

17 ESSENTIAL THINGS YOU NEED
TO KNOW BEFORE BOOKING YOUR
WEDDING
PHOTOGRAPHER



ANDY KERR PHOTOGRAPHY

17 Essential Things You Need To Know Before Booking Your Wedding Photographer

You're awake. It's your wedding day and you have the most superb, special day in your life in front of you. Your dress hangs on the door of the wardrobe of your hotel room, or perhaps you're in your old bedroom at your parents' house, where as a child you dreamt about this day.

And now it's here.

And it has to be perfect. As a wedding photographer I know a few things so I thought I'd pass on some top tips that, from my experience, every bride should know...

1. Leave enough time

If I could give you one important piece of advice it's this: on your wedding day, a 60 second minute is more like 30 seconds. Time whips away and here's the thing: wedding photographs take longer than you think they do. Always.

People disappear, children runabout, you name it, there are a great many reasons why it's hard to keep to a strict time schedule.

So, allow more time than you think you will need and let your guests know about it. To avoid that last-minute rush allow at least an hour and a half for your photographer to take photographs of you getting ready, with all your bridesmaids, your Mum and anyone else you want close to you before you leave for the ceremony.

2. Have an engagement shoot

Why is this a good idea? Because it allows you to get used to being in front of your photographer having your picture taken.

An engagement shoot is THE perfect way to get to know your photographer too, and more importantly, for them to get to know the two of you. It will help to build trust too - and that's vital.

It's a prime opportunity to experiment with a particular wedding photography style to see which suits you best. You should discuss this with your photographer and make sure that they have the skills to use natural light *and* flash to create the perfect image for you.

3. Choose someone you like

If you don't meet your photographer before the wedding, even just on Skype, you're taking a risk, because you don't know if you click.

This person is going to be with you all day long, on one of the most important days of your lives, so it's vital you feel comfortable with them. I often meet my couples twice or more - once to visit the venue with them, the initial consultation meeting, and again just for a cuppa and a chat to check that we're all on the same page. Also, if your photographer gets to know you well, they will be more emotionally invested in the day - I have actually teared up during the speeches! Wedding photographers aren't just suppliers, they're one of the most important guests at your wedding.

Once you've narrowed down photographers whose work you like, and whose philosophy you seem to gel with, *set up an in-person meeting*. Then, figure out if you LIKE them. If you don't, please don't hire them.

Think about how personable the photographer is. You will use the meeting in part to determine the technical skills and style of the photographer, but it is also an invaluable opportunity to assess their soft skills - if you take a disliking to them for whatever reason, this could create a negative dynamic or atmosphere on your big day.

Do you trust them to handle all the pressures and stresses of a wedding and still deliver great pictures? Do you feel comfortable around them? Will your friends and family be able to relax and have a good time, do they have great people management skills?

4. Think about lighting on the day

Are you getting married at the Brighton Pavilion? It's lovely there, of course, but it's very red, and can be quite dark inside. Similarly other venues will all have their own specific lighting requirements such as a dark church, or if your ceremony takes place on a bright, sunny day, you may be after some more muted images - sunny days are beautiful but do need specialist equipment and lighting to lift the shadows on peoples faces to create a flattering look.

This is no problem, of course, as long as your photographer has the skills and equipment to shoot images in a wide range of lighting situation, so make sure that they have these.

Also ensure that you discuss your wedding day venue with your photographer to equip them with some prior knowledge - a professional photographer should be willing to visit the venue before your wedding day to assess the lighting requirements beforehand.

5. What about the 'golden hour'?

The 'golden hour' is that magic time of the day shortly after sunrise or before sunset, during which daylight is warmer and softer than when the sun is higher in the sky. This provides an opportunity to get some beautiful photos in a very flattering light.

Be sure to ask your wedding photographer when the golden hour and sunset will be on your chosen wedding day.

Of course, living in England, we have to accept that there's no guarantee of great weather - you could be getting married in December, so...

6. Have a Plan B

The weather. If it's raining hard, your wedding photographer may not be able to take pictures in that beautiful country meadow you've chosen for group shots.

There's no planning for a monsoon, a snow storm or at the opposite end of the spectrum, boiling hot weather.

You and your partner may want to discuss some alternative nearby locations. Or even a few large umbrellas! Make sure to ask your photographer or wedding planner for some advice.

7. Do you like their photography style?

There are many different styles of photography out there.

Traditional wedding photography is usually quite formal and rigid and involves a lot of organised shots and a very hands on photographer. Contemporary wedding photography is informal, relaxed and spontaneous. Reportage or documentary style wedding photography is when a photographer records the day as it happens, it is very hands-off and the photographer will remain mainly in the background. This style of photography is becoming increasingly popular.

The only way you will be sure that you are getting the style of photography that you want is if you do research and speak to different photographers to see if they can deliver the style that you're looking for.

