

A-Z of Wedding Photography

Reproduced by Courtesy of the Scottish Wedding Directory

A Albums

As the wedding album is one of the few tangible items you'll be left with after the day, remember to ask if you can see the different album designs your potential photographer supplies. But before you commit to anyone, make sure you view a complete album (as opposed to the best individual shots he/she's taken from different weddings over the last ten years) to give you a good idea of the finished product you will receive.

B Beforehand

Many couples choose to have photographs taken before the wedding begins; perhaps as the girls are getting their hair and make-up done, or as the guys greet guests arriving for the ceremony. Often this can be one of the most enjoyable parts of the day, as the anticipation builds and the reality of the occasion starts to sink in.

It also gives the bride and groom an insight into parts of the day they would otherwise miss.

C Composition

The composition of a photo is to do with quite technical elements such as contrast, lighting, perspective, framing and depth. Basically, an expert can take a look at a great photo and a poor one and explain why that's the case in terms of composition. Many couples develop a general interest in photography when they start researching the market, and enjoy learning more about the technical side. The more you learn the easier it is to spot a good photo. For more information, see Q for quality!

D Digital

The advent of digital technology has opened up a whole new world to photographers, who are able to use lots of clever techniques to create jaw-dropping images using stunning effects. In one sense, this is great news. But there is a downside to living in an era where photos can be sent across the world with a mere ping of an email - for a start you might be tempted to save money by asking for your photos on disc, rather than going down the conventional route of paying for a printed album. The trouble is that even if you have a talented graphic designer at your disposal, will he/she ever get round to laying out and printing your album? Digital photos are brilliant for speed and convenience, but there's nothing like having a high quality printed image in your possession.

E Experience

This is something your photographer will (hopefully) have in abundance. It is also why you should tap in to their knowledge as much as possible. Maybe they have some good ideas about locations for a photo session near the venue, or perhaps they will be able to advise on a possible pitfall in your schedule - the fact is that they have been to more weddings than you've had hot dinners, so utilise this source of wisdom.

F Face to face

This is the best way to communicate with a photographer. You can initially send an email or phone for a chat (note that many good photographers don't respond well to impersonal emails), but you'll learn much more about them by meeting in person. So once you have narrowed your choice down to two or three potential candidates, go to visit their studio.

G Gut feeling

If you meet many photographers in your quest for the right one to capture you in all your glory, you will notice that some are a little eccentric. Creative people can often seem somewhat different from your typical man/woman in the street, but sometimes those who come across as the real oddballs turn out to be the best photographers! In other words, being a good salesperson and taking good photos don't always go hand in hand. It is hugely important that you get on with them and that there's a good rapport between you all - they play a key role on your day so you must be able to relax in their company. Don't be swayed by reputations alone; if your gut instinct is warning you against a photographer, look elsewhere.

H Help

Your photographer may need some of this if he/she is to take shots of all those important friends and relatives. It's a good idea to assign somebody as photographer's assistant on the day. Choose somebody responsible who knows most of the VIPs, and someone who won't be too polite to grab whoever's needed for the next couple of shots and ensure they don't run off to the bar when their big moment is coming up.

I Ignorance

This is not bliss as far as wedding photography goes, so make sure your photographer is well informed. If there are people who must be included or moments that you really want captured then let him/her know well in advance. Also give him/her a copy of your running order so that they don't miss anything vital.

J Jubilant

This is how the vast majority of couples feel when they see their proofs for the first time. It really is amazing just how creative photographers can be, and how much time and effort they put into their work. So if you start to get the post-wedding blues after all the excitement's over, just remember you still have the photos to look forward to!

K Kling-on

There is a strange phenomenon that sometimes happens at weddings. You will notice a number of people who suddenly begin to lurk behind your professional photographer, aping his shot at every turn. These kling-ons mistakenly believe that if they copy his/her movements they will somehow be able to magically produce fantastic photos! This should be avoided as much as possible as firstly it can be off-putting for the photographer, secondly it means you're more likely to have the people in the shot all looking towards different cameras, which can ruin the photo, and thirdly it can be a little daunting for the people in the shot to be faced with an army of amateur paparazzi.

L Line ups

Wedding albums used to be full of photos where people had simply been told to stand in line, with line up after line up comprising various combinations of family members - all looking directly at the camera, posing in exactly the same way every time. Thankfully things have moved on considerably since then, and photographers manage to inject a lot more life into family group shots. Sometimes you even see people smiling and laughing...

