



# Wedding Photography 101

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## **Wedding Photography 101**

### **Table of Contents**

1. Goals Of A Wedding Photographer
2. What The Bride Wants
3. Difficulties Of A Wedding Photographer
4. Preparation, Equipment & Backup
5. The Art Of Shots
6. Life-Advantages Of Being A Good Wedding Photographer
7. Become An In-Demand Wedding Photographer – Tips & Guides

## **Chapter 1—Goals Of A Wedding Photographer**

This isn't just an encouraging topic to help get you started on the road to wedding photography greatness. Rather it is also a practical chapter wherein will be detailed ideas, tips and to-do's that will help you hone your photography goals so you can get started on the right foot.

When you set goals for yourself as a wedding photographer you're following in the age-old tradition of discipline. By setting aims for yourself you have started planning way ahead of time to meet them, increasing your chances of success.

Effort helps mightily, because it's not that you can wish your dreams into reality and not everyone receives lucky breaks to get where they want to go. The first factor you need to cover is specificity. When you set your goals, make them specific and not generic. Such exactness helps reduce risk and guesswork, paving the way for you to meet your goals in reality with no wishful thinking stepping in.

Measurable target-setting like this helps you answer personal queries along the lines of 'what do you personally want from your wedding photography career?' Instead of opting for vague answers that demand more bookings and better pay, get to work actively tracking your leads, sales, bookings and potential clientele.

### **Goal 1: Basic Steps**

**Step 1:** Frame a reasonable income goal for the year. This helps in plenty of ways, from general bookkeeping to getting you to find all the work you can successfully handle that year.

**Step 2:** There is, of course, an average income you make from taking photos at weddings, so use that to determine how many weddings you need to cover in a year to attain that income goal you framed in the previous step.

**Step 3:** Meetings take time, travel expenses and plenty of effort preparing portfolios, pitches and presentations to impress the bride or another person standing in to hire you. Be sure you know the number of meetings you're supposed to attend for each wedding. Not only will it help you manage your time, you also get to choose and prioritize accordingly.

**Step 4:** This is a corollary to the previous point but demands a 'step' all its own. You must figure out how many leads you're going to have to follow up on for each wedding you've booked or are being booked for. These leads are essentially bridal shows, calls, emails, referrals and such like, all to help 'lead' the client to understand what you can do for them while helping you 'lead' yourself to follow through. It's one of those common-sense points you'll end up following no matter what.

## **Goal 2: A Few Tricks Up Your Sleeve**

Choosing wedding photography for a career niche isn't easy because there is immense competition in it. However, if you forge all the right contacts and provide excellent service for each of them chances are they'll head your way again or suggest you to someone else. This makes your competitors less prone to getting work you're well-suited to perform.

As you can imagine this 'trick' is something that more often than not takes time to master, from several months to a few years, so be patient. Why be patient, you ask? Just imagine a bride and how she's constantly seeing advertisements and hire-us pages numbering in the thousands. This is a very real fact of the wedding season as any bride worth her gown will know. Basically, it's more about the bride than it is about you.

You need to up your ante and create an advertisement that truly stands out in the crowd, is memorable and has the attractive pull that makes a bride want to call you for more details. This is easier said than done, but if you were to hire a competent advertiser or professional friend to craft an amazing sketch for you, that will be your most powerful trump card in your wedding photography dreams.

We enter once more into the field of specifics. Your advertisement shouldn't necessarily be glamorous or eye-candyish, because there are several such adverts out there already. On the other hand, if you can combine a good looking spread with key points and information you know the client is desperately seeking and put it up there on your advert in clear no-nonsense terms you up your chances of getting noticed and , most important of all, being remembered.

Ways you can carve a niche for yourself out of an already competitive market like wedding photography will require you to specialize, meaning you offer your potential client something few or none others in the same industry can match. This is very much possible when you know what type of clientele you're seeking. As hard as it may be to believe, especially given the sheer number of brides at any one time, each of them have their own preferences for their wedding day. They come prepared, know what they want and feel sorely disappointed if they can't have it.

More than coming across as something of a bridezilla tantrum, their preferences actually help fine tune your focus, renders your work a whole lot easier and gives you the chance to specialize your skills and bring ideas to match those specific clients' needs. Crafting an appropriate advertisement with these facts in mind is sure to send out all the right signals.

### **Goal 3: Working Smart With Leads**

Maintaining only a few sources when you begin your wedding photography career is a bad idea. Granted, you may be of a mind to pool valuable resources, time, and cash into a few important leads rather than diluting them across many. However, taking a counter-intuitive approach with that decision is the way to go.

A minimum of 7 high-quality leads will keep your business swimming strong. These leads wield a very powerful gift and it's called 'referrals'. If you get them from a few sources on a nice consistent basis, that's great. However, imagine not getting referrals at all for a period of time. Such an unfortunate business setting is sure to put a crimp in your wedding photography dreams. Multiple leads help get you multiple referrals and keep the flow going.

Given the present shaky economy it's best you diversify. Bridal shows and advertising are two smart ways to get yourself leads, with vendor referrals adding to your advantages. There is one other extremely valuable source you should tap into and that's the internet. You can social network your way through this industry. More and more brides are getting into the notion of social networking on sites like Twitter, FaceBook, Google+ and such like.

Create professional accounts for yourself and don't shy from investing in their advertisement/promotion/marketing programs. You increase your chances of getting noticed and hired in incredible ways and not to mention the referrals those people will get you in turn.

By using chat platforms you can talk to brides and learn more about what they expect in wedding photographers. Through such chats you instill trust and earn trust in return. Next, you also get to manage your friends list and discuss strategies with them, stay in touch more often than over the phone and be ready to act when they send referrals your way.

