

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO CHOOSING A WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER



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INTRODUCTION

Hi and welcome to my free guide. My name is Mike I am a wedding photographer based in the UK. Here I will be answering some of your questions on how to select the best photographer for your kind of wedding.

Congratulations you are officially engaged the question has been popped and the clock is now officially ticking. The date has been set and all your preparations are well under way and it seems as if there are a million and one things to do.

Organizing invitations, ordering flowers, booking a venue, shopping for dresses, tracking down long lost relatives, organizing a wedding planner, hair stylist, makeup artist, the list just seems endless.

Oh yeah hang on we forgot the photographer!

As a wedding photographer I realize just how difficult it might seem choosing the right person to capture your big day, after all there are literally thousands of us out there right?

So how do you go about choosing the right person. How do you wade through all the different options available.

How do you hire someone to photograph the most important day in your life?

Relax I have it all covered for you right here.



DECIDING ON A STYLE

The very first thing is to decide what kind of "look" you both want. Most wedding photographers shoot in a style, this is either "reportage", or the more "traditional", established look.

"Reportage" is commonly described as a "photo journalistic" approach, where the photographer remains almost "invisible." Documenting the proceedings discreetly from the sidelines without resorting to staging of any kind. This style is very modern and is the preferred choice for many brides. This approach works very well due to the fact that "a picture tells a thousand words." A true reportage photographer will capture the events as they happen throughout the day in a candid and unobtrusive fashion. The end results tell the story following a narrative. Capturing people who are unaware of the camera, results in a more "natural" look.

The more traditional approach relies on the photographer taking lots of very formal shots. This type of photography can look a little contrived and possibly a bit boring. Traditional wedding photographers control the pace and the flow of the day by asking everyone to pose for photographs. This can be very off putting and have a detrimental effect on the atmosphere. Many photographers (myself included) offer a reportage approach, but still shoot a selection of the more formal group shots. Typically these would have been specifically requested by the couple.

Take the time to sit down, browse the internet and decide on how you would like your photographs to look. This will then give you some idea of who to start looking for. Typing into a search engine "reportage" "candid" wedding photography will yield lots of results for you and that is a good place to start whittling down your choices



DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

Ok so you have decided on the style of photography that you both like, great that is a good first step you are now on your way. Next step is to look at photographers in your area and more importantly, within your budget.

Begin by looking at lots of different photographers websites this can give you some idea of the kind of quality you can expect.

A photographers website is his "shop window", inside are all the things that he has to offer. There are a few things to look out for here that are worth considering. The very first thing to look at is the **portfolio**, this should be the photographers best work. Second thing to look at is the **blog**, this will tell you how active the photographer is. Next you really should be able to see examples of **full weddings**, they have shot then you can visualize how your own wedding will look.

Its relatively easy to fill a portfolio with stunning photographs, there are many websites that let you download stock photos for free, so please make sure you can see some "**real weddings**" in their entirety.

So you have found a photographer in your area that shoots in the style you like. The portfolio matches the look you want, he has lots of real weddings under his belt and is well within your price range. His Facebook, Instagram & Twitter accounts are all current and you are feeling confident that you are close to finding the right photographer for your big day

Congrats your getting closer and you are now ready for the next step.





CONSULTATIONS

The next step is to email or phone the photographer and providing your date is available a meeting can now be arranged. *Always insist on meeting your photographer in person.*

This initial consultation is not only to discuss the details but its also to assess if you are all going to get along. Sadly personalities do clash and its best to spend some time with each other to see if you are a good fit.

Is your photographer presentable, does he inspire you with confidence, does he put you at ease. Remember he will be with you for a large part of your day, and be interacting with all your guests. A good photographer should be bold but not arrogant, have a firm grasp of all the social graces, respectful but not to timid. To get the best shots your photographer needs to be friendly but assertive.

Most photographers myself included give the couple a complimentary photo shoot. This is very important as it gives everyone a chance to forge a bond which is so important on the day. It is on this session that advice can be given on all aspects of the photography itself and this again will prove invaluable later on.

On this consultation you will get the chance to ask questions regarding the photographers services. Here you should ask about the packages he offers, how far he is willing to travel, does he offer any extras like albums or prints etc. Does he have insurance, will he ask you to sign a contract.

One important question you should be asking is "*what kind of equipment do you have*" Does he have a wide range of lenses, does he have back ups of everything, if something fails could he carry on or will that be the end of it. Do some research on all these topics the internet is a very valuable resource.



COMPARE ALL THE PACKAGES

Most photographers (myself included) offer various photography packages. These will include anything from a few hours to a full days coverage. Most weddings can be broken down into 4 phases these are;

Bridal prep

Ceremony & Formals (Group & Couple Photos)

Reception & Speeches (Cake & First dance)

Evenings Entertainment

A package will typically include part or all of these different stages. Travelling expenses and the time spent editing in post production are also taken into consideration. If you are on a really tight budget then a basic package will cover the ceremony, bride & groom, family and friends, photography.

A middle package will cover the ceremony and all the proceedings up to the first dance. And finally the top package will guarantee you coverage from the bridal preparations right through to the evenings entertainment. This will ensure the narrative of your day is totally covered.

One question commonly asked is "how many images can I expect"? this is all down to the photographer but bear in mind the more images you receive the likelihood of repetition. In all honesty are you really going to sit and look through 600 - 1000 images? quality over quantity is something to think about. personally I shoot lots & lots of images throughout the day, I then cull the shots that don't make the grade and deliver the rest.

Ask what each package includes making sure there are no hidden extras. Be sure to ask about extra time, dance floor photography, what happens if the weather turns bad. The best thing to do before you have the consultation is to draw up a list of questions covering all the possible contingencies.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Your wedding is a one off event never to be repeated, probably costing an arm and a leg. Choosing a professional wedding photographer to record your day will not be easy.

There are a few options available to you, these are;

A - No expense will be spared, the sky is the limit you can book someone who is fantastic, but expensive.

B - Your budget does not stretch to booking a top drawer photographer, but you have some latitude.

C - You are on a tight budget and have no money for a photographer, but a friend will do it for nothing.

If you are in category A then the world is your oyster. There are loads to choose from and you have nothing else to worry about, your day will run smoothly and your photographs will look fantastic!

If you are in category B then there are loads of capable photographers out there who will also do a fantastic job. The best advice here is; there are "photographers" and then there are wedding photographers, there is a **big difference**.

Remember, you always get what you pay for. So think about your budget, have a reshuffle, your photographs are all that will remain of your once in a lifetime day.

And so to the last category. Sadly not everyone is so fortunate to even have a budget that stretches to a photographer. "Uncle Bob" is a well known figure in the wedding photography industry. He does have a great camera, takes good pictures, is a nice bloke and he means well. If this is your only option then my advice is to sit down and go through your day with him and discuss the photography, and **your expectations**.

Fortunately there is lots of help online these days, it would be very easy to research how to shoot a wedding, and with a little luck your wedding photographs will be ok.

Whatever your circumstances whatever your budget take the time to do your research, ask questions, see as many as you can, and make sure you choose carefully you won't get a second chance.

