



THE
WEDDING
EXPERIENCE

A Photography Guide for Ethereal Brides



W E L C O M E

Hello Bride-to-be and Welcome! This is such an exciting time for you and your groom! But first things first - take a breath. I know planning an event of this magnitude can be overwhelming. My goal as a wedding photographer is to make this one aspect of the planning process simple. Photography is more than just images, it's a real part of your day. Not only do you deserve beautiful images, but you also deserve an amazing photographic experience. The goal of this guide is to help you plan your wedding day in a way that will allow me to provide you with the best experience possible. Good photography takes planning and keeping it in mind while scheduling the events of the day can make sure nothing feels too rushed. I feel privileged to be walking this road with you. Now you are officially an #etherealbride, I am here as an extra resource to you. Usually the first time you plan a wedding, it is your own! So much to figure out. I've been to a lot. Hopefully this guide will help. Also feel free to pick my brain in our scheduled consultations together. I cannot wait to get to know you and your groom during your Wedding Experience with me and sharing the happiness of your big day!

Cheers

Kali Birks-Gallup

GET TO KNOW ME

There's a lot of media jobs I could be doing right now... but I LOVE weddings! JOYFUL is my buzz word. Documenting your joy is my happy place. Since we'll be spending a lot of time together, I want to make sure you feel like you know me a little too. Keep reading to learn more about which parts of your wedding day are extra close to my heart.



WEDDING DAY *Favourites*

Every photographer has parts of the wedding day that they look forward to. My favorite moments of the day stem from my own experience as a bride and also the experience I have had photographing so many weddings. I look forward to these specific parts of the day every time I'm shooting.



BRIDAL DETAILS

I love starting off the day with beautiful details. I consider this my "warm up" time. These details allow me to be creative from the moment I begin shooting on your wedding day. I love having this time to prepare for the rest of your day.



BRIDE & GROOM PORTRAITS

Portrait time with the bride and groom is by far the favorite part of my job. This is when I try to produce my best work, knowing this will populate the walls of your home for the years to come. My couples also get to enjoy being together - mostly alone - and expressing the emotions of the day.

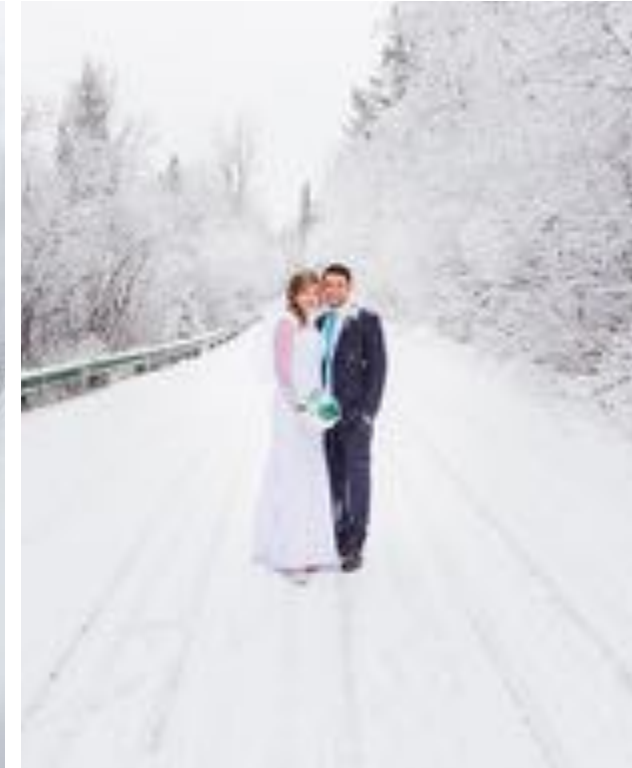
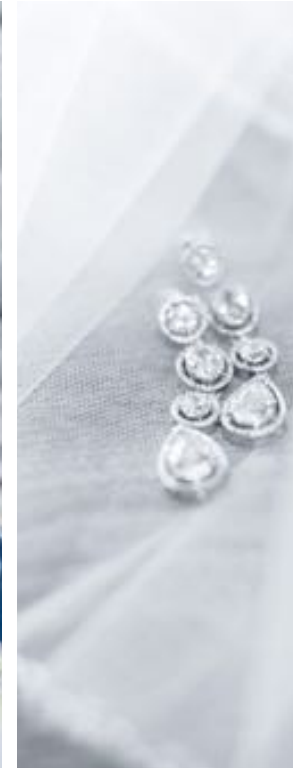


AFTER THE CEREMONY

The first few moments after the ceremony are so special. This is when the couple gets to hug, laugh and cry with those that they are closest to. Emotions are high and it's a part of the day when everyone seems equally excited and relieved that the pressure is off and they are looking forward to the party!

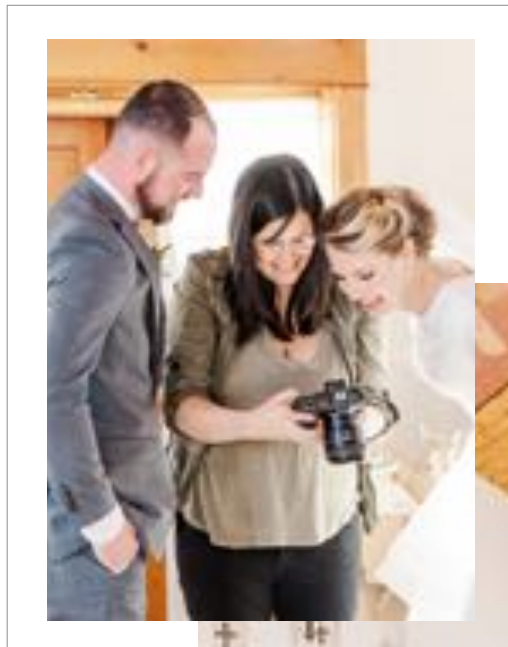


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LETS TALK ABOUT
me and you

THE GIFT OF *friendship.*

You likely weren't expecting to find this in your photographer's client guide, but it's important to me for you to know what sets me apart as a photographer. I am an extrovert and I love people. I view my relationship with my couples as being vital to a successful experience together. If we can develop a personal connection, your images will be naturally expressive of your real emotions. Everyone wants to be known, seen, loved and befriended. I don't know if I've ever met a human being who didn't appreciate someone caring about who they are, what they're passionate about, etc. I want you to know me and therefore feel comfortable communicating with me. I will be in your personal space for much of a momentous event in your life. I am committed to forming friendships with my clients and intentionally caring to get to know them. It changes everything in the way we work together. Having a heart for genuine friendships in my business has made my business so much more than how I pay the bills. I am driven to enriching your life and giving you great memories. Our friendship is a gift, so when you are getting ready the morning of your wedding day, it will be a relief to feel like a friend walks through those doors with a camera and not just a random hired vendor. Friendship breeds comfortability and comfortability leads to trust ... and trust is something that EVERY bride needs to have in their relationship with their wedding photographer! I'm excited to get to know you in the days to come.

YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION

One of the keys to the Wedding Experience I offer, is including a complementary Engagement Session. I truly believe that this time together is a vital part of the process. During your session, you'll have the chance to get to know me, experience how I shoot and how I handle posing and lighting. This session will make a huge impact on how the wedding day flows. I'll arrive on your wedding day already knowing how you two interact, what your best poses are and how to photograph you in a genuine way. What I will learn about you during your engagement session is invaluable. You will feel like such a pro on your big day because of the great practice you had during your engagement session, and that's how it should be! I've listed a few tips to get you started and there's lots more on my blog.

You should plan a style that suits you both. Bold or Neutral? Dressy or Casual? Classic or trendy? These answers will help with outfit inspiration and location choices. If you are going for a romantic look, stick to neutral and pastel colours. Gals should go for feminine and flowy dresses/skirts. Choose a natural location, a park or field. If you like casual and trendy, go for one bright and bold colour. An urban/downtown setting would add some punch.

Things to Avoid:

1. Super bright red or oranges. Any neon.
2. Clothes that have tiny or busy patterns that are smaller than a quarter. Graphic tees or large logos.
3. Pure white or plain black. These lose detail or show imperfections like lint. Go for lace, beading or layer up with another colour.



PREPARING YOUR GROOM

If you're a bride that is a little anxious about how your groom is going to react to this whole "picture" thing, you're not alone. I have to bribe my own husband to take pictures too. If your worried your groom won't be 'into it', don't panic, remind him it's only an hour and make it into a date night with something else he will enjoy too. He will also be surprised at his hidden modeling skills when he has a professional coach on his side. My aim is for his response of "That wasn't as bad as I thought! It was actually fun". Boom! My mission is accomplished! Your engagement session is supposed to be enjoyable and relaxed, not forced or awkward. As you prepare for your shoot, there are a few things that you can do to help your groom know what to expect.

First of all, I highly recommend spending some time together scrolling through Instagram or a few of my blog posts or galleries. This will allow him to gauge what his expectations should be. I also recommend that you allow for plenty of time to get to your shoot! Make sure you have hair and makeup finished early and account for traffic delays. There is nothing worse than when a couple shows up late, and they have been arguing in the car! That is definitely going to put your groom in a bad mood. Last but not least, remember to have patience with him, and don't assume that he's not going to have a good time... I think you'll be surprised how much you will both enjoy your session in the end.



PLANNING YOUR
WEDDING
DAY

SAMPLE TIMELINE

Bridal Details 2:30-3:15



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

Every bride loves having those beautiful shots of her bridal details. It's an important part of the story and I love having some time to shoot the dress, shoes, jewelry, invitations, etc. These shots allow me to get warmed up for the rest of the big day. I normally like to allow at least 45 minutes for this part of the day. While I'm shooting details, I'm also capturing some shots of the bride and her girls getting ready. If the groom is getting ready nearby, I try to catch them too. It always takes them less time to get dressed. If they are at a different location, consider adding a second shooter to our day.



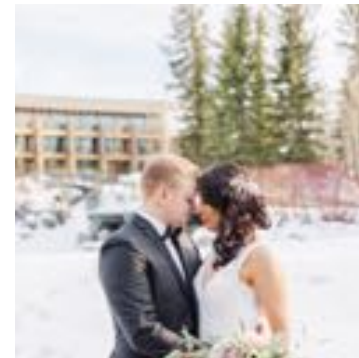
3:15-3:45 Bridal Prep

First Look 4:00



This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day! Do you have a location in mind? Otherwise allow me some time to scout the perfect location for your first look prior to the getting ready portion of the day. Add some time in the beginning of our coverage. Don't stress about it though, I will make sure the location is private and as secluded as possible.

Portraits 4:15-4:45



After the bride and groom take their time with the First Look, I will begin taking a few romantic portraits of the two of them while the initial excitement is still present. I will find the locations for these shots as well! Remember, the LIGHT determines where we shoot and so I can't decide on portrait locations until the day-of. As we shoot these portraits, the bridal party can start making their way to us for Bridal Party portraits.

Bridal Party Portraits 4:50-5:20



... great shots of the guys and girls both separately AND together! After bridal party portraits are complete, the bride will go into hiding so that early guests don't sneak a peek and the ushers will begin their duties.



Now it's time for Bridal Party shots. I buffer in extra time throughout the day just in case we have some unexpected things that hold us up! One way to make sure we stay on schedule for bridal party portraits is to have someone put the boutonnieres on the guys BEFORE they arrive for portraits. During Bridal Party portraits, I will make sure to take some...



5:30-6:00 Bride in Hiding

Take a breath. Have a drink of water. Eat something. Fix your hair and reapply lip colour - you may have kissed some away. These are your last moments as a single lady.

THE TIMELINE CONTINUED...

Reception Details 5:30-5:50



It's time to get married! Most ceremonies are 30 minutes long. If your ceremony is longer than 30 mins, we'll make adjustments to the timeline. Cherish these moments. Your ceremony will pass by so quickly.

If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I will use this time to shoot the reception decor UNTOUCHED. If the ceremony and reception are in different locations, I recommend having a cocktail hour outside of the main reception area if possible so that I can grab some great shots of your reception before the night begins and guests start laying down purses and coats on their seats.



Ceremony 6:00-6:30

Family Portraits 6:40-7:10

Family formals normally take place immediately following the ceremony. It's best to save all of the family formals until after the ceremony because ALL family members will be present at that time.



We'll need about 40 minutes for family formals and I will send a questionnaire before the wedding where you can list out the shots that you want. I recommend shooting portraits outdoors if possible so that they resemble more natural family portraits, especially if the ceremony location is dark. Stairs are always a bonus for large groups.

"Just Married" Portraits SUNSET



Those sunset portraits we've talked all about. This is when the sun is glowy and golden. I love having a few extra minutes with the bride and groom to take a few "Just Married" portraits. The timing will all depend on what season we are booked in. We may need to nip out of the reception for about 20 minutes.

APPROXIMATE TIMES:

DETAILS & PREP : 1.5 HOURS

FIRST LOOK & PORTRAITS : 30-40 MINS

BRIDAL PARTY : 30-40 MINS

FAMILY FORMALS : 40 MINS

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

Reception Begins! 7:30



This is when the bridal party lines up for introductions and the party begins! By this part of the day, my timeline isn't as strict. I work off of the natural light and so after the sun is set, my portrait time is over and I begin focusing on the reception events.