If you're still unsure how bridal shows can help, imagine about 400 to 500 brides present at one event. Now imagine the possibilities of forging contacts, advertising yourself and your skills and creating friendships that could help in the long run.

A networking event, on the other hand, is way different. It opens opportunities for you to meet contacts who in turn have bridal contacts. It's a bit roundabout but has massive potential to add to your wedding photography book of contacts.

Wedding vendors are superb choices as well. There are few more solid referrals than when a bride contacts you after a preferred bridal vendor passes the suggestion by them. Seeing as how brides work very closely with such vendors to plan their joyous event, you're certain to stand out on this route.

## **Summary**

These three main goals are a must-have for any wedding photographer if their business is to see huge prospects. Besides, more than the business itself it's 'You' you're selling. *Your* ideas, depth of understanding, passion for photography and taste in capturing all the right angles and moments are what brides pay to see. This chapter is in essence about personal cultivation first, business development next.

## **Chapter 2 – What A Bride Wants**

### **The 'Meaning' Of It All**

If it were that easy, a teenager with a camera phone can have his own wedding photography business. However, such a thing as style and class add emphasis on weddings and all the factors that go behind making it a memorable success. A wedding is when two souls officiate their love for each other and let the world have a decisive grip on the fact that they are going to be spending a whole lifetime as man and wife.

This encourages the main vein of this chapter, namely what brides want to see in their wedding photos. The overall consensus, online as well as casual face-to-face opinions, says 'Meaning'. This is where skill meets art and leaves behind the casual photo-snapping abilities anyone can perform.

A wedding photographer isn't hired based on how cheap their services are but how good it is in line with their affordability. If you're really good and the price is right, business will practically rush to meet you. Mastering the idea of 'meaning' is tricky for most photographers dealing with weddings. This means you have to get into the mind of the bride and understand what they're looking to see when the photos come out post-development.

It can be funny how people often assume comprehending the emotional nature of a wedding is more a woman's thing and that female wedding photographers are better at it than their male counterparts. However, understanding emotions is a universal concept. It's like reading a book wherein the characters experience things you're nowhere even close to seeing except in your mind's eye. It's a human gift to be able to experience what someone else does without actually going through the rigors of it all.

In this manner, a smart and competent wedding photographer—be they a man or a woman—can get closer to the emotional kernel underlying an anxious bride on her wedding day and, looking past the jitters, sense what she's seeking by way of professional wedding photos that have what it takes to spark a feeling or two even if the bride and her hubby were to see it many years down the line, and also when they show it to other people and watch as they sense a similar feeling.

Such is the power of photos to capture not just crystal clear images of reality but the emotions that are woven into all things. As intimidating as this notion may at first appear, it too falls under the guidelines of the phrase 'practice makes perfect'. After all, as with any skill, this too can be learned.



## **Interacting With The Bride**

A bride is a stressed soul on her wedding day. No matter what you do, feel or bring to the event by way of photography skills, do not forget that she is scared, vulnerable, wants everything to go off alright and seeks meaning in everything. Your job is not to be Oprah or Dr. Phil. Keeping it simple is a step in the right direction for any wedding photographer.

**Keeping Her Updated:** Letting the bride know how the photos are turning out will be one of your best moves. Don't go assuming she's too busy, you might come across as bothersome, or that the groom will think something suspicious of you. If you do not find the time to do this, the bride is going to experience increased stress as to how the photos are *really* turning out and whether your silence is proof of how *terrible* they are. Losing trust in you fast becomes a very possible thing.

**You're In Charge Of The Shot:** Some brides are averse to telling a photographer how to do their job, because they assume you have all the wizard-like skills to help make their event awesome. However, you're responsible for each shot, especially the ones with her in it, making it also your responsibility to help her pose. From the slightest tilt to a better position change, don't shy from directing her to do such things so you can capture that perfect pose in a superb shot. She will not think you're unprofessional. Rather, when the photos come out, she'll laud you on a job well done and you can be sure you'll have referrals coming your way.

**Time Your Humor:** If you're one of those photographers who pre-rehearse jokes for the wedding, it's best you do not blurt it out during snaps. Granted, sharing a giggle or two when speaking with the bride and groom eases the bride's already heightened nervousness which she does a great job at hiding from her guests and groom, but when you throw pot-shots out there just when you're clicking a picture or aiming for a good pose, you'll not only upset out the bride's sensitivity levels as to how the pictures are coming out your jokes become a nuisance at that moment as well. So time it right and keep it minimal.

**Privacy Levels:** These vary with brides, but the general idea is to ask when you are at that pivotal moment when the bride-groom solo-pics are being taken or when an intimate kiss needs to be captured for posterity. Whereas some brides are alright with posing for such an 'alone with my hubby' shot in the presence of others, family and guests, there are many other brides who'd really appreciate it if you take the initiative to find a private spot to shoot them in those 'lovey-dovey' poses. If you're immersed in a group shot which gradually whittles down to the duo of the event be sure to go up to them and ask if they'd like to accompany you to a pre-selected more private spot for pics of them together.

**Original Or Duplicate:** Keeping your shots realistic is key, because no bride wants to see her own wedding day pics and not recognize a lot of things, people and moments in them. This in mind, try to capture your shots in a realistic light and stay original, as your advertisement may have declared. However, what must you do when the bride suddenly craves a shot she saw somewhere online, in a movie or in a magazine? She may show it to you, most probably, but are you ready to duplicate that look despite you being a professional with their own skills and ideas? You must be flexible enough to oblige the bride's wishes, enough said.

## **The Brides Have Spoken**

In this section you, the wedding photographer, are going to be let in on a series of demands brides have voiced online about stuff they'd loved to have been told *earlier*, when the photo was being shot. Get the know-how and you get the success wedding photographers everywhere crave.

