

## The finding a wedding photographer survival guides!

### Introduction

Finding a wedding photographer is a competitive process, not only for the photographer, but for you. If you're lucky enough to have a wedding on a Friday or Sunday, or in the winter months, than you may find that you have a wide range of choices when it comes to wedding photographers who are available on your date. However, if you want one of those coveted summer/fall Saturday dates then you will need to start your search early in order to ensure you have a good number of choices. Wedding photography follows the simple rules of supply and demand, and on those busy Saturday dates there simply aren't enough good photographers to go around. So in order to get the best photographer for your wedding day, start early!

The following strategy is something I really didn't develop, they are ideas I have borrowed from past clients who seemed to have ideal weddings. They had the vendors that they wanted, the day went perfectly, and they were all around happy with every aspect of their wedding day. A common thing I hear from brides doing the search is the term "I haven't done this before." What does this mean? It means that beyond asking if their date is available and if we are within their budget they more or less run out of questions or ideas where to take the process next. This won't happen to you, because you will be too much on the ball to let this happen. This is your wedding day, this is your investment, and follow the plan, things will work out great for you!

After discovering the five most common mistakes made in the process, we are going to determine what level of involvement you can give to the evaluation process.

### The five most common mistakes

There are some huge pitfalls that can occur in planning a wedding. However, if you're lucky you will only have to do this once in your lifetime. Let's take a quick look at some of the more common pitfalls.

#### 1. Multi-tasking

This is by far the most common scenario. A bride comes to see us. She is excited about the planning process, and usually by the time she visits us she has a date, a ceremony and reception site, a dress, and that's about it. She has an appointment with us, a florist, a DJ, and a bakery, all on the same day! Next weekend, she has an appointment with another DJ, another photography studio, and other florist, etc. Seven weeks later we get a phone call back from her, asking if the date is still open (if it's a summertime Saturday the answer is usually "no"). What happened? Somewhere between seeing us and seven weeks later, some got sick. And something happened at work to cause one of them to work weekends. And their was a birthday party or a wedding to attend one weekend... And friends came in from out of town one weekend. Suddenly its seven weeks later, or another way to look at it, two months closer to the wedding date and the core vendors are not secure.

What are core vendors? Photographer, DJ, videographers, and depending upon your situation Clergy, and Caterer. These are the people who book up fastest. Your florist, and cake people, and the wedding invitations, and all those other details can wait. These are the things you need to jump on quickly. The very best idea I have heard was to visit core vendors by vendor type, in short periods of time. For example, one week you meet with all the photographers, decide on

one. The next week, meet all the videographers, decide on one, etc. The chances of your favorite vendor booking in one week are slim.

## **2. Emotional decisions**

A recent headline news story in Los Angeles was about a woman wedding photographer who never came through with wedding photos for not one, or five, but 16 sets of clients! How did she do it? I don't know her, but perhaps it's because she made people feel good when they signed up. She most likely gave them a good vibe. Then according to the article, she stalled and made excuses and probably made people feel sorry for her when she couldn't deliver... It took a couple of years for this all to catch up to her.

We're not saying that selecting a photographer shouldn't be cold and technical like selecting a grade of gasoline. At the end of the process, you should feel good about your decision. It's just that if you let your emotions take control you can find yourself signing up for a photographer outside of your budget or worse yet, one who may make you feel good, but in the end, do a poor job. If you know that you're an emotional decision maker, perhaps it may be wise to have a friend come along who is a lot different from you just to get a second opinion.

## **3. Getting bored with the process**

This is a very common problem, and it manifests itself in two ways. First, there is the excited bride who is in her element when planning for a wedding. Her mind is constantly buzzing with wedding ideas and spends nights and weekends 100% committed to the process. These brides are often emotional buyers so the groom feels he has to come along to keep a watch on her. One thing becomes clear; she can spend the next six months talking to photographers. To avoid this problem he pushes for the first photographer they find that they can afford, and he can get along with. It's not a smooth decision because she wants to see more photographers before making up her mind.

The second scenario is the multi-tasking couple. They more or less get overwhelmed with the process, they get tired of the pressure of finding vendors, and they find that it isn't so much fun running all over town looking at everything. They want to get the process over and thus start making snap decisions.

## **4. Lack of planning**

This is the least common problem, but you will be surprised how many people call looking for a photographer in less than two months before their wedding. One bride told me that it was in a wedding planner she bought to hire a photographer three months before the wedding. This is really bad advice; the planner may be outdated because ten years ago the average engagement was less than a year, now it's 18 months! This means people have more time to plan their weddings and those who plan early will get exactly what they want.