Photojournalism & Reportage photography have become buzzwords in wedding photography, and for good reason. This is a key role of any wedding photographer.

A wedding photographer should capture natural reportage photographs of people laughing, crying, hugging and kissing - and all those little moments that would go unnoticed by the casual observer. The photographer should always be ready to capture these shots and not be sat down, waiting for the next main event on the schedule. This is how amazing moments would be missed by an inexperienced or an undedicated photographer. (Having said that we do need a 5 minute water break every now and then!)

You may ask for only reportage type photographs and this is fine, but often after talking about your true requirements your photographer will find out what you really have in mind. Often you won't want the cheesy photographs that have given wedding photography a

bad name - you don't want the hours and hours of stand in a line group photographs that weddings are famous for.

You may want a mix of photographic styles to capture your wedding in the best possible way - natural photographs of your friends laughing and their parents crying but also want a beautiful family photograph that your parents and grandparents will treasure forever.

I strongly believe that there is a place for group photographs, reportage photos *and* portrait photographs on the wedding day. Good balance can ensure that this process is kept enjoyable, stress free and fun.

8. Copyright Information

Understanding the basics of copyright can help you discuss what you want and need from your photographer.

Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988:

Usually the copyright of a photograph belongs to the person who took it. Copyright lasts for 70 years after the author dies and offers protection against unauthorised reproduction of the photographs and entitles the owner to economic benefit from it.

In practice, this means that clients may only use photographs taken by a professional photographer in ways that have been agreed at the time they were commissioned.

Not all photographers will agree to let you have digital files of your wedding images, as it would be difficult for them to retain quality control of the images once you release them to friends/family etc. This is something that you need to discuss with your photographer and make sure that both of you are happy with the contractual agreement.

If, after your wedding, you decide you would like to use further images, permission must be sought from the copyright holder and an additional fee agreed.

So, if you decide that you would like to have digital files, your photographer may not agree to do this. This is why it's especially important to make sure all of your requirements are

made known prior to signing a contract.

9. The contract

Whilst it might seem a bit formal in some instances, all professional photographers should provide a written contract detailing the services that they have agreed to provide. This is to protect you and them.

The contract should include all the details of the event (venue, date etc) as well as the services to be provided.

All fees should be clearly stated on the contract. Booking fees or deposits should be confirmed, along with when the balance needs to be paid. Normally, a photographer will request full payment approximately 30 days before your wedding. Full terms and conditions should be provided by your photographer and should include a cancellation policy.

Always take time to read and understand the terms and conditions before signing.

If you have any queries, ask the photographer to explain them to you and always keep copies of your signed contract and any communication you have with your photographer.

10. Backup equipment

Does your photographer have back up equipment? The answer should be a definitive YES.

Fortunately, professional camera equipment is very reliable these days, but if it does fail you can guarantee it will be when you are exchanging your vows, or during the first dance.

I have never experienced equipment failure whilst shooting a wedding but if I did I would be able to continue shooting using backup equipment as if nothing had happened.

It is also important to note that backup equipment *must* be of an equivalent professional standard to ensure that all of the images you receive after the wedding have the same

professional quality, so make sure that your photographer has this. This includes the lenses as well as the camera body.

11. Insurance

Your photographer should be professionally insured. This insurance covers them should something go wrong with their equipment or should the images be lost. Ask your photographer if they hold Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance. You want a stress free day, so if your photographer accidentally breaks something at the venue you can relax and enjoy your day knowing that all will be taken care of.

Additionally, be sure to ask your photographer about wedding insurance. You are making a significant investment in your wedding so if any of your suppliers let you down you it's great to know that you have this covered.

12. How much should I spend?

This is one of the most common questions couples ask when thinking about booking a wedding photographer.

It is your decision what value you place on your wedding photography. A photographer's fees may vary, so it is important to be 100% sure about your budget when you are ready to book.

Spend as much as you reasonably can on your chosen photographer, and importantly, speak to them about what they are able to provide for your budget - a professional wedding photographer should be able to produce a *bespoke* package to suit you.

Think about what you would prefer - professionally edited digital files, or a selection of images presented in a professionally designed album. Perhaps you would like a combination of both? If a wedding 'package' doesn't suit you, ask the photographer if they can provide what you want.

Remember when choosing your photographer, wedding photos will last forever, even beyond your lifetime and may well be the only reminder you and your family have in years to come. The most common regret I hear from brides is that they didn't use a professional photographer and that, after the wedding, they realised just how important the images are.

There's no getting away from it - a wedding is a costly business. Like most things there's a massive variance between photography pricing. You can find full day coverage from £500 or you can spend upwards of £10,000. It depends on your budget and how much you value your photography. There *are* wedding photographers who are quite frankly not charging as much as they should considering their talent but they are very few and far between. Let's face it, for the most part the cheap ones are cheap for a reason - they are either not very good, or they are not running a legitimate business.