**The Bouquet:** To be told the bouquet is being held too high or too close to the chest are important pointers. More often than not, when a bride holds the bouquet below waist level or perhaps even a tad bit higher, she gets to show her gown-design in its best light while also adding an inimitable sense of charm to her overall look in the photo.

**The Angles:** When you try to get that creative or varied shot from low or high angles be sure you're not doing it for the sake of photographic diversity. Some brides look—pardon the term—ill-shaped (be it double-chins or over-elongation) when you take them from such angles. Be objective, remain calm and observe more than you click during such moments and you'll save the bride, and consequently yourself, a lot of disappointment.

**The Hair:** A smart designer once said 'Your hair is your best accessory'. It's an obvious fact that brides will have their hair done to perfection on a day as important as this. It's during the wedding photos that she needs to be guided on how best to wear it. For instance, since all the 'main event' parts of the day are over she may be (just may be) inclined to get her hair set in a more casual manner. Sometimes her photos in this look could have come out better with her hair either pulled back in a refined style or allowed to frame her face in a rather elegant side-flow.

**Listen And Oblige:** Some brides know exactly how and when they look their best. It can be in poses or, on a more counter intuitive route, doing something goofy and looking great doing it. Always put yourself in a place where you can see *her* perspective of it all and *then* help with suggestions and improvements or simply go with her flow and snap away as she wants it.

## **Summary**

This chapter is crucial because it focuses as much on the bride as it does on you, the wedding photographer. Take some time to look online for more views and opinions from brides. The bottom line is there must be positive chemistry between the two of you. That's when the magic happens. Your skills at snaps aren't worth a dime if you have no idea what the bride wants or make no effort to grasp her take on things. This is especially hard if you're a man, but if your heart is in the right place you'll learn fast.

## **Chapter 3 – Difficulties Of A Wedding Photographer**

### **The Beginning – Getting Started**

The age old problem of every rookie or beginner, even in the wedding photography business, is gaining experience. The problem enters when people want to hire photographers with experience under their belts. Doesn't that mean you've got to be hired first in order to gain experience after?

It's often the usual route of things to gather experience while working under an established photographer or to avail chances from family or friends who are getting into the business. Another tougher and longer option will be for you to make the rounds and gain your experience doing both freelance wedding photography, where you join an established 'main group' already hired for the task, or a full time position somewhere that helps you earn the experience you need.

These are but a few obvious but invaluable factors involved in the wedding photography game. There are, of course, others that have cropped up as modernity progressed and the economy digressed. Be sure to do adequate online research to hone your knowledge on all things experience.

Next, we come to the matter of investment. What have you got to invest in as a rookie wedding photographer, you ask? Why, equipment, of course (for a detailed looksie through this particular topic, read 'Chapter 4: Preparation, Equipment & Backups'). Specific equipment, certain hardware, components, lenses and more, all fall under this category, from the humble tripod stand to the quality of the camera you plan on holding in your hand.

You need to start considering this a legitimate career track so you leave yourself no room for casual guesswork and you work extra smart and just as hard to get it right and come out shining. As with so many business ventures wedding photography can get quite expensive so it isn't a bad choice to save cash by renting equipment the first few times you're hired to cover a wedding.

There are several contacts you're going to have to make during the few events you're signed up to cover. These include planners, officiants, parents, wannabe brides and so on and so forth. This means you have a lot of people to please. After all, they're all going to have to look at your photos once they come out.

The veritable company you will have created to represent your wedding photography career needs to take its first steps. That means sitting down and planning what goes where and when. This is due the sheer number of varied aspects this particular business has going for it, details best covered in a whole new e-book.

The bottom-line is you stand responsible for all the working sections of your startup company. That's actually a good thing rather than an intimidating factor, because you hold the reins to all the valuable work that gets done. Speaking of work...

## **The Middle – Work**

Granted, at first you take over every duty reserved for a set group of employees, from managing, accounting, marketing and graphic designing, even secretarial work. Amidst all this you also have to learn to make it all run smoothly until that blessed day you can afford to hire people to help you run things.

Pricing your skills and services is yet another crucial part of your work ethic. As you can imagine it's also rather scary, what with you having to answer self-imposed queries like 'Am I setting the right price for this specific skill? Will the business suffer under this budget and price range? Who will be willing to pay?' and so on and so forth.

Branding and paperwork, combined with advertising, add to your so-called wedding photography woes, but that's only because the world has become a far more competitive place than, say, 20 years ago. You need to be better than your competitors to go places in any niche anywhere.

One thing about work where wedding photography is concerned... You do not get paid big bucks once or twice a week for mere two or so projects and strike it rich. This is a business you're running, not a wishing well, so expect a 5-day work-week perhaps even a weekend gig and engagement shoots to keep the flow going. At first, you might see little to no profit but as you gain reputation, improve your skills, play your cards right—as you read in 'Chapter 2: What A Bride Wants'—you'll see the referrals practically pouring in.

You're probably starting to think you're going to turn into a zombie or cyborg, whichever comes first (!), because you seem to be getting no time to yourself, no change in routine and a life with no unwinding or relaxation. As you pursue your wedding photography career you might find your personal relationships coming under stress too. This is part of life, so don't start worrying. Instead, consider your personal life part of your work ethic and see how well you'll find ways and time to balance that with the rest of the things you aim to do. It will be hard—if everybody knew this for a fact it will have worked by now—but it's worth a try, isn't it?

A good wedding photographer is someone who knows how and what to prioritize. It all comes down to the planning stage, but the word work itself denotes you turn those plans into viable actions that have realistic goals (sometimes even fantastic ones) carried out using practical methods (perhaps even a few unconventional ones).