## **5. Price Fixation**

Are average clients pay for part if not all their wedding photography themselves. This being said, getting the most for their money is obviously a concern. The actual investment is a highly important part of the process. As you will see below one of the first steps in evaluating wedding photography is establishing a budget.

This being said, there are people who get over fixated on the price of wedding photography to the point that this is their primary concern. What's worse, to pay more than you want to, or less than you should have? After all, this is wedding photography we're talking about. If you get a bad haircut from a barber, your hair will grow back. If a plumber doesn't fix your leak, you can call another one. If your wedding photographer does a bad job, you will have to live with it the rest of your life! Ten years from now you may not remember nor will you care if you spent \$500 more or less on your wedding photography than you did.

### **Your involvement level**

Your involvement into the process depends mostly on the amount of time you can invest, and your situation. If you are a busy bride who works constantly or if you live out of state then you will need to rely more on phone screening interviews and websites to narrow down your choices and meet with only the studios that best fit your needs. Sometimes you can't even meet with the studios so everything has to be done over the phone. This is more common than you may think. On the other hand, if you have tons of time, and can meet with dozens of studios, should you? Finding a photographer is only one aspect of your wedding day plans. Very often we find brides who spend too much time in one area of planning and not enough in others. The process doesn't need to be long, and when it's over you can scratch one thing off your list and move on to the next part of your planning process. I suggest that you narrow your search down to your three favorite photographers. Those will be the three that you will meet with in person.

### **The strategy**

We figured out the following strategy from wedding coordinators, and brides that went before you. It's quite simple to follow, and best of all, it will save you a ton of time and stress!

#### **Search strategy**

- ▶ Rank Priorities
- ▶ Determine budget
- ▶ Situation Analysis
- ▶ Re-evaluate budget/ define needs
- ▶ Meet with deciding parties
- ▶ Do phone screening interviews
- ▶ Visit 2 to five studios
- ▶ Make a decision at home

#### **Ranking priorities**

If you hire a professional wedding coordinator, one of the very first things they will help you do is rank your priorities. They break it down like this, food, drinks, flowers, music, location, photography, videography, etc. You then have to rank these for your wedding. What's more important, food or music? If music is more important it goes higher up the list. By ranking things you are in better shape to make decisions on what to splurge on, and what to skimp on. Where does photography fall? Most of our clients rate it close to the top.

#### **Determine a budget**

The first thing we are going to do is establish a rough budget for photography, it will be refined later. According to national statistics, your wedding photography should be around 10-15% of your wedding budget. Just to make things simple we will work with a 12.5% budget, which is between 10 and 15 percent.

Total Wedding Budget	Photography Budget
\$15,000	\$1,875
\$20,000	\$2,500
\$25,000	\$3,125
\$30,000	\$3,750
\$35,000	\$4,375

Once again, these are midline budget estimates; you can invest more or less depending upon your priority ranking. This will give you a fairly good estimate of a budget ballpark you're in and help you screen out studios.

### Situation Analysis

What's important is that before you begin holding talks with your fiancée and other decision makers is that you have a good idea in your mind of a budget, and what is available in your budget range. The easiest thing to do is spend an evening evaluating websites. You can find tons of information, and fairly quickly figure out what is available for your budget. You will also want to check out things that fall outside your budget, both high and low, so that you are prepared to discuss the wide range of options available to you.

### Digital vs. Film Photography

Don't Be Scared - Technology is your FRIEND!

Welcome to the Digital Revolution where your wedding pictures really develop!

**Do you think that capturing your wedding on digital files is futuristic at best, risky at worst?** Think again. Today's professional digital cameras are incredibly advanced - resulting in crystal clear pictures, offering the photographer so much flexibility and possibly faster turnaround times and more convenient sharing options than with conventional photography. Some of the industry's best photographers are shooting digitally - and are even beginning to prefer it to 35 mm film. "The technology and quality of imagery has advanced to such a point in the past year that I think it's an appropriate and exciting choice for wedding photographers," claims renowned photographer Denis Reggie, whose work has appeared in Vogue, Bazaar, and Elle, and who shot the now-classic image of newlyweds John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Caroline Besset. With all the buzz about digital photography, here are the top ten things that you should know about it!