M Money

Many couples are flabbergasted when they discover how much a professional photographer costs to hire. But there are all sorts of reasons why wedding photography isn't as overpriced as it seems, especially when you start thinking about everything that is involved in doing the job. For a start there's the preparation, the degree of skill needed to do it properly, the stress on the day, the costly camera and software equipment photographers need to invest in... And don't forget about the time and effort spent producing the final album layout, which is easy to underestimate unless you have firsthand knowledge.

N Night vision

Photographers often own lots of fancy equipment, but night vision goggles are not usually part of the kit. That is to say, be careful you will have enough daylight left to do some outdoor shots when you plan your schedule - especially if you're having a winter wedding. Lighting is incredibly important to photographers, so talk to him/her about it in good time.

O Online

Going online is a great way to start your search for the perfect photographer. Browsing websites will give you a great idea of their individual style. Many photographers now publish blogs too, which not only let you see highlights from recent weddings but also give an insight into what kind of person they are.

P Packages

Photographers usually have a range of different packages on offer, with various prices and corresponding levels of coverage. Try not to get too caught up in the different products, however, as photographers tend to be quite flexible. But make sure you know exactly what you're paying for so you don't get any nasty surprises - is the album and its layout included for example? Watch out for hidden extras (such as high reprint costs) on very cheap deals; if it seems too good to be true it probably is.

Q Quality

While it may not be necessary to learn the jargon surrounding styles and techniques, there's certainly no harm in keeping an eye out for telltale signs of poor photography. If somebody shows you pics that are out of focus, have the tops of people's heads missing or you spot guests with their eyes closed, it's not a good sign. Especially considering they should be showing off their best work.

R Romance

You might think that all wedding photographs were inherently romantic, but sometimes the bride and groom feel a little tense in front of the camera, and if you look stiff or awkward it kind of removes the sense of romance. Fortunately good photographers have all manner of techniques to relax you, so if you're a bit camera-shy just let him/her know. Try to let go and enjoy it, as this will make for picture-perfect results.

S Selection

This is what you have to make once your photographer sends you the proofs, and invariably this is a hard task. Try to think ahead as to how you will choose between one photograph and another, and take this into consideration when you decide which package to go for.

T Timings

The question of how much time to spend on photography is a difficult one - it's best to talk to your photographer about what shots he/she will take and when. Some couples are determined not to 'lose' too much time to the posed 'happy couple' type shots usually taken after the ceremony, but this is a great opportunity not just to capture some brilliant images but also to take it all in and bask in a few quiet moments with your new spouse.

U Uncle Tam

When you find out how much your favourite photographer charges, you might be tempted to ask dear Uncle Tam to be official photographer instead. But think very carefully before you go down this route - the quality of the photos at the end of it all simply won't compare to those a good professional can supply you with. Secondly, Uncle Tam will find the experience stressful, no matter how extrovert he is; it's very difficult directing people when all they want to do is chat and mingle with relatives they haven't seen in years. A professional has already mastered the near-impossible skill of getting people to pose without being bossy or aggressive. Thirdly, getting through your list of key shots will take at least twice as long with Uncle Tam at the helm. Fourthly, there are no second chances on the wedding day; if Tam misses the first dance or the cutting of the cake, that's it, moment well and truly gone in a puff of smoke.

V Virtually there

Hopefully most people you invited to the wedding will be there on the day, but there are usually a few who are unable to attend. However, with so many photographers offering an online gallery service, your Aussie aunty can enjoy the next best thing to actually being there by looking through all the pics on the marvellous world wide web.

W Worse for wear

There's nothing worse than a bride or groom whose eyes have glazed over or one who stumbles down the aisle. Obviously you want to enjoy yourselves and that may involve having a few drinks, but go easy early in the day. And when it comes to the pics, even the best photographer won't be able to disguise the just-about-to-fall-over look. We're not trying to be party poopers, but do take it easy!

X Extreme lengths

OK, so it doesn't actually begin with 'X', but then not much does. Anyway, the point is that you will be amazed by the extreme lengths some photographers go to just to get the right shot.

Y Years ahead

Certain photographers have a reputation that precedes them and their bookings reflect that - those at the top of their game really do get booked up years in advance for popular dates. So the moral of the story is to get in there early if you want the best!

Z Zzzzzzz

This is the sound you don't want to hear from your H2B as he looks through your potential photographer's portfolio. If all the photos look very similar then it can be pretty boring to look through more than a few pages. All photographers favour certain shots but it's a good sign if there is lots of variation.