Herein lies the possibility for you to discover your own style, something that's *just* you and *no one* else. Such originality is often found many months or a few years into your wedding photography career, but if you've already got it then even better. This style will define you and your work and will set the standard for others out there. In addition to that you'll be more in demand and see more referrals if you've got a certain special something working on your behalf.

## **The End –Keeping The Flow Going**

Keeping what you've set up going is tricky, to say the least. However long it may have taken for you to gain a reputation it can be marred just as easily. Sometimes even the simplest things matter and can work to *effect* or *affect* your career as a wedding photographer.

Seeing heightened activity only in due season, weddings can come and go pretty fast. You have to be quick to grab opportunities and make a contract worth your while. The weather is known to play a huge role in weddings.

No, this isn't some superstitious mumbo-jumbo, rather a simple fact. Modern equipment may be able to withstand extreme heat or cold but this is not the case with people. They, on the other hand, would hate to have the weather put a crimp on their special day. This is a crucial factor to consider for your career so be sure to keep it mind at the planning stages.

The harsh reality of this business is it's going to be very tough making ends meet as a startup wedding photographer. Adapting to a changing market is a must-have trait, because you can't have skill and lose faith in it working for you just because the market isn't kind to wedding photographers this season. You must push on and strive to be your best at every turn. This, quite simply, separates great wedding photographers from average ones.

Balance it all, sit in with a business consultant and learn what you need doing to keep your head above water during the slow times and to satisfy all parties involved during hectic work days. It's a game of chances where you get just *one* attempt to prove you're worth it. This is easier imagined than achieved. With practice and patience, though, you'll get there. Thinking on your feet is a useful trait for any wedding photographer and a willingness to handle pressure and responsibility.

Such a varied skill set will definitely pay off in the long run as your 'image' spreads and you gain a repute few other competitors out there possess. This means increased cash flow, a diverse clientele list and enhanced business success.

There's more to being a wedding photographer than merely shooting pictures at weddings. Often you end up seeing hours and hours of field work, almost a whole day even. This is sure to put pressure on your physical and mental states, especially with the flimsy diet wedding photographers end up following and not to mention the hangovers. Everything done in moderation and kept at a professional level is sure to work alright for you in the long run.

Soon, what was once considered the difficulties of a wedding photographer will transmute into opportunities and advantages that came along to help further your career.

## **Chapter 4 – Preparation, Equipment & Backup**

This chapter will take you through the basics of what you need to be an ace wedding photographer.

### **Preparation**

The first thing to share concerning preparation has quite a contrary message, but true nevertheless. No matter how much you prepare you will feel the 'butterflies' on your first day covering a wedding. There are essential ways to get ready before heading out on your wedding coverage process.

**Research:** This is the keystone in your career arch. You have to do your research, no matter what, no matter whether you're lazy person or over-active by nature. This is how you add to your success until the day arrives when you can quite confidently call yourself a professional, trusted and admired by your clients.

The simplest research tool is reading. Read up on all things wedding photography, especially the experiences of actual photographers who share their views on the field.

Go to the location of the event ahead of time and scout it. Go again after following the points detailed below. It will help you be extra prepared.

**Contacts:** Get them together in one safe location, make copies if you have to. Numbers belonging to the best man, the wedding coordinator and any other key persons involved in the marriage ceremony is great to have. This way you keep yourself updated on changes and can request information without bothering the bride or groom on a day they're already highly anxious.

Besides, when you're actually there at the event and a need to contact such important people arises you won't look lost or unprofessional verbally asking around for them, you simply fish out your phone and dial.

This is why it's best you hire an assistant to help with all sorts of things out there, especially holding reflectors, keeping track of phone calls and helping you carry your equipment.

**Scheduling:** You must book a pre-wedding meeting with the bride to learn what she wants and how you plan on carrying out the photography process. These include an exchange of ideas on portraits for the bride and bridesmaids, the same for the groom and groomsmen, family portraits, overall wedding preps, bride portraits and more. Since this is your first time you'll be pressed for, um, time and to balance this will be entirely up to you, so don't risk looking unprofessional and ask the bride to help you out on extra time scheduling for this or that shot.

**Finding Their Style:** Every couple has their own style and preferences. Figuring those out are steps in the right direction. The basics styles are contemporary and traditional, so find out which one they belong

to? What colors are they into where wedding photos are concerned? Go through online resources or magazines to help figure out what their style is.

Such know-how will then help you capture all the right shots. Once you know what they're looking for, go for specifics and craft a 'snap list' where you have all the itty-bitty details on what the bride wants to see in her developed wedding photos, from pictures of this or that, certain specific family members, friends and so on.

## **Equipment**

You may have your own take on this chapter section so here's a technical check list for you to peruse, discuss with others if you like and/or buy or rent once you've settled on something.

Since this is your first time, renting will be your best option. For instance, a \$1500 Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM can be rented for \$50-\$200/day with most lenses ranging from \$10-30/day (rates depend on chosen rental company). You can have equipment fedexed to you, if you have no rental companies nearby.

### **Lenses:**

- A maximum aperture of f/2.8 or larger, very useful, wields available light in remarkable ways.
- In weddings where the use of flash isn't encouraged, the added two stops of shutter speed between a f/2.8 lens and a f/4-5.6 kit lens is invaluable.

Professional wedding photographers use 3 different lens-types...

**Wide-angle zoom:** Great in confined spaces (dance floor, dressing room etc.), wide angle perspective allows for an 'expansive' look.