- 1. Get the Right Goods.** You know your wedding photographer isn't going to pick up any old 35 mm camera to shoot your wedding. So, of course, she isn't going to use the ubiquitous point and shoot digital varieties you've seen and probably used. There are a handful of high-end cameras that professionals use, and what makes them stand apart - aside from the whopping \$3500 to \$7000 price tags - are resolution and pixel size, and, like any other professional cameras, all the options and settings that allow a photographer to tweak the picture for the very best image possible. These are way beyond basic digital cameras, which means the quality of your pictures will be too.
- 2. Sneak a Peak.** Photographers almost unanimously agree that one of the greatest things about shooting digitally is that you can see the results as you go along, on the camera's LCD screen. What does this mean for you? It means that your wedding

photographer will know right away if she needs to take a shot again - if, for example, the exposure was poor or a bridesmaid had her eyes closed. It also gives photographers more creative freedom - allowing them to compose pictures with different lighting, angles and cropping, because they can tell instantly if the shot worked.

3. **Contrast and Compare.** Worried that digital files won't produce nice images? Thanks to the quality now of both cameras and printers - your 11x14 digital prints will be just as good or better than your 11x14 35mm prints. In fact, you probably couldn't tell the difference between side-by-side samples - a test that wedding photographer Joe Buissink, whose work has been featured in such magazines as InStyle and in books by entertaining guru Colin Cowie, gives his brides to demonstrate the merits of digital prints. But beware: Only the newest and most advanced pro cameras are up to this task. That is why it is absolutely essential to take a good look at a photographer's portfolio. Ask which photos were taken with a digital camera and be sure you're comfortable with the quality of those photos.
4. **Don't Just Do Digital.** A digital camera, like anything else, is just a tool - one of several - that photographers use for a particular job. Digital cameras don't necessarily replace other formats, but rather add a niche in a photographer's repertoire. You may want your photographer to shoot with a medium-format camera as well. Although state of the art digital cameras can compare in quality and resolution with medium format cameras, nothing comes close to the beauty and detail captured with the larger negative of a medium format camera. So when you take formal and group shots that you'll want to enlarge beyond 8x10 - many photographers will pull out their faithful medium format cameras.
5. **Share the Love!** As soon as two weeks after the wedding, you can share your wedding pictures with everyone online! Or, as Denis Reggie puts it, digital photography "enhances the after-effects of a wedding." And since the images are digital, it's easy for photographers to offer the option of online viewing (often sooner than it would take to get conventional proofs). As soon as your photographer uploads the images, you get to see hundreds of pictures from your wedding - and share them with everyone - no matter how far away they are. Even better, everyone can order their own prints online - less hassle for you, instant gratification for your family! After all the stress of wedding planning, this convenient feature will be a welcome respite.
6. **Know Your Rights.** When it comes to who owns the digital files, don't assume that they're automatically yours - even if they are posted online for everyone to see. Much like the issue of negative ownership with traditional photographers, it all depends on whom you hire and the terms of your contract. Some photographers might give you the files but maintain the copyright, others might charge you extra to own them, and still others might download lower resolution copies of the images on a CD for you, but keep the original high resolution files that would be appropriate for enlargements. As always, make sure the contract terms are acceptable to you before signing on the dotted line.
7. **Make it Last.** Like any pictures printed on high-quality photographic paper, your digital prints may last for decades depending on which printing system your photographer uses. And instead of worrying about protecting fragile negatives that are easily scratched or lost, you can archive your digital files on DVD or CD - technology that should last for many years to come - and then you (or your photographer) can convert the files to the next greatest thing.
8. **Add Special Effects.** Think of the enhancements and techniques photographers use on "regular" photos. Now it is even easier to manipulate images because they're already in a digital format. Not that your photographer is going to give you shockingly pink hair or superimpose your image on the moon, but she can greatly enhance a picture with

computer software like Adobe Photoshop and Genuine Fractals (say, if you want a poster-size wedding portrait). A more artistic technique might be printing onto watercolor paper, resulting in images that look like paintings. Check out a photographer's portfolios to see what artistic techniques she might use.

9. **Save Cash Elsewhere.** Sure, your photographer saves on film and processing costs. But the actual time spent shooting at your wedding, equipment costs, and printing expenses remain. And, because what you're really paying for is the skill of the photographer, no matter what her medium, and a package with a set number of images, your cost benefit comes when you get to pick from a better selection of pictures.
10. **Explore Your Options.** The number of wedding photographers who have taken the digital plunge is still low - an estimated 30%. But with industry leaders like Denis Reggie and Joe Buissink raving about the exceptional results, it is only a matter of time before digital goes mainstream. Once other photographers start learning the ropes and investing in the equipment - the two biggest barriers to entering the digital arena - you can bet they'll rely on it more and more!