My base start is 8 hours of coverage so that I can be present for the main events of the reception and about an hour of dancing! If you're interested in having your exit photographed, there are several options for this. You can either add additional coverage or plan a faux exit with just your bridal party. We have had great success with this and the party never stops!



The Exit 10:30



SEASONS

Portrait & Timing Tips for:

WINTER

Winter weddings are gorgeous! However, they do take some additional planning simply because of the cold. A winter timeline is also governed by the sun setting early - sometimes 4pm. This means that all of your portraits have to be done before then. Add the cold and outside time is limited too. This isn't a problem if you're having an afternoon wedding. However, if you're planning on having a late evening wedding, you may have a bit of down time from 4pm until the start of the ceremony. You will also need more coverage time as well.

SPRING

Spring weddings are wonderful but the weather can be a little unpredictable. A clear umbrella is worth the investment. I also recommend having plenty of Claritin on hand just in case allergies start to flare up. Spring weddings normally mean the potential for some blooms. If we happen to find any type of blooming tree or plant, it will be worth it to give us a few minutes for portraits with it. You'll love the result.

SUMMER

Summer weddings are amazing! I love that there is so much daylight! In some months, the light will last until 10pm. So, if you're having a summer wedding, you'll need to plan on having a few minutes to slip out of the reception for your sunset portraits. You will not regret this. It is the absolute best light of the day and you're going to want to have portraits during this time period. Usually, these portraits happen during dinner or open dancing so that no one even notices that you're gone for a few minutes.

FALL

Fall weddings are my favorite! I love the temperature and the colors. Most of my fall brides worry about colour, and I just want to encourage you that all I need is one tree with some color in order to make it look like fall! A little bit of colour can go a long way. Your portrait time will vary depending on your wedding date. We'll be sure to discuss this when we approve your final timeline.





PRE CEREMONY



Let the day begin!

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



GETTING READY

It's the morning of your wedding! Hopefully all of the little details are taken care of and you're relaxing with your best friends while your hair is being done. If certain items haven't been checked off of the to-do list, it's time to hand them over to someone else. Delegation is a key part of a stress-free wedding day. I know it's hard to hand over the decorating duties and all of the last minute things that need to be done, but it really is important to relax the morning of your wedding. The rest of the day is going to be fast paced and filled with a lot of emotions. Take advantage of this down time! There are a few things to consider about the "getting ready" portion of the day. Do you want to share a "first look" with your dad or any other person who plays a huge role in your life? Will you and your groom be exchanging gifts during this time?

If so, who would you like to deliver them? I highly recommend writing a letter to one another, especially if you aren't sharing personal vows later. Allow for time to read this out loud, especially if you are having a wedding film made. Are there certain women in your life who would appreciate seeing you get into your gown? Some brides want very few people around for this moment. Other brides love having aunts and grandmas present. It's totally up to you! A few other things to consider; as you get ready to put your dress on, refrain from putting any jewelry on. I love shooting all of those final steps once you're in your dress. Speaking of the dress, if it came on a plastic hanger, try to make a note to bring a wooden hanger along for picture sake. Keep reading along for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare!

A woman with dark hair styled in an updo, wearing a white lace wedding dress, is seated in a grey upholstered chair. She is looking down and to the right with a slight smile. Her left hand is resting on her chest, and she is wearing a large diamond ring and a bracelet. The background features a large window with a wooden frame, through which a blurred outdoor scene is visible. The lighting is soft and natural, coming from the window.

THE WINDOW EFFECT

By having just one large window in the bridal prep area, I am able to create beautiful portraits with soft light. I prefer natural light so the more windows, the better!



EVERY
LITTLE
DETAIL

RINGS, SHOES, JEWELS ...

The whole day begins with the DETAILS. This helps me get in the groove of the day and get my creative side warmed up. I try to photograph a bride's details in a way that matches and showcases the style of the entire wedding day. So, in some ways, the details set the stage for the look of the whole wedding and I love having ample time to set up and stylize. I will shoot everything from the dress, to the jewelry, to grandma's handkerchief. To the right, you'll find a list of the most common details that I shoot. I ask brides to gather any details they have before I arrive so that I can walk in, say hello, give you a big hug and then begin with all the goodies. I will take extra care with everything, Promise.

WHAT TO BRING



- dress
- veil / hair pieces
- rings (all three)
- shoes
- bouquet & boutonniere
- jewelry
- perfume
- invitation suite
- borrowed & blue

DAY-OF REMINDERS



GATHER the goods.

If possible, collect all of your details before I arrive so that I can begin quickly and have more time for some “getting ready” shots of you and your girls. All in a small box is ideal.

EXTRA elements.

Sometimes, depending on the theme and “look” of the wedding day, there may be some extra elements that you could include when you gather your details. Left over reception decor is ideal. For example, if you’re having a country themed wedding, you could include a piece of burlap or lace. If you’re having a rustic themed wedding that includes some wooden elements, maybe save a small piece of wood for me to use when I’m shooting your rings and jewelry. This really makes for beautiful, consistent album spreads.

KEEP all three rings.

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

BRING the bouquet.

Don’t forget the Bouquet! Have the bouquets and bouts delivered to the bride before I arrive. I will shoot it and then the bride can have her bouquet in her portraits. No worries, if it’s hot, we’ll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony.

When you're planning a wedding day timeline, the best advice I could give is to ADD CUSHION TIME! Sometimes the most simple things can take an extra 20 minutes and then all of a sudden, the whole morning is thrown off. I have seen "getting the bride in her dress" take almost 40 minutes because of a button malfunction. It's a smart idea to add in an extra ten minutes here and there so that we have some wiggle room to work with. This way, if one part of the day gets thrown off by 20 minutes, I can help you compensate that time in other areas. There are so many different things to think about when you're planning a wedding day, and so here are some tips for the preceremony timeline. I realize that every single wedding day is different and so not all of these tips will apply to every wedding day schedule. Something else to consider is that not EVERYTHING will go as planned, and I promise you, that is completely normal.



TIMING TIPS



BOUQUETS AND BOUTS

You will need your Bouquet & Bouts for your First Look! Have them delivered to the room where the bride is getting ready.

TRAVEL TIME

Be sure to think about the travel time and TRAFFIC to and from your getting ready location and your venue.

HAIR & MAKEUP

I encourage brides to have at least their makeup done before I start because who wants a ton of shots without their makeup on?! Nobody.

GROOMSMEN PREP

I will photograph the guys getting ready if they are getting ready in the same location as the bride or within 10 mins. Allow extra prep in the timeline.

GETTING IN THE DRESS

I'll instruct you to get into your dress close to a window and it would be fabulous to have your bridesmaids dressed when you're getting in your gown.

CREATE A CUSHION

A 20 minute cushion every now and then is a great idea! It's amazing how fast time slips away the day of!



WHAT MAKES A VEIL fly?

