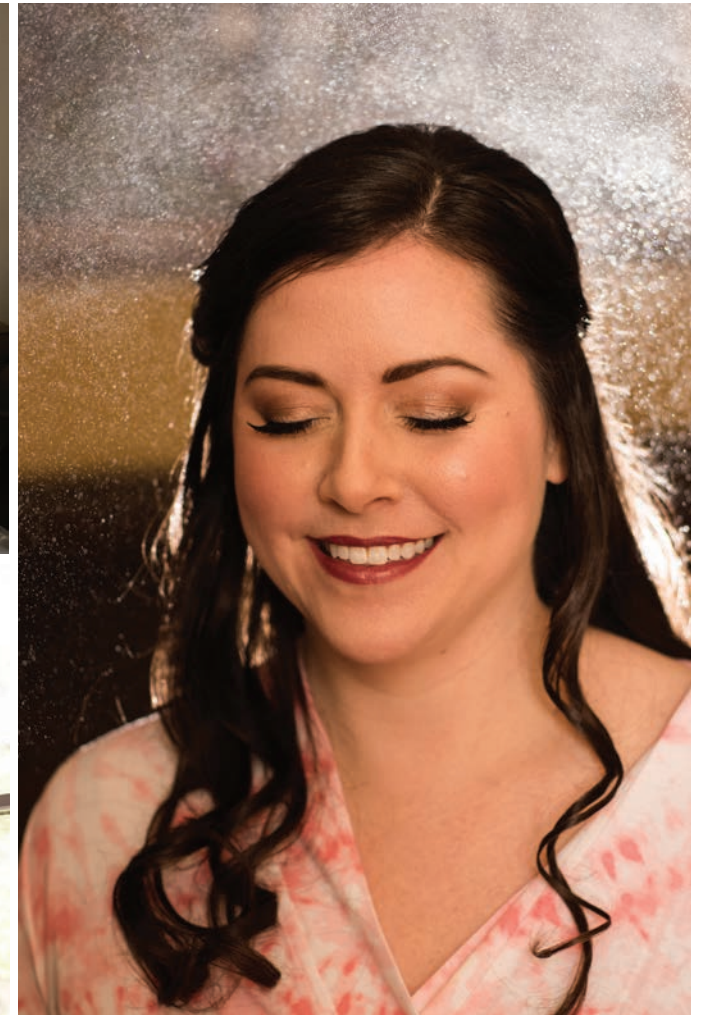
Don’t forget the Bouquet! Have the bouquets and bouts delivered to the bride before the first look so that she can have her bouquet in her portraits. No worries, if it’s hot, we’ll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony!



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, the whole day is thrown off. I have seen getting the bride in her dress take almost 30 minutes because of a button malfunction. It's a smart idea to add in an extra ten minutes here and there so that we 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 & boutonnieres for your first look and portraits! 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 their makeup done before I start because who wants a ton of shots without their makeup on?! Nobody.

GROOMSMEN PREP

Groomsmen prep takes some time at the beginning of your photography coverage. Be sure to plan accordingly.

GETTING IN THE DRESS

Your photographer will instruct you where to stand and it would be fabulous to have your bridesmaids dressed when you're getting in your gown!

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!



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 anyone 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 couples do this and LOVE it!

THE FIRST LOOK explained



I cannot express how big a fan I am 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 they immediately write it off. Most brides want a REACTION. Isn't that EVERY girl's dream? Who doesn't want that reaction? Luckily, it's possible to have the best of both worlds, because most couples who decide to share an intimate first look moment on their wedding day, STILL get that reaction when the bride comes down the aisle. In my experience, if a groom is one to cry at seeing his bride for the first time during the first look, he almost always tears up again as she walks down the aisle.

After shooting over 200 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 tension grows.

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. But since you two have already seen each other and shared a private, intimate moment... he got to spend the morning with his best friends and the pressure was OFF. By the time the ceremony rolled around he was ready to ENJOY their beautiful day!

The nerves are gone and when the nerves are gone... true emotions are free to be expressed. And OH are they expressed! So if I were to condense what I just wrote... basically, Grooms normally become incredibly nervous on wedding days.... 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 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 have fun. 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 aren't clasped out of nervousness but excitement. 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 my preference to do one for many reasons.... Keep reading to find out more of the benefits of sharing your first look privately! For brides not interested in a first look, let's start chatting soon about how we'll create a special timeline to 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 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 gorgeousness... 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 the same as the initial first glance.

EXTEND YOUR DAY

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! 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.