## Types of Wedding Photography

There are three types of wedding photography available for the wedding couple. The three are called photojournalistic (candid) wedding photography, traditional wedding photography, and artistic wedding photography. Even though the three types of wedding photography is uniquely different to the others most wedding photographers can provide any or all the types of wedding photography.

### **Candid Wedding Photography and Photojournalistic Wedding Photography**

The candid photographer, better known as a photojournalistic photographer, captures a wedding day similar to a newspaper photojournalist. The wedding photos that are made from a wedding photojournalist are often angled, candid, and original. These documentary style wedding photos are taken from the beginning to the end of the full wedding day. The photos always show the wedding guest, bridal party and family being themselves. In Photojournalistic Style wedding photography a wide assortment of camera lens, from wide-angle to normal to telephoto is often used. These lens are changed throughout the wedding day to capture more unique and original wedding photos.

### **Traditional Wedding Photography and Formal Wedding Photography**

A traditional wedding photographers main photographic subject is the bride and groom. This type of wedding photographer photographs only formal photos. Formal photography is where the bridal and groom, bridal party, and family pose before each photo is taken. Formal photos should be taken at all wedding, however it should not be the only style used. Engaged couples should only be looking to hire a traditional wedding photographer for two reasons. First reason, if they absolutely cannot afford a wedding photographer to capture all their wedding photography. Secondly, if they just like all formals. Traditional wedding photography is perfect for short, small weddings, like beach weddings and Las Vegas weddings.

### **Artistic Wedding Photography**

There are many types of artistic looking wedding photography. A lot of the artistic type wedding photographers do not even call themselves artistic styles wedding photographers. Instead they will more than likely classify themselves as a photojournalistic wedding photographer or a traditional wedding photographer. Artistic wedding photography can be called artistic because the materials used to make the photo, the way the photography was processed, or the way the

wedding photographer decided to shoot the photo. I have heard of wedding photographers using infrared film to shoot black and white wedding photography for deeper contrast, wedding photographers hand developing black and white wedding photography then hand coloring certain photos and even wedding photographers that shoot full weddings with wide angle lens.

**Mixed Style Wedding Photography**  
A wedding photographer that shoots in all types of wedding photography would be said to be able to shoot in mixed styles. The most common wedding photographer will shoot in photojournalistic style, however will also shoot formals and be able to present a unique artistic view in their wedding photography or in the way they process the final photos.

### **Black and White Versus Color Wedding Photography**

Nowadays, both black and white and color photos are preferred by both brides and grooms. Black and white photos give an old touch, making the photos look artistic and timeless. Whereas, color photos show detail and action. Wedding photographers all are different when it comes to what they prefer to shoot in, black and white vs. color. In wedding photography I recommend getting a professional wedding photographer that shoots excellent color photos. Color photos can always be changed to black and white, however the same cannot be done the other way around.

### **The Wedding Day Photography Schedule**

There are three very successful schedules that are used by most photographers. You should consider all of them and then pick the one that best meets your personal needs.

#### **Pre-ceremony Photographs**

Meshing traditional and contemporary styles can sometimes be tricky for the photographer and the couple working within a limited time span. "Pre-ceremony photographs" can eliminate this hindrance. "Pre-ceremony photographs" are normally conducted three hours before the ceremony and can be done with the entire family or the bride and groom alone. During this time away from the crowds of guests, the photographer can take unobtrusive photographs of the couple, family, and wedding party.

The most common objection is from the bride, who wants the groom to see her for the first time as she comes down the aisle. I understand wanting to have him see you, and you him. However, I have found that most couples don't even remember that experience. As you are walking down the aisle, the bride often can't even see the groom right away. Even more importantly, you are usually worried about tripping on your dress or your father stepping on you. The groom typically can't express his emotions, because all he can think about is the hundred people in the church and keeping his cool. With "Pre-ceremony photographs" you'll be able to see each other for the first time without all the other stresses, and then spend some very special private time together. You will do much more than just gasp as you walk down the aisle.