- Canon full-frame body: Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM
- Canon small-sensor body: Canon EF-S 10-22mm f/3.5-4.5 USM (review)
- Nikon full-frame body: Nikon 17-35mm f/2.8D ED-IF AF-S
- Nikon small-sensor body: Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8G ED AF-S

**Wide-to-tele zoom:** Wide enough to photograph a group while still long enough to take a 3/4 portrait of a couple without wide-angle perspective distortion (warping of object and surrounding area that differs from what the object would look like with a normal focal length). This is due the relative scale of nearby and distant features; {definition courtesy: Wikipedia}).

- Canon full-frame body: Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L USM (review)
- Canon small-sensor body: Canon EF-S 17-55 f/2.8 IS USM (review)
- Nikon full-frame body: Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G ED AF-S
- Nikon small-sensor body: Nikon 17-55mm f/2.8G ED-IF AF-S DX

**Image-stabilized telephoto zoom:** Perfect for long-distance shots, especially when you (the wedding photographer) could probably be getting in the way, ideal for use inside the Church (during the official 'I Do' ceremony).

- Canon full-frame body: Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM (review) or Canon EF 70-200mm f/4L USM (review)
- Canon small-sensor body: same as above
- Nikon full-frame body: Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8G ED-IF AF-S VR
- Nikon small-sensor body: same as above

**Prime Lenses:** Perfect when even an f/2.8 aperture isn't sufficient to get the motion-stopping shutter speed or shallow depth of field required in so many wedding shots.

**Three-Lens Prime Kit:**

- 28mm: Canon EF 28mm f/1.8 USM, Nikon 28mm f/2.8D AF
- 50mm: Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 II (review), Nikon 50mm f/1.8D AF Nikkor
- 85mm: Canon EF 85mm f/1.8 USM (review), Nikon 85mm f/1.8D AF Nikkor

**Flashes & Accessories:**

- 2-3 500-800 w/s monolight heads
- 2-3 "speedlight" on-camera TTL flashes
- light stands for each flash
- umbrellas/softboxes for each flash
- flash triggering device (radio slaves, optical triggers, or PC cords)
- hand held flash meter

In addition to all this, there are 500-800 w/s Monolight Heads, On-camera TTL Flashes, Light Stands, Umbrellas/Softboxes, Optical Triggers, PC Cords, different backpacks and battery packs, Tripods and Monopods and Gaffers Tape to consider.

**Backup**

This section is relatively obvious. It needs you to come prepared in case something or other goes wrong. The best backup you can ever have is a notepad or digital note-maker. Do not trust your memory where weddings are concerned. Maintaining notes go easy on your peace of mind and it leaves you sure of what you wrote and when you wrote it, so you can confirm or alter if the occasion calls for it.

External hard drives are the most important backup technologies you can own as a wedding photographer. There are huge risks involved in the digital world from virus attacks to internal hard drive errors, electrical short-circuiting, and then there are fires and floods (natural disasters) to consider. By



purchasing a reliable hard drive that's portable, comes with encryption software and other important backup utilities, you're setting yourself up for success in times of emergency.

There are so many wedding photographers who have mastered a system of backing up their data that a simple online search and patient reading (about a couple hours will be more than sufficient) will get you up to speed on a system that works for you and all the external hard disk technologies that can help achieve security goals for your wedding photography business.

Then there is the *other* backup, where you have to plan on what to do if you fall ill all of a sudden or meet with an accident. As forthright as that sentence may read, it's a hard fact that needs reconciling. If you, the wedding photographer, are inconvenienced in any way a lot of people are going to suffer right along with you and that's not something your photography career/business can afford. They'll understand your situation but you can be certain they won't be returning to avail your services nor will they send any referrals your way.

It's best you have an assistant or friend sitting in with you (preferably as a paid employee) who is part of the whole process from start to finish. Much like an actor's understudy stepping in when the lead actor is inconvenienced and can't perform on schedule this assistant photographer will take over if you're out of the picture.

You can also find backup photographers on Craigslist or hire photography students from colleges and universities by posting an advert on their campus bulletin board.

Whatever your choice the main idea is the show goes on, nobody's hurt, you display a remarkable proficiency for smart planning and thinking ahead. This, in itself, will earn you plenty of points with your clientele.

## **Chapter 5 – The Art Of Shots**

### **The Idea Behind Successful Wedding Photos**

It's all about telling a couple's wedding story using photography. This is, after all, the principal element behind all wedding photography careers. More than it being about you and how you see it—which is not a bad idea to incorporate into your photos of the wedding day you're covering—it's primarily about the couple, especially the bride, and all the factors that make her day memorable.

Anyone can snap cool angles and get some pictures that have every right to be considered a collector's piece. However, it takes that special something to be able to weave emotion and meaning into your photos for one look to speak a thousand words.

According to Melissa Mermin, an accomplished wedding photographer, her idea to use conceptual angles has changed the way wedding shots are taken. The main aim of such snaps is to tell smaller stories within the bigger picture, using the environment to add to the special nature of the shot.

Wedding photojournalist working out of New York City Dave Robbins says he enjoys seeing irony and humor in wedding photos. He stresses on the importance of juxtaposition and context to achieve such shots. Whether it's capturing the beauty of the just-married couple or telling fun stories based on where they're standing at the time, Dave values the nature of emotion and how the actions of the people in the picture can go a long way to add meaning to it.

According to successful North Carolina, USA-based WPJA member Corey McNabb diverse angles help get diverse shots that are, more often than not, incredibly beautiful when compared to taking them the usual way, namely with everyday backgrounds and such like, which could prove more distracting than artistic.

What Corey is really conveying is how you need to seek out different angles to capture shots of the beautiful bride when her surroundings aren't all that appealing to look at. This is when true wedding photographic magic is accomplished, when time is invested into creativity and finding that perfect angle. Incorporating a thing or two changes the very look of the moment for the better. In his personal opinion, Corey believes anything that's different from the norm could well end up being interesting.