YOUR ONLY ALONE TIME

First looks allow you to be TOGETHER and alone on your wedding day. Normally 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 testimonials from so many grooms who initially weren't a fan of the first look... but afterwards they admitted to being SO much more relaxed and ready for the ceremony!



The Father / 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 Father/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 brides to make time in their timeline for this moment. It doesn't take long at all! 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 church 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 most girls, she's dreamed about this moment for a long time! Vows will be shared and promises will be made... 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 do matter and planning is necessary, it's important to never lose sight of the real purpose of this amazing day!



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 likely 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. If you are having an indoor ceremony, it is always best to have EVEN lighting at the 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 feet, 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. I've seen sand ceremonies, rope ceremonies and the signing of the family Bible. 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! Some couples give a program to everyone attending our wedding but quickly realize that most families only take one. They end up with so many extra 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!

COORDINATION

Hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator is SO important! Brides realize very quickly that if they do not have someone in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility will automatically fall on the mother of the bride, the photographer, or the bride herself! When a photographer is in charge of the timeline and the coordination of the day, the images will suffer. All of my stressful wedding situations were caused by a lack of organization and coordination. It's so important to make this a priority. If you need any recommendations on wedding coordination services I would love to share some of my favorite vendors with you!

Sample List for

FAMILY PORTRAITS

I love meeting 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! In the weeks 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 preparing what shots you need. We can do as many groups as you like! However, keep in mind the more we need to get, the less time we have for any portraits afterwards. And if you think of other family shots you forgot we can take them during the reception!

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 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 your favorite person 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 we can also take some sunset photos after the ceremony! This is when the light is low and golden! It's such a romantic time for bride and groom portraits! 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!





TRUSTING PORTRAIT LOCATIONS

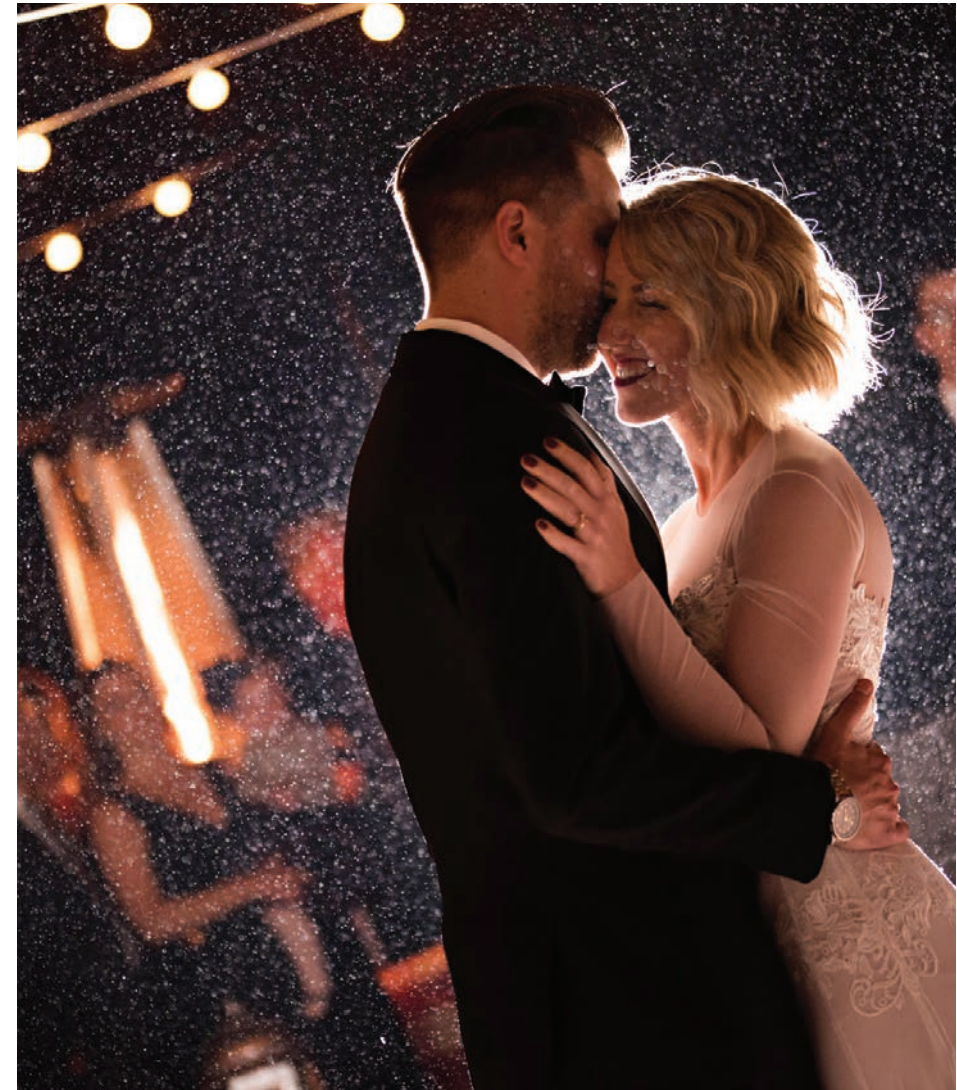
One of my favorite parts of my job is taking something so ordinary and making it look absolutely amazing! This happens most often when it comes to picking portrait locations! If there is one thing that I love and appreciate about my couples, it's that they trust us! Sometimes I select portrait locations that most people wouldn't consider attractive or that seem unusual. For example, the image on this spread was taken in a parking lot next to a muddy ditch. However, because my couple trusted me and they were willing to jump over some mud and stand in a parking lot, they now have the most amazing portraits! So my encouragement is to just trust your photographer! You don't have to worry about a thing! Trust our locations, and I promise you, you'll LOVE the results!