As your wedding photographer, I feel that it's my duty to let you know that not all veils have equal flying power! It's true! Some veils do not fly! It's actually very disappointing for a bride to realize on her wedding day that it's impossible to capture the "flying veil" shot she always deamed of because she selected a veil that has too much detail and is weighted down too much to fly. So, if a flying veil shot is very important to you, here are some tips for selecting a veil that can easily go airborne and is extra photogenic.


1. *Avoid heavy beading* and detail that weighs down your veil.
2. *One layer is best.* Multiple layers of tulle can be hard to toss.
3. *Choose off-white.* Some veils can actually photograph "blue" if they are a pure white and that is very hard to hide in editing. This is true for stark white dresses as well. Off-white, light ivories and creams are actually better for pictures.
4. *Fine tulle flies more freely.* Stiff tulle is a little more rigid.



YOUR FIRST LOOK

Your first look is an amazing part of your wedding day! If you aren't sure about this tradition, the next few pages will explain why it would be a romantic addition to your wedding day celebration that not only adds to the experience but also reduces stress. Please know that I would never want any of our couples to feel pressured to go with this option. However, I do want to make sure that I share all of the benefits of a first look, because there is a reason 90% of my couples do this and love it!





THE FIRST LOOK explained

In our initial chat, I likely have recommended we plan a 'First Look'. It makes for some of the most genuine and emotional portraits of the day. Not everyone is aware of how awesome they are, because they get caught up in how "non-traditional" it is, and they immediately write it off.

I know as a bride you may dream of your groom's reaction as you gracefully glide down the aisle... a tear slides down his cheek at the first sight of you... Well gals, do not fear. I've seen grooms cry in a first look and still lose it when you come down that aisle.

Some couples love "traditions" ... but what a bride really wants when it comes to her groom seeing her for the first time, is a reaction. Those who are not interested in a First Look usually think that by seeing each other beforehand, they will lose part of that reaction. They also assume that it will not be as emotional or as intimate as it would be if they were coming down the aisle. What I know from experience is that wedding days are a bit stressful for the bride and groom - especially if you aren't used to being the centre of attention.



The whole day is focused on you both. You're trying to look your best. You're needing to be on time. Your groom likely has no idea what side the boutonniere is supposed to go on and little by little... the tension can grow.

Before the ceremony, the gravity of what is about to happen starts to sink in and your calm, collected groom who was laughing with his groomsmen just a few short hours ago is now starting to feel a little anxious. It's usually all hidden but the nerves are there. Then he finds himself in front of anywhere from 80-300 people and they're all looking where? Right at his face... because everyone has expectations and anticipation about his first reaction. It's all getting VERY REAL.

This is the farthest thing from a private, intimate moment. Sure, it's SO powerful and SO wonderful. Walking down the aisle is one of the best parts of your wedding day. It's magical! ... But when you walk down the aisle... should the groom be a nervous wreck?

What if, instead, he was in a private place... no people, no on-lookers, no distractions and his beautiful bride, the love of his life, comes to him. He turns around and finally gets his first look at his stunning bride. He doesn't just get to see her; he can embrace her... cry with her... kiss her... and enjoy that moment with her for as long as they want. As she shows him her dress, twirls a few times and then asks him what he thinks... his nerves start to diminish. Now all that tension can burst in genuine smiles and romantic portraits while the two of you bask in the moment.



FIRST LOOK | Why it's Worth It



40% MORE PORTRAITS

You're investing a lot into your wedding photography. With a first look, you'll receive around 40% more portraits of the two of you... and those are the images you can decorate your home with, not to mention populating your heirloom wedding album. With a first look, you make the most out of this large investment and get the most for your money.

ENJOY THE SURPRISE FREELY

You actually get to have intimate time on your wedding day with your man. Most brides don't realize that when you come down the aisle and totally SHOCK him with your gorgeous-ness... he can't even tell you how amazing you look. He can't touch you, embrace you or even SPEAK to you. You have to wait until 30 minutes later when the ceremony is over for him to react and tell you how amazing you look. And after 30 minutes of the ceremony, the reaction isn't the same as the initial first glance.

EXTEND YOUR DAY BY 3 HOURS

First Looks allow you to extend your wedding day. Normally the wedding day would start when you come down the aisle, then the ceremony would end, you would rush through portraits so that you're not late for the introductions and then it's reception time. With a first look, your wedding day is extended by almost 3 hours. Instead of being rushed for your bridal party portraits... you actually get to enjoy them and have fun hanging out with your best friends on your wedding day. The whole first half of my client's wedding albums are filled with images just from this time together before the ceremony.

YOUR ONLY ALONE TIME

First Looks allow you to be together and alone on your wedding day. It is an intimate bubble you get before the rush of family and friends who will be dying to speak to you later. You can cry and laugh and cry some more. Your emotions are real as we head into romantic portraits and the joyful mood doesn't need to be faked. Normally portraits are a little rushed after the family formals, and it can be hard to really get back into that "lovey dovey" mode... especially with family around! When you have just shared your first look, you're ready to love on each other, and I always capture some super sweet images during those moments.

DIMINISHES NERVES

You get rid of your nerves! I'd say, literally 1/2 of my couples who have decided to do a first look, the grooms were not fans of it at first. However, because they have never experienced their wedding day before, they didn't know how nerve racking it can be. I have testimonials from so many grooms who initially weren't a fan of the first look... but afterwards they admitted to being so much more relaxed and ready for the ceremony.



FOR THE BRIDE

FIRST LOOK

EXPECTATIONS

Brides - if you have never seen your man cry or get emotional, you can't expect him to be overly emotional on your wedding day. Some guys just embrace their brides and never cry and that's just fine. Some guys show very little emotion when their bride is coming down the aisle and that's okay too. Just enjoy this amazing day and try not to put any expectations on him. If you take this advice to heart, I could potentially be saving you a lot of disappointment on your day. One thing I've noticed after shooting lots of weddings is that the stress and nerves that come with a wedding day can sometimes make it hard for some grooms to truly express their emotions. It's just a lot to take in all at once. This is a great reason to share a first look and also a great reason to give some grace to your guy. Sure, you deserve to feel beautiful, but my encouragement to you is to enjoy this time together, no matter what his reaction is like.



The Daddy / Daughter

FIRST LOOK

This is for all of the brides who have a sweet spot in their heart for their dad. I have to admit that Daddy/Daughter first looks make me a little teary. For a lot of Dads, this is when everything feels real and it hits him... “My baby girl is getting married!” These are precious moments to photograph and I highly encourage any Daddy’s girl to make time in their timeline for this moment. It doesn’t take long at all. The hardest part is making sure Dad shows up on time! If Dad doesn’t show up on time, the whole timeline can get thrown off, or we’ll have to skip the Daddy/Daughter first look. Another sweet idea we’ve seen is having the father of the bride escort the bride to her first look.