From reflections to shadows, light and color, you can wield Nature's creativity into your own and shoot that ideal photograph which will not only reveal how skillful you are as a wedding photographer but also how passionate you are to share authenticity and make it seem magical.

This is the 'art' being referred to in this chapter. Getting it and doing so in your own style can be hard if not tricky but keep at it. Once you hit the zone, you're in and it'll be hard to leave even if you wanted to.

## **Playing With Black & White**

If you choose the right angles and things to shoot in ideal settings, black and white becomes more of an art than simply converting a photo into a monochrome one using free software and moving on. As you can imagine, it starts at the photograph level with you capturing shadows and light with the people featuring in the photo getting extra allure due the change.

Competent photo editing software works magic with such well-thought-out snaps. The trick is in imagining how your color shot will look after turning into black and white. A passing familiarity with light and shadow and how they meld is an important piece of experience to help you with this step.

The main subject of your monochrome photo, the bride and/or groom, must get increased attention. They appear in a grey shade (close to grayish white). Making them compliment their 'new' surroundings makes all the difference between an awe-inspiring black and white photograph and the not so great ones.

Tone and texture—these are the two that add depth to your photo—are key. Subtle notes of them reside in every color shot about to be altered to monochrome. You must aim to transform colors into attractive tones. This means white balance does indeed matter in a monochrome wedding photograph. Remove any hint of color casting in your altered black and whites. This remarkably improves the final outcome.

Getting rid of color from a wedding photograph can veritably remove so much detail that you won't be wrong in worrying about people losing sight of the inherent art. This is exactly why you use photo-editing software to enhance the other elements of the shot to get all the beautiful detail you can introduce to the new monochrome photo of a wedding inclination, be it the bride in her lovely gown or the two star-struck newlyweds exchanging a romantic kiss. Then there's the family to consider against a sensational natural background, and the list goes on.

**Contrast:** This is absolutely essential in black and whites, so aim to capture good strong lines and other shapes in your photo to avail yourself of this important monochrome factor. While light is great at enhancing fine details it's often shadows that play the valuable role of adding definition and depth.

**Tone:** A varied range of greys go into forging a black and white photo. This is called tone and manipulating their assorted subtleties is one of the best means of developing an artful monochrome wedding photo.

**Texture:** As mentioned earlier in passing, texture adds startling detail to a black and white photo, especially in wedding-related ones. Rely on what Nature provides and you have yourself ample opportunities to wow with this factor.

**Composition:** These are graphically introduced and any monochrome wedding shot needs a strong presence of compositional features to add beauty to the shot.

Learn the techniques to set up your camera to snap some superb black and white wedding photographs. Also, be sure you observe and learn what features and angles *don't* go well with monochrome wedding shots.

## **Working With Angles**

**Vertical Orientation:** Also called camera height, it's based on whether you're above, below or at the same level as your subject.

- **Level Angle:** Taken at the subject's eye level, this is one of the simplest photo angles to work with. It's a very subjective shot, leaving enough room for a person looking at the photo to instantly connect with the subject, making it a rather natural photograph.
- **High Angle:** This is a favorite, imparting a dramatic and powerful perspective to the shot. Granted, wedding photos don't always need this angle, which is really more relevant to other photographic fields. However, in certain instances it sure can weave a special sort of genius.
- **Low Angle:** Most brides wouldn't have gone for the high angle let alone this one, because in wedding photos such high-low angles tend to play havoc with the overall appearance of the bride. Certain rare cases have proven to come out superbly though, what with the potential to make things look taller than they really are using this specific angle.

**Horizontal Orientation:** This takes you through the plane *around* the subject. Instead of up and down, you now have sides, back and front to work with.

- **Front Angle:** This is a very honest and straightforward shot, with your aim being to capture the bride, groom and/or whoever else in a simple no-nonsense setting without undue drama or photo effects.
- **Point-Of-View Angle:** A slight change in position to the left or right of the subject comes into play with this angle, opening the person observing such a wedding photo to interpret it based on what they individually feel. An angle like this has the tendency to encourage that.
- **Side Angle:** This profile-view shot is a common favorite in photos, creating a beautiful setting and appeal especially where shots of the bride and groom are concerned. It allows for people to assume what they're feeling, thinking and how happy they are inside when they look away from the camera and are immersed in their own world on their joyful wedding day.
- **Rear Angle:** This is taken from behind, making room for superb silhouette effects and dramatic into-the-sunset photos, filled with romantic promise and a happily ever after.

**Tilted Orientation:** This technique is exactly what it says, introducing drama and a taste for the abstract, not to mention emotional value, using a tilted wedding-day shot or two.

- **Tilted Angle:** Classified under this sub-technique of photography is a skill with the camera that can mean plenty of different things to different people. You get to see a side of the photographer's style and a vast amount of meaning where the bride and groom (and others) are concerned.
- **Angle-Plus-Angle:** A lot of positions and, of course, angles come into play with this one. You can get a cool wedding shot using high and low positions that capture disparate environmental angles and get you a highly interesting shot, something that if done right will stand out in the photo-crowd.

**Field Of View:** Also called 'angle of coverage', this number has you incorporating plenty of much-needed detail, distance and such like to get a wholesome wedding shot that encompasses a mini-story, essentially. It's certain to make people study it for a few minutes longer than usual.