Running a photography business is *very* expensive if you are doing it properly. Think about the investment in the best equipment and back up equipment, ongoing training and mentoring to ensure continuous improvement, and all those important but costly things like insurance and professional editing software.

If you find a photographer that you absolutely and completely love but they are above your budget then sit down and figure out a way to afford them. I promise you that in 10 years time when you are looking at your beautiful images you will not regret the decision you made to scrap that candy cart or buy a cheaper pair of shoes.

13. What's included?

When looking at someone's pricing, be careful to see what's included in the package you're looking at. Things like second shooters, additional hours, hi-res JPeGS, albums, and engagement sessions may be included in the price quoted, or might be extra money. Just make sure you're not signing up to pay more later for things you definitely want (i.e. having your wedding photos taken isn't worth all that much if you have to pay £1,000 extra to get the files).

Once your wedding has happened, you're going to want to get your hands on your photos. Now is the time to figure out how that's going to work (and what's going to work for you). Get a timeline for how fast or slow a particular photographer turns around

images. Delivery of the full gallery can range from a week to six months. What rights will you have? Will you get hi-res JPEGs or will you have to order prints through the photographer? What publication rights will your photographer have?

14. Avoid hiring family or friends

It may be tempting to hire somebody you know to be your wedding photographer. You may be drawn towards hiring someone you trust, who knows you and your partner well, and you think will understand what kind of pictures you want.

While this might turn out perfectly well, it is highly likely that this person will not have the technical skills and experience to give you the best photos.

Consider if this person has the technical knowledge of light and photography to anticipate and quickly correct any problems that may occur. Ask yourself if they have a spare camera of high quality. Do they have experience working with large groups of people? Would they be able and happy to spend all day, maybe 8-12 hours, behind the camera and not participating in the wedding as a guest?

15. Talking of which, why should we pay for a professional photographer when so many great images can be captured on an iPhone?

There's no intrinsic reason why you shouldn't do this and I agree, the iPhone is an extraordinary thing.

However, your friends have come to the wedding to be a part of your celebration. If you ask them to step up to the mark, it will be very stressful. They'll miss things. It happens.

Investing in the services of a professional photographer means two key things:

- You, your new life partner, your guests, everyone - will be able to relax and enjoy the day.

- There will be stunning photographs that have captured every single special moment.

16. Find out about the post-production

You should ask about how the photographer does the post-production on the photos, or if they do any post-production on the photos at all.

You may get the photos straight from the camera, which will not look as good as those which go through professional post-production.

- Colour correction is a basic part of post-production, and makes a big difference.
- Be sure you are completely clear on the photographer's practices.
- If post-production is not included in the main price, ask if this is an optional extra.

17. Ask about what the photographer will do on the day

It's important to find out detailed information about how the photographer will work on the day of wedding. You need to determine whether they are prepared to stay a little later if it runs on, and how they plan to interact with the guests. Will they be taking lots of candid shots, or will they be corralling people around a lot?

- If they are going to be very hands-on and active, you should make sure that this won't be a distraction or annoyance.
- Don't forget to ask how they plan to be dressed, and be sure to make your expectations clear.

Last but not least...Let go and trust your photographer

After all this, enjoy your day and put your entire faith in your wedding photographer. He or she will be able to capture every single special moment without you having to worry about a thing.

Allow your photographer to do their job, to be creative and to notice the things that pass by in a blur as you celebrate your love to the person you love most in the world.

All will be well. Oh, and by the way - congratulations!

Kind words



"I love the way that you have a knack of capturing those special moments...your calm and friendly way with people gets the best out of them in front of the camera." Dawn Wilson



"He's provided me with some amazing photos...I was so impressed with his professionalism...I'd recommend Andy for any of your photography needs as he has great experience and a fantastic eye for detail." Sarah Wylie



"He has a gift of seeing the difference between a smile that's just for the camera and a smile that's from within...a smile that reflects me and my personality...thanks Andy, you really know your art". Katie Bridge



"WOW! Fast and beautiful...they are fabulous, especially the close up photos, but all are gorgeous...love the different angles and light you have captured. Thanks so much, love them." Steph Willoughby



"I absolutely love the way you captured the best moments from our wedding - especially those that we didn't notice ourselves on the day. It's great to be able to look back at the lovely memories that you captured for us. Thank you." Clare Holmes

About Andy Kerr

I've been a photographer for over 20 years and specialise in weddings and engagements. Based just outside of Brighton, East Sussex I cover the south east of England and further.

I hope that you found this guide useful - if you'd like to know more about me and to find out if we're a good fit please do get in touch to book a FREE consultation.

Warmest regards

Andy

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