THE CEREMONY

Here it is! The moment everyone has been waiting for! The music is playing and the guests have been seated. Ushers make their way to the back of the church and the coordinator is lining up the bridesmaids while giving the musicians a 5 minute warning. The bride is about to walk down the aisle to the love of her life and if she's like many girls, she's dreamed about this moment for a long time. Vows will be shared and promises will be made... this is what it's all about! In a world full of wedding blogs, Pinterest and bridal magazines, it's easy to be overwhelmed and consumed by the "prettiness" of the event. While details do matter and planning is necessary, it's important to never lose sight of the real purpose of this amazing day!

One thing I learned in 2020 and witnessing so many smaller celebrations - the joy is present as long as the bride and groom focus on what matters most - love and commitment to each other.



THE UNPLUGGED CEREMONY

Imagine this with me... you're in my shoes.... the most important moment of the day is about to happen. You've checked your camera settings; you've taken test shots and you're ready to capture the bride coming down the aisle to her groom. You want to capture reactions, variety of angles and every moment of joy and emotion in those few seconds. However, just as everyone stands and the music plays, not one, but three different family members and friends get so excited that they take just one step out into the aisle with their iPhones in hand trying to capture the moment. I'm scrambling. My couple is trusting me not to miss this! But now I'm dodging guests who are trying desperately to have a good Insta-story to share and they have no idea that the back of their heads, their arms and their phones are blocking me from capturing the bride and her escort walking down the aisle. It's honestly one of the worst things that can happen to a photographer during a ceremony and the hard part is, it can always be avoided. This issue is a growing one. Every wedding season I experience more and more of these issues. However, there is a solution! We highly recommend having an "Unplugged Ceremony". This is just another way of saying that you want only your photographers to be capturing photos and you would like everyone else to enjoy the ceremony instead of trying to capture it themselves. This can apply to all events, cake cutting, first dance etc. All the photos can be shared later!



Options for notifying guests the your ceremony is
UNPLUGGED :

1. *Signage* : Have a simple sign that guests see as they are entering the ceremony
2. *Spoken* : Have your officiant politely mention that you prefer no cell phones
3. *Program* : Include your Unplugged Ceremony request in your program design



LIGHTING

Ceremony lighting is really important. If you get married outdoors at 12pm, the lighting will be extremely harsh and not only will there be harsh lines of light on your faces, but you will also be squinting. I suggest planning an outdoor ceremony 2 hours before sunset if you are having a First Look. If you are not interested in sharing a first look, then I would suggest having your ceremony 3 hours before sunset to ensure that you will have plenty of time for all of your portraits afterwards. The lower the sun, the more romantic the lighting. If you are having an indoor ceremony, it is always best to have EVEN lighting at the altar. If there are two spotlights on the bride and groom, I will not be able to expose the rest of the bridal party. It is better to have soft, even light across the whole altar.

ORDER OF SERVICE

I have seen so many couples do many amazing things during their ceremony. I've photographed couples washing each other's feet, symbolizing that they want to serve each other for the rest of their life. Some couples share in communion while some light a unity candle. I've seen sand ceremonies, rope ceremonies and the signing of the family Bible. The options are limitless. As you plan your ceremony, make sure you design it to be exactly what the two of you envision it to be. This is your day. If you have the freedom to be creative, then by all means, be creative. Make sure you provide me with a rundown of the ceremony so I can be ready to capture these special moments. I often change lenses for different shots, and I want to make sure I am prepared for all that is to come.

PROGRAMS & DETAILS

The best advice I have for the program-making process is to remember that not every guest needs a program. Most couples/families will only take one. Also, before ordering your programs, have several people check it for spelling and grammatical errors. If you have access to the venue the day before the wedding, check all the set-up details for the ceremony and reception. Go over everything you want done with a coordinator or trusted friend. Programs and decor are things that the bride can plan in advance and then delegate. The last thing a bride needs to be doing the morning of her wedding is running around setting up floral arrangements. This leads me into my next column.

COORDINATION

If you are planning a big wedding, you may consider hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator. Brides realize very quickly that if they do not have someone officially in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility will automatically fall on the mother of the bride, the photographer or the bride herself! If the budget is tight, ask your most organized and trusted friend to help. Go through every last detail with them. Although I can help run the day along, if coordination is solely in my hands, the images will suffer. All of my stressful wedding situations were caused by a lack of organization and coordination. It's so important to make this a priority. If you need any recommendations on wedding coordination services, I would love to share some of my favorite vendors with you.



DESTINATION Weddings

If you are planning a destination wedding, a lot of the details in this guide will not apply to you. Your details, your timeline and even your preparation for the big day will be much simpler. However, it is a good idea to start thinking about a few key components of the day such as: your ceremony time and your ceremony/portrait locations (some destination weddings require some planning to find portrait locations without tourists in the background). Be sure to check the sunset time at your wedding location before settling on your ceremony time. As your wedding day draws closer, we'll begin to chat about the timeline of the day and the travel arrangements. Get excited! This is going to be amazing!



Sample List for

FAMILY FORMALS

I love meeting your families on the wedding day. Family formals are normally my first interaction with them and so I love to have a game plan for this part of the day. About 6 weeks before the wedding, you'll receive a questionnaire from me that will ask you to list out the family formals you want to capture. Here is a sample family formal list to help you start preparing what shots you need. We do have to limit the family formal time in order to ensure that we have plenty of daylight for your romantic portraits. However, any large family group shots that we don't accomplish during family formals, we can be sure to capture at the reception. It's handy to make this list and then put ALL their first names beside the grouping. People listen better when their name is called rather than 'brother of the bride'. Assign a family member who knows everyone and has a big voice. They can call the names of each person who needs to be in the photo.

- B&G with Bride's Immediate Family
(Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Nieces, Nephews)
- B&G with Bride's Parents
- B&G with Bride's Siblings
- Bride with her Parents
- Bride with Mom, Bride with Dad
- B&G with Bride's Grandparents
- B&G with both sets of Parents
- B&G with Groom's Immediate Family
(Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Nieces, Nephews)
- B&G with Groom's Parents
- B&G with Groom's Siblings
- Groom with his Parents
- Groom with Mom, Groom with Dad
- B&G with Groom's Grandparents
- B&G with all family members if time allows

ROMANTIC PORTRAITS

If we're being honest, all of the wedding day images are important, but the real favorites are almost always from my time with the Bride and Groom! These romantic portraits of just the two of you will be the images that you frame beside your bed or over your mantle, and they will also be the images that will fill your album for generations to enjoy. These images are always my favorite not only because of their beauty, but because this is such a sweet portion of the day. For this brief moment in time, you will be alone with your groom on your wedding day. You will have a chance to love on each other and really connect before the craziness begins! Romantic portraits are normally done before the ceremony (after the "First Look") and then the aim is shooting a few "just married" portraits at sunset as well. This is when the light is low and golden. It's such a romantic time for bride and groom portraits. If you're not interested in a first look, we will make sure to include a lot of time after the ceremony for these portraits!