- **Long- or Wide-View Angle:** It isn't the first choice per se where wedding photos are concerned. It could be due the distance needed to capture this image or the fact that the bride and other wedding-goers would love to see close-up details than far off what's-that-supposed-to-be's so be sure you get it right or don't opt for this angle at weddings.
- **Medium-View Angle:** This one, on the other hand, is much welcome. You can capture plenty of human interaction through this angle and that's something any wedding is sure to have going for it and which people will love to see and share happy moments over.
- **Narrow-View Angle:** More commonly known as 'close-ups' this angle is perfect for a very personal photo of the bride, whether it's solo, with her man, with her family and so on. It gets into the emotional thick of things and lets people see one feature (above all else) that holds plenty of meaning, namely the eyes.

Get creative, combine camera angles, practice a lot with your selected angles before you summon their use at actual weddings and, of course, discuss what angles the bride specifically wants used on her wedding day.

## **Chapter 6 – Advantages Of Being A Wedding Photographer**

Emotionally speaking, this is quite the profession indeed. Not only do you get marked satisfaction knowing you perfected a day filled with happiness and romance, you will definitely feel the good you did in people's lives. No, this chapter isn't going to be a rendezvous with philosophy. After all, one can't be remiss to forget the pay you also enjoy once you establish yourself as a smart, reliable and excellent wedding photographer.

By playing a small part in such a memorable event, you gain noticeable peace of mind for your own future. Aside from a more positive outlook on things and chances to be surrounded by happiness, you get to be part of someone's life-decision where love is concerned. A lot of these ideas will swim through your mind during the photo development stage, as you see one image after the other evolve and recall the sights and sounds that accompanied the moment that very shot was taken.

Such post-production bliss isn't just about you, though, but also about the newlyweds, the bride and groom, who will cherish these pictures for as long as they live or are together. In fact, it could well be these photos you've taken that will help them get through difficult times as a couple and not go through it alone, remembering the happy times when they held each other's hand in trust and said 'I do'.

Creating memories that will live on long after you are done with the wedding contract in question isn't a small responsibility. Such marked emotional allure assures change in yourself as much as in the lives of the people directly impacted by the beauty and art you've captured through your smart and hard work during the wedding day.

Essentially being a leisure activity, wedding photography can get very creative, entertaining and worthy of being called a passion. However, with knowledge, skill, a unique style and understanding of equipment you transform into that much sought after person called a professional photographer. The professionals get a large portion, not all, of a rookie's leisure where photography is concerned but they see a lot more benefits to make up for the missing elements, which you'll read later below.

The biggest positive note in wedding photography is you get to one particular niche to explore and root yourself in. If photography proper was your choice, you'd have to opt for sub-fields like Nature, Journalism, Exploration, Action and so on and so forth, all of which are niches in their own right. Choosing one and being the best at it is your key to success, and wedding photography opens more doors than some of those other photo-career choices.

With all this freedom and creativity a wedding photographer really does hold the sky as their limit. Of course, how high and wide the sky is depends on what type of photos they're asked to take on a bride's special day, a day so valuable you simply can't go wrong where such 'immortalized memories' are involved.

Earning a living as a wedding photographer may not be easy at first with so much to balance and pursue to make ends meet. However, in time when you get established and have made a name for yourself in the industry you can go full steam with this passion and shoot away as the good times roll. Patience is indeed one of the photographer's sharpest tools.

Good news is even slow or low economies make room for weddings and photography needs, so your skill with the lens can indeed get you work and keep you going until the situation starts to look up. Chances for fame are high. The world has always been in love with photographs and the power they bring with to inspire, encourage and dream.

There are dollops of job satisfaction that come with being a wedding photographer, especially when you catch that one real-life moment nobody else in the whole world could have managed to do at that moment in time. Yes, weddings do afford you plenty of such singular opportunities.

One can't discount the importance of 'creative accidents' in the wedding business. You may end up taking a shot so different from anything ever done before—and you may not even have intended to capture the scene that exact way—it ends up inspiring so many people, colleagues in the photography world and not to forget photography students.

Travel is yet another welcome addition to the mix. Being a wedding photographer you get to go places few other people can, even other-genre photographers. You gain an inside-look into families and romances and hold in your hand, for the period of your contract, the responsibility of capturing those wonderful memories for posterity. The life-advantage, on the other hand, is priceless.

Traveling as a wedding photographer lets you meet a vast number of people, adding to your friends and contacts list. Then there's the added advantage of doing things you always wanted to try out along your travel route instead of specifically planning on it sometime. This is one more way you get to experience much that others have to wait until their schedules permit.

Social Networking is a wedding photographer's best friend. Friends, clients, employers, employees, editors, officials, local and international celebrities, general acquaintances and much more all line up on your web of contacts, connections and possibilities once you decide to create and develop a social networking platform.

The years have been overly kind to technology but have made more than staunch 'fans' out of the masses who flock to this or that social site simply because they prefer it, like how it looks or feels or serves their individualistic purposes. You don't have the privilege of choosing a favorite but you do have an better option. Creating *multiple* social networking sites to cater to a vast range of people and potential clients is a step in the best direction.

Aside from Google+, FaceBook, Twitter, MySpace and other prominent social networks, you must bring your attention to focus on everyday sites closer to your thing, some of the most popular being Bridal Musings, Green Wedding Shoes, Style Me Pretty and others. By presenting your skills on these sites or simply observing what's trending on it, you open yourself up to more and more contacts, knowledge,

and preparation-tips for a future in which wedding photography just might change abruptly, only you're in on the survival tricks you picked up by paying diligent attention online.

Advertisements add immense advantages to being a wedding photographer. There are few things in the world that compete to capturing people's attention like the beautiful, divine, happy occasion called a wedding. Watching a bride blush in her wedding whites is one of the most naturally lovely looks sure to inspire marriage in anyone's heart.

The potential to advertise using one of millions of diverse ideas and choices is immeasurable. This step called advertising—and spending cash to do so—will markedly improve your chances to get noticed in a veritable crowd of wedding photography businesses which some people mistakenly assume the bride is capable of sifting through in a matter of a few days.