When private time is scheduled, we select a special location. When the bride is ready, we stage her holding her bouquet. The groom waits in another area until she is ready. Then we ask everyone to leave. The photographer has the bride staged and is positioned discretely in a spot where they can capture both expressions. Then the groom is sent in. The photographer captures the moment as he exits the room. The bride and groom are then left alone to spend a few moments together. When they are ready, the bride and groom come out of the room and the photography begins. Couples have written letters stating that their "Special Moment" was the most wonderful part of their wedding day.

Listed below are the disadvantages and advantages to "Pre-ceremony photographs". It is completely your decision if you want to experience this once in a lifetime moment. You will never be pressured in either direction, it is only another option to help make your wedding day a dream come true.

#### **DISADVANTAGES**

1. You start your day earlier (however, you enjoy it longer)
2. According to the old adage, it is bad luck to see each other beforehand (however, most churches believe it is good to pray together beforehand)

#### BENEFITS

1. Pray together
2. Discuss what your about to do, enjoy each other's company in solitude.
3. Spend some time alone away from the confusion and stress.
4. Take time to freely express emotions.
5. Spend less time photographing after the ceremony.
6. Reduce stress.
7. Enjoy this special experience together.
8. Do all your posed photographs before the ceremony; get more intimate images throughout the day.

#### Post-Reception Photographs

For the couple who have a very early morning ceremony or just not enough time before the ceremony, scheduling the posed photography after the reception may be the option for you. The photography will last about three hours. You will need to schedule time for everyone to freshen up after the party. You will also want to make sure your photographer is contracted to stay long enough to capture the images. This schedule is not the most popular because everyone is tired and the flowers and hairdos are not at their best, but in some cases this schedule may be necessary. The advantage is that your guests do not have to wait at the reception for your arrival.

#### The Traditional Schedule

This is probably the most popular schedule. It allows for the tradition of the groom not seeing the bride before the ceremony, and most of the photos are taken while flowers and make-up are still fresh. This schedule normally starts two hours before the ceremony with the bride, bridesmaids, and bride's family. After about forty-five minutes the photographer switches to the groom, groomsmen, and groom's family. Photos of the couple and group shots of family are done after the ceremony. The only big disadvantage to this schedule is that the guests have to wait up to an hour for the couple's arrival.

There are, of course, variations on these three that also might fit your needs. The variations are normally discussed at the planning session. If you have your own ideas make sure your photographer is aware of them. In some cases a schedule would not be necessary, for instance, a completely photojournalistic approach.

## Wedding Photography Coverage

### The Basics

**Time:** Typically the most underestimated aspect of wedding photography is the amount of time you should demand a photographer spend with you. If you're having a ceremony and reception at different locations you will need more time. We've found the typical wedding needs at least seven hours. Studios often want more money for longer hours, figure out the costs

upfront. On your wedding day you don't need the aggravation of a photographer who is telling you that he is running out of time and agree to pay more or he will leave!

**Number of images:** Let's see, there are two camps these days. The photographer who shows you images on websites or CD's can take a zillion images for nothing. Those who still provide prints will establish their limits. We've determined that an average sized wedding needs around 300 images to be taken for good coverage. Some packages that studios offer come with less. The photographer will tell you that they are running low on film and you can agree to BUY more film.

**Albums:** Preview albums, presentation albums, and proof albums are not what you think of as a bridal album. This is the area where things get very confusing for a lot of brides. Having a proof album is nice, but the final album is most crucial. You will need to take your time to investigate these albums first hand. Nicer albums will cost more money.

**Multiple Locations:** A common request is to go to the beach for a photo session. If you plan some extra stops along the way, some studios will charge extra.

**Extra Fees:** There are tons of extra junk fees associated with wedding photography. Ignorance isn't bliss, especially when you get the final bill. With some studios these are part of the cost of doing business with them, so get these things out in the open.

**Engagement Photographs:** Will you need one? They are a great idea, and will give you an opportunity to work with your photographer.

**Parent Albums:** This is a very nice gift for the people who have done so much for you.

**Second Albums:** There are new and exciting options for displaying images from your wedding. For example, a black and white only album, or a coffee table albums.

**Negatives:** Are you really going to need your negatives or digital files? Is this a major selling point to you? This is something that will not only influence the price, but also determine what you will get and may speak volumes as to the quality of your final images.

**Other Options:** There are folios and specialized wedding invitations, and a ton of other options available. The bottom line is the more you pile on to your package, the higher your package will be.

### **Establishing your needs**

Your going to need to figure out what you really want in the end before you can firmly establish a budget. First you have to get a wish list of the things you want, and then present it all to your fiancée. Together you can work on what you need and what you can cut out. Then you are better set to figure out studios and packages that make sense.