A romantic photograph of a couple kissing at sunset. The woman is wearing a light blue dress and the man is in a grey suit. They are standing on a beach with a lake and mountains in the background. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from the setting sun.

Trusting

PORTRAIT LOCATIONS

One of the benefits of using an experienced photographer is using whatever location we have making it look absolutely amazing! This happens most often when it comes to picking portrait locations. If there is one thing that I love and appreciate about my couples, it's that they trust me. Hopefully we have discussed and even scouted locations, but in the end, it doesn't matter how pretty something might look with the eye... it is all about the light. If the light is working against us, we might not be able to get that tree or building you were wanting. Sometimes I select portrait locations that most people wouldn't consider attractive. For example, the image on this spread was taken at Ghost Lake at a busy parking lot. I had to frame out lots of people. It was freezing. But when you work with light, in this case, an amazing sunset - ordinary can be extraordinary.



THE CASE OF A RAINY WEDDING DAY

One of the most frequently asked questions that we receive during wedding season is “Soooo, what do you do if it RAINS?!”. I want to reassure you that even if it rains, you will still have beautiful portraits and bright colors in your images. Overcast skies can make for vibrant colors. I know that rain isn’t ideal, and no bride would wish for rain on their big day, but if it happens, it happens... and it’s going to be just fine. Here are a few things to remember:

1. All I need to create natural light portraits on a rainy wedding day is a covered porch! Just one porch!
2. Let me worry about the pictures. You have enough to think about. If there is a chance of rain, I’ll be sure to do some extra scouting to find a covered location or two, for us to use for you first look, romantic portraits and bridal party portraits.
3. Take it one step at a time. Don’t think about your entire day and what will happen if it rains. That will only overwhelm you. Definitely have a rain plan for your venue. Have a clear umbrella on hand (Bed, Bath and Beyond have some) but then let your vendors do the work of handling the rest of the day if rain is in the forecast.



This was the last shot of the night and it so perfectly shows that the rain can’t keep us from taking beautiful images! Don’t let the fear of rain steal your joy. You can’t control it, and we promise we will make the best of it!



your bridal party.

Lets chat about your bridal party. This is when the fun begins. I know from experience that all brides want their closest friends to have an amazing time during their big day, and I will make sure that happens. Bridal party portraits should be a ton of FUN! After you share your first look, depending on the locations and the timing of the day, your bridal party will join us for portraits. If all goes well, we will be able to accomplish ALL of your bridal party portraits BEFORE the ceremony. This means that your guys and gals will be free to mingle at cocktail hour if they wish. If there are flower girls and ring bearers involved, they can either join us for the pre-ceremony portraits or we can take one final group photo after the ceremony, before family formals. Be sure your groomsmen arrive with boutonnières on, and your bridesmaids arrive with bouquets!



Remind EVERYONE to be a little early. One late member can put the whole team behind.

HIGH - IMPACT PLANNING

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

1. Invest in your bridal bouquet over other florals : Make your bridal bouquet a big priority! When I'm photographing a wedding, if the bride has a gorgeous bouquet, I can make the entire day look like there were beautiful florals everywhere. I can use the bridal bouquet to spruce up bridal details, reception details and even bride and groom portraits as well! The bridal bouquet is a focal point for me when it comes to your photography and so I highly recommend getting your DREAM bouquet and investing less on the bridesmaids' bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much.

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

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

4. Double purposes for decor: Maybe you choose to have an epic, well-styled entryway decor at your reception that also doubles as an amazing photobooth later on throughout the evening once party dancing has started. Or a big floral centerpiece can be zip tied to your ceremony arch, then used on your bridal or cake table.

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



RECEPTION DETAILS



The party is here! Receptions can be a blast! However, it's important to make sure that you have your event well thought out. You should have a rundown sheet with approximate times to hit, then it's the coordinator, master of ceremony and/or your DJ/Band who run the program. Your caterer will also play a big role in the design and set up of your event. Every aspect of your reception affects the overall outline of the evening. For example, if you're not having a plated meal, your reception will need to be set up in a way that allows movement. Guests will need to be able to find the food stations easily, and there will be a mixture of dinner tables and high-top cocktail tables. This will encourage guests to mix and mingle. If you are having a plated dinner, you will more than likely need escort cards, full place settings and space for all of your guests to be seated comfortably. Whatever the style of your event, your coordinator/ MC and/or DJ can help you set up the evening so that guests won't leave early or experience long periods of waiting for the next thing to happen.

Much like the ceremony, you have the freedom to make your reception your own. It's your party, it should be exactly how you want it to be. Here is a list of some key events that happen often at receptions:

- *Bridal Party Introductions*
- *First Dance*
- *Daddy-Daughter Dance*
- *Mother-Son Dance*
- *Anniversary Dance*
- *Money Dance*
- *Traditional Religious Dances*
- *Welcome by Father of the Bride*
- *Blessing*
- *Cake Cutting*
- *Toasts and Speeches*
- *Bouquet and Garter Toss*
- *Large group portraits with friends*
- *The exit of the Bride and Groom*

RECEPTION TIPS

The fun has begun! It's time to relax, dance and celebrate. Your reception should be a blast! The last thing you need to be worrying about is your timeline. Your coordinator, MC and/or DJ should take care of making sure that everything stays on schedule so that you can enjoy your night. Here are some helpful tips that will help your reception flow smoothly.

- **GUEST CONSIDERATION** : Take your guests into consideration when planning your timeline. If you have a lot of elderly guests that will not be staying until the very end, make sure you schedule the cake cutting at a relatively early time so that they can be a part of it. Grandma's love seeing this sweet tradition!

- **KEEP IT MOVING** : Chat with your MC/coordinator about how you can plan your reception in a way that will keep guests engaged and moving all night.

- **MAKE IT YOUR OWN** : If you want to have a special dance with your grandparents, do it! Make your reception a reflection of who you are and don't feel tied to traditions. Also, make sure you give your DJ or Band a "Do Not Play" list if there are some songs you really don't want to hear during your reception.

- **DON'T GET CAUGHT UP**: Sure, details are pretty and fun to photograph, but they can steal the joy of the day if you get too caught up in them. (Just speaking from experience here.) Plan your centerpieces, welcome table, etc. well before the wedding date, and teach your coordinator or family friend how to set them up so that you aren't even thinking about those things the day of.

- **RECEPTION COVERAGE** : If you haven't purchased enough coverage time for your photography to last until the exit, that's okay. Let's plan a controlled exit. (See next page.) I recommend planning your timeline so that you can have at least one hour of dancing photographed. The guests who dance during the first hour will still be dancing in the third hour! One hour of dancing will be enough time to really capture the joy of your reception.