How you 'sell' your art, what you say and what photo you use on your advert are some of the factors adding to your advantages. How, you ask? Well, people do tend to look at and/or desire to be a bride than they do at taxes or stock options, the latter two having the potential to fail them no matter how much they try to control that from happening.

Love and keeping that spark burning, these are things people can manage to maintain, with effort and patience and unconditional appreciation for the beauty and awesomeness that is their partner, their bride, their beloved, their soulmate.



## **Chapter 7 – Become An In-Demand Wedding Photographer – Tips & Guides**

1. **Backup Equipment & Backup 'You'**: This is very important. You can make or break your career with this one option, increase credibility or lose what little you've gathered. Have backups for all your photos and software and such and get a backup photographer (perhaps a photography student) to stand in if you're inconvenienced. Even if you have no need for a backup photographer, take a second one with you, an assistant of sorts, to help ease the workload and increase efficiency.

2. **Your Positioning**: Ask ahead of time where you're supposed to stand/sit/setup and so on. This keeps you out of the way during important events and brings you in line with the shots you're seeking when the occasion calls for it. This is of special import inside the Church because the last thing you need is to block an invitee's view of the whole ceremony with a badly chosen position, or blunt the solemn nature of the moment with your 'techno-flashy' presence. To prevent these, stake out the place beforehand and ask your client for some pointers.

3. **Stay Calm**: This is actually your best tip/guide so don't put emphasis on where it is on this list. Instead understand how much your calm, smiling, positive outlook will ease the bride's own worries as to how the day is turning out. She's probably wondering what each photo she catches you snapping is going to come out. Your stress-less demeanor alone is all she gets as indication that everything is going as planned.

4. **Know Your Light**: There are varied venues that come into play on a wedding day. Checking each of them a week or so before the wedding event will help you plan what type of shots you can take at those specific locales, including the tree lines, weather, horizon and so on. You can understand this because each of those places has a different light-setting, natural as well as opportunities for you to setup artificial lighting.

5. **Other Valuable Shots**: Wedding invites, general family photos, name cards, centerpieces, gardens, the cake and other 'extra shots' all come under your purview as the wedding photographer. These will most certainly add to your collection of photos of the main events and compliment them in extraordinary ways, bringing a singular sense of magic and much-needed simplicity.

6. **Added Responsibility**: Not all weddings come equipped with a budget to afford the expensive services of a wedding coordinator or wedding planner. This means you can certainly expect the bride to rely on you, because you're the next person who has sufficient knowledge on the flow of weddings. You, the wedding photographer, see everything, in a manner of speaking.

7. **Slideshow Surprise**: Your client, the bride, and all the important people at her wedding will absolutely fall in love with your skills if you have the equipment and know-how to provide a photo slideshow surprise at an appropriate time—dinner time is best, because that's when taking snapshots of people eating turns awkward! About 30 photos in your collection for the day, made into a slideshow at a prominent location in the room, will earn you plenty of points. This will veritably cement memories and make you the person-of-the-hour who made it work.

8. **Contacts**: Making all the right connections can get very awkward very fast if you do not possess the one thing that will help you bond with total strangers at a wedding. This is their names. A questionnaire sent to the bride will help furnish you with all the essential names of important people. After that, calling out to them during poses, making casual conversation and such like will get you closer to a larger clientele than you may have at first expected. The vendors (planner, venue coordinator, florist, chef, decorator, DJ etc.) are yet another superb means of adding to your contacts list.

9. **Thank-You Gift**: It's not often that the hired photographer sends a wedding present doubling as a thank-you gift to the bride and groom. The best way to be remembered while not coming across as awkward is getting the newlyweds a 16×20 Canvas Wrap of their favorite wedding image (sizes can vary). In addition to being very thoughtful it sells your own image as the photographer who made the day special in their own way.

10. **Renting Equipment**: Not only is it cheap it's also rather smart of you to rent wedding photography equipment. By saving cash that can be invested in other areas of your career, you also have the potential to create a professional bond with the rental company of your preference so they send referrals your way or get you in touch with other contacts from the hundreds of photographers they meet and serve in a clutch of days.

11. **Dealing With 'Photo-Crashers'**: There's a very strong possibility for a family member or friend to bring their own camera and sort of 'crash your party'. In these cases, you'll find your work cut out for you. You can't counter them, intervene when they take important locations away from you (who is the official professional on site) and you certainly can't go whining to the bride about it. Diplomacy and quick thinking will help get you through this phase. You can only know what to do with them when you're actually beset by them at the wedding. Keep a positive mindset, though, because that 'photo-crasher' could well be more helpful than you might expect.

12. **The Sudden Receiving Line**: Plan for an unplanned receiving line, just in case it does occur. The bride may not have wanted one after her wedding ceremony, but there are funny ways how the receiving line butts into the event. If you, the wedding photographer, come prepared for it you show competence, thoughtfulness and street-smarts.

13. **Quirky Preferences**: Sometimes the bride may not share a certain idiosyncrasy or two she shares with her beloved. She may desire for you to take a photograph of that but feels unsure about bringing it up and risking sounding odd. This can be a certain funny pose inspired from a movie or video song, a crazy expression she and her hubby always wanted to make together or a charming natural pose that she, for some unknown reason, may have thought too clichéd. You need to pay attention and figure out what these are.

14. **Practice Makes Perfect**: In this modern age where expensive camera film is being replaced with a digital counterpart, you can practice your wedding photography skills with no great dent in your expenses. It's this sort of practice that enhances your skill with angles, incorporate a personal style and originality and not to forget instill passion and promote efficiency at what you do.