### **Meet with the deciding parties.**

If you want to know the one area that causes the most grief and frustration for the bride, this is it. Very often we meet with brides who are planning large elaborate weddings, rank wedding photography towards the top of their list, are planning a \$20K -30K wedding, and NEED to find a photographer that will do everything for \$1200! Why? Because the budget was established prior to checking out what's available and determining the need of the bridal couple. The bridal couple is often forced into a situation of renegotiating with the decision makers. Quite often wedding photography is a gift for the bridal couple and what often comes up is either the gifting party has to spend more or they pay the first \$1200 themselves and it's up to the bridal couple to cover the

rest. If \$1200 won't cut it, it's best to discuss this up front before you start your search instead of at the end when you found someone and they only hold your date for a few days. The point is, before you sit down and discuss your wedding photography needs with your fiancée or family, be certain to do your homework up front. Though you may have one studio you are zeroing in on, try to keep the conversation very general.

### **The Narrow down Process- Read Warning**

By this point you have a fairly good handle on what's out there. You've had a meeting of the minds with your fiancée and other key decision makers. And it has been suggested that you focus on only meeting with photographers, then making a decision. This is a good time to ask advice from others, but along with advice I will put in big red letters the word **WARNING**. Be careful of the advice you take. I say this for two reasons. The first is something I noticed. I will have one bride come in and look at my previous work and she will say "Wow, what a pretty wedding, I've never considered black bridesmaids dresses! They're so pretty, and look, I love the Lilly bouquet!" The next bride will come along and say "A Lilly bouquet! That's a death flower! And black bridesmaids dresses, was this a wedding or a funeral!" The point is that you can have a best friend, and you can love everything that they love. You love the same food, music, movies, cars, etc. And both your weddings can be completely different! When it comes to wedding photography, it's great to ask for references for studios. It's great when they highly recommend someone. But keep in mind your tastes may be different.

The next warning I have is bridal chat rooms. We have come to find first hand that there are photographers posing as engaged brides that somehow highly recommend their own studios. And there is also a lot of bad advice flying around, so do be weary of these boards.

By this point you're ready to hit the phones and start calling around. Depending upon the time you may want to talk to 6 to ten studios first hand and do screening interviews.

### **The phone screening interview.**

This very thing is hard for most brides to do. What do you ask other than is my date available and how much are your packages? The brief answer is, there is a lot you can ask and talk about. Of course the first question should be if your date is available. From here you can get some ideas from our document 25 questions to ask a wedding photographer. Some ideas of questions and topics.

Have you worked at my ceremony and reception site before?

What's your style like?

What type of equipment do you use?

What types of albums do you use?

What is a typical package?

How long do you stay at a wedding?

What do you wear?

Tell me about your best wedding

How long have you been doing wedding photography?

Why are you a wedding photographer?

What's your specialty?

The point that is important is that you engage in a conversation. One thing you may want to make sure of is that they have time to speak with you. You may need to schedule an appointment just to talk on the phone. They should be interested in you and ask questions about your day and what you are looking for. If you have a whole series of questions to ask and you view their work online you will find that you can get a fairly good handle on the studio before you even walk in the door.

### **Visit two to five studios**

After you're done with the phone screening interviews you have a fairly good idea of who to meet. After going over the selection list with your fiancée it's time to call back and schedule appointments. Like we said before, does this cluster within a week so that you can ensure that you don't lose your date.

While meeting with the various photographers ask to see some of their latest work, complete proof albums, and examples of what a package you're interested in looks like. Ask questions about style, see examples of their style. Discuss your wedding plans thus far and how they would tackle your day. Gauge their personality and decide if it is conducive to yours. Do you like their work? Their ideas? Are they interested in you? Your plans? Review the packages with them. Get as much information as you can before you're on your way.

**Make a decision at home:**

Be fair to yourself and work through the process. Don't book the first photographer you see. Talk it over with each other. Check out their status on the Better Business Bureau website. If uncertain, check references. Sleep on the decision. When you get close get a contract mailed out. Read it very carefully and make sure you understand the terms before you sign on the bottom line. Is everything you discussed in the contract? Any surprises? If it all checks out and you have a clear winner in mind, congratulations! If you aren't sold on what you have seen it's back to the net! Don't feel bad we had one bride that saw 10 photographers and didn't like any of them until they met us. We had another who had two years to plan her wedding and met with 25 photographers. Good luck!