THE CASE OF A RAINY WEDDING DAY

One of the most frequently asked questions that we 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 bride would wish for rain on their big day, but if it happens, it happens..... and it’s going to be JUST fine!! Some of my favorite weddings have been 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 you 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.



It started raining during the couple’s first dance and this photo so perfectly shows that the rain can’t keep us from taking beautiful images! Don’t let the fear of rain steal your joy. You can’t control it, and I promise we will make the best of it!



your bridal party.

Lets 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 help 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 on, and your bridesmaids arrive with bouquets!

HIGH - IMPACT PLANNING

There are so many expenses when it comes to wedding planning. Many brides have to prioritize what they want to invest in. Over the last 6 years of photographing weddings, I have found that there are certain things to avoid investing in and other parts of the day that a little extra investment will go a very long way! My hope is that this list will help you invest in the parts of your day that will be high-impact and will help you avoid spending money where it doesn't matter.

1. Invest in your bridal bouquet over other florals: Make your bridal bouquet a big 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! The bridal bouquet is a focal point for me when it comes to your photography and so I highly recommend getting your DREAM bouquet and investing less on the bridesmaids bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much!

2. Go with greenery over blooms: Greenery is beautiful and photographs well and it can be half the price of ordering blooms. I recommend actual flowers for your bridal bouquet and other bouquets but then decorating other aspects of the day with greenery to save money but still make a huge visual impact!

3. Have one well-done installation instead of a lot of small vignettes of decor: If you're hoping for a heavily detailed reception but the cost is adding up, focus on one focal point instead of trying to decorate everywhere. For example, invest in a beautiful, large, hanging chandelier or unique lighting elements but do shorter, simpler floral centerpieces on 1/2 of your tables and candles on the other 1/2.

4. Double purposes for decor: Maybe you choose to have an epic, well-styled entryway decor at your reception that also doubles as an amazing photobooth later on throughout the evening once party dancing has started!

5. Avoid spending money on tiny details: Customized favors, personalized M&M's, etc.... it all adds up and at the end of the day, your hard work in the tiny details can often be overlooked.



RECEPTION PLANNING



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. 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*
- *Father-Daughter Dance*
- *Mother-Son Dance*
- *Anniversary Dance*
- *Traditional Religious Dances*
- *Welcome by Father of the Bride*
- *Blessing*
- *Cake Cutting*
- *Toasts*
- *Bouquet and Garter Toss*
- *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. Grandparents 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!

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 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!





If your coverage ends before the very end of your reception and you are hoping to have an exit shot captured, you have the option of planning to do a “Controlled Exit” with your bridal party! This is more common than you may think. Instead of saving your exit until the very end, you can plan a controlled exit with just the members of your bridal party and a few family members! This allows us 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!

RECEPTION: THE GRAND EXIT

This is it! You’ve spent all morning getting ready, you married the love of your life, and you danced the night away with your closest friends and family. The only thing left to do is go out in style! The exit from your wedding can be such a fun way to end the night and kick start the beginning of your married lives together! Be sure to talk to your venue and/or coordinator about the options available for a grand exit. Also make sure your DJ and coordinator know when your photo/video coverage ends so they can end the dancing and start lining guests up about 15 minutes before your coverage ends!





THANK YOU!

Last, but certainly not least, THANK YOU for taking the time to read this guide. My hope is that it can be helpful to you as you plan your dream wedding! Enjoy this season of planning but also remember that your marriage will endure long after the wedding is over. The wedding will come and go in a matter of hours, but your marriage will 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!

Chris