3 REASONS A CONTROLLED EXIT IS BEST :

1. *Multiple chances at an epic shot* : When you do an exit shot at the very end of the wedding day, I only have one chance to capture the two of you as you run through sparklers or whatever type of exit you have planned. When you do a “controlled exit”, I have multiple chances to capture several awesome exit portraits for you and add some fun to it all.
2. *You haven't partied all night yet* : This means that your makeup and hair are still intact for your exit shot! That's a win right there.
3. *Coordinated Colours* : When you are surrounded by your bridal party instead of wedding guests that could be wearing distracting colors, you can expect to have beautiful exits shots surrounded by your wedding colors.

RECEPTION:

CONTROLLED EXITS

If your coverage ends before the very end of your reception and you are hoping to have an “Exit” shot captured, you have the option of planning to do a “Controlled Exit” with your bridal party! This is more common than you may think. Instead of saving your exit until the very end, you can plan a controlled exit with just the members of your bridal party and a few family members. This allows us to have more control over these shots and the party never has to stop. In most cases, no one even notices that the bride and groom are missing for a few minutes. You still get to do the real exit with all guest at the end of the night.





LEGACY ALBUMS



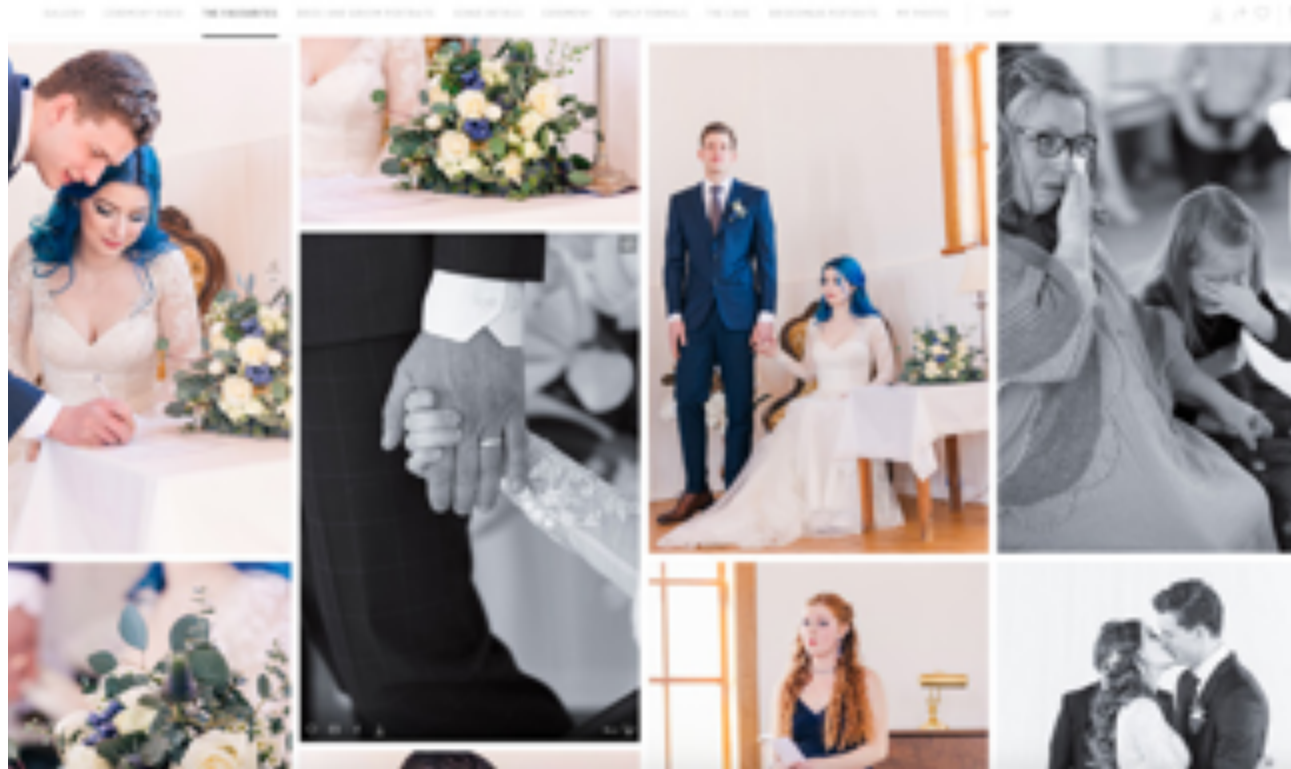
In the digital age, a lot of couples chalk up a physical album as an unnecessary expense. Let me tell you, albums are about the future. There is something special about creating your first heirloom. I could never have known how my heart would melt seeing my children pouring through the pages over and over... Having digital images is wonderful but having a printed keepsake that tells a visual story of your wedding day is priceless! If you haven't already invested in a Legacy Album of your own, you can always come back to us at any time and order one.

SIZE OPTIONS:

8x8, 10x10, 12x12

SAY THANK YOU WITH A PARENT ALBUM :

How do you say thank you to the people who have supported you most in this journey? Imagine their faces as they can unwrap their very own keepsake of the day! My parents cherish their personal album and look at it as much as my children do! Whether you're wanting to surprise your parents with an album for Christmas or want to order one any time after the wedding day, just let me know and I'll create a heirloom album that they can cherish for a lifetime.



YOUR ONLINE GALLERY

Your online gallery will be a beautiful, accessible way to not only view your images but download them and share them as well. I want you to be able to save and share your images freely and without any hesitation and so there will not be any watermarks on your high resolution images and all of your images will be available to download in high-resolution and web-sized. You will receive a separate online gallery for your engagement session and your wedding day. Each gallery will begin with a folder of images titled “Ethereal Favorites”. These images are what I consider the best of the best. On the next page, I’ve listed out some important information that will help you understand your online gallery and all that it can do.

DOWNLOADING PHOTOS:

You will be able to download your edited images directly from your online gallery in either a high resolution or web-sized .jpg file. This process is very simple. You can either click the “Download” on each image or “Download All” in the top righthand corner of the gallery. See the blog post on my website for more details. You can invite whomever you like to view the gallery in full via email. You can also share images directly to social media from the gallery without having to download/upload them in the top righthand corner. You can also mark favourites so I can see ones you can’t live without in your album design.

ACCESSING YOUR PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE:

The online gallery system that we use will work on mobile devices as well. It’s simple and easy to download individual photos on your smart phone. It means that you have immediate access to all of your images when you’re on the go. Just note high resolution images can take eat up storage space fast.

ORDERING PRINTS:

You can order professional and affordable prints from within your online gallery and have them shipped directly to your home. Print sizes range from 4x6 to 24x36 and are printed in a Canadian based professional lab to ensure colour and contrast accuracy. You are more than welcome to print images on your own. However, I would warn you to avoid Walmart, Costco, etc. I cannot promise that your colours will print true-to-life if you choose to print from non-professional labs.

GALLERY EXPIRATION:

Your gallery will be available for an entire year. I would still recommend downloading them and saving them in multiple places as soon as possible for safe keeping. The internet is amazing, but it can also be unreliable. Please don’t use your online gallery as a way to permanently store your images. I recommend downloading and saving your images on a solid state, portable hard drive as a permanent backup while also using an online backup system like google drive for a secondary online backup. Keep copies in more than one place.

SHARING, WATERMARKING & EDITING:

Even though I retain the copyright to all my work, you still have the freedom to share your images. In fact, I want you to love them so much that you can’t help but share them. I would ask the favour of adding some type of credit whenever you use an image on social media. You cannot use the images for commercial purposes (such as reselling on stock sites). I would also ask to refrain from re-editing images, this includes any kind of filter. The auto crop feature on Instagram is acceptable though. If there is an image or two that you want to print at a very large size and you find an imperfection, I will gladly perfect it! Just let me know.

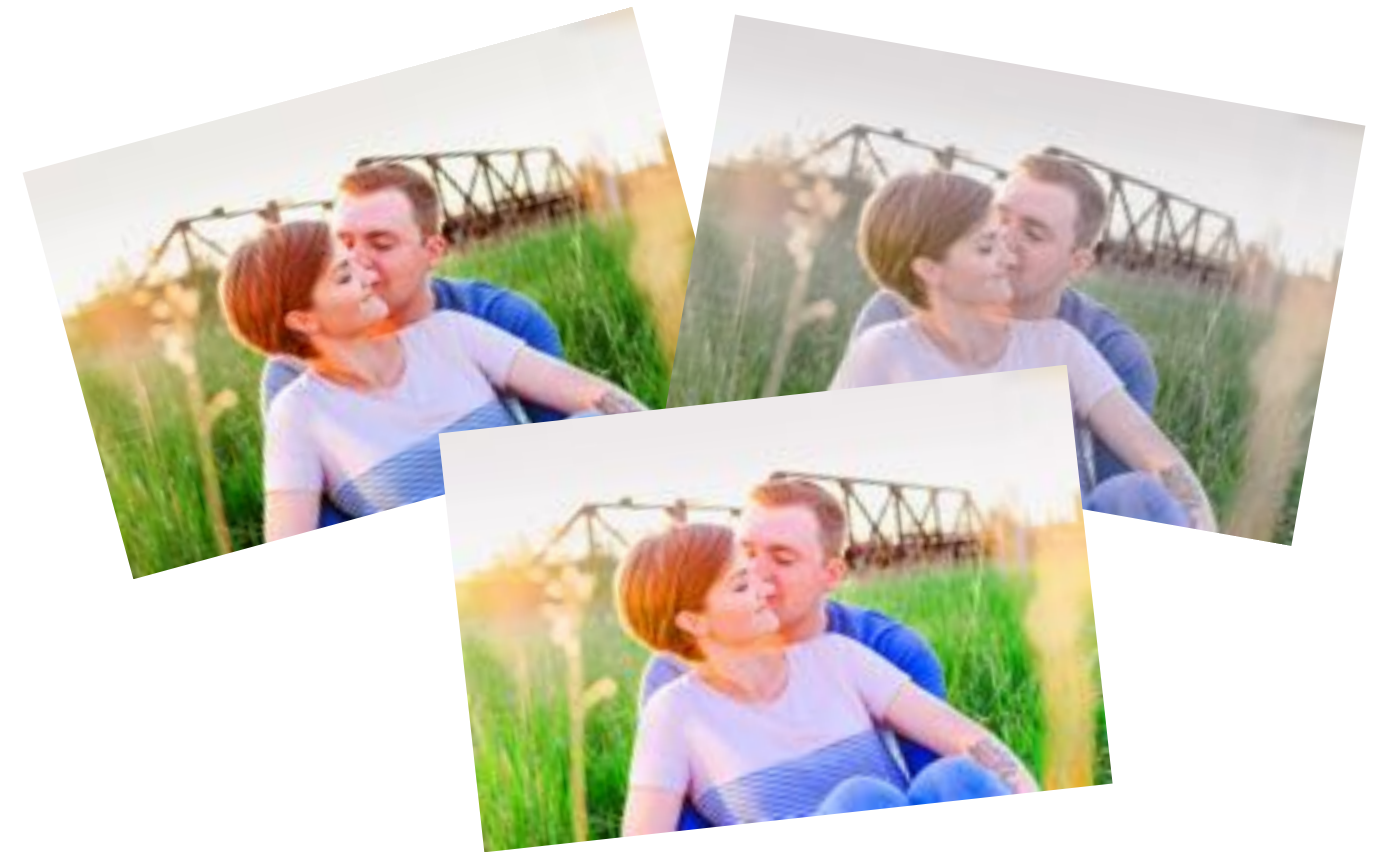
NON-PROFESSIONAL PRINTS

How bad could it really be?



This is the original image that I edited and delivered to my couple. To the right, you'll see the most common print issues that clients experience when they choose to not print through their online gallery that I provide for them. I try to offer as many sizes and products as possible at the most affordable CAD price so that my clients can have access to professional quality prints for the images that they invested too much in. Investing in high-end photography but ordering prints at Costco is similar to wearing an evening gown to a date night at Tim Hortons. Why pay thousands of dollars but then not have the images look right. It just doesn't make sense.

SAMPLE PRINTING ISSUES:
High contrast, over-saturation and de-saturation



Once your images have been delivered via your online gallery, you can begin ordering professional prints. Your prints will be printed in a professional lab and then shipped directly to you.

There is always an "EARLY BIRD" discount in your gallery.

Special Care for 8x10's and 5x7's

For some reason, our culture has normalized print sizes that are not similar size ratios to the ratios that a camera captures. This means, when you are ordering an 8x10 or 5x7 print, you will need to pay attention to the "Crop" option and adjust the crop of your print before ordering. See example to the right.





Thank You

Last, but certainly not least, thank you for trusting me with your special day. I feel the privilege of being chosen to capture your memories, and cannot wait to celebrate alongside you. Enjoy this season of planning but also remember that your MARRIAGE is more important than the wedding. The wedding will come and go in a matter of hours, but your marriage needs to stand the test of time. Continue to make time for one another even with all that needs to get done. As you continue to plan, please feel free to contact me with questions you may have along the way. About 6 weeks before the wedding, you'll receive an online questionnaire that will provide me with everything I need to know for your big day. I hope this guide has been helpful as you continue to plan and prepare for your wedding day!

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