



YOUR
WEDDING
P H O T O G R A P H Y





WELCOME

Hello and welcome! I'm sure your mind is racing with all that needs to be planned. It's exciting, but it can also be somewhat overwhelming. You're planning the day that you've been anticipating your whole life and yet you only get one shot at it! By the time you get the hang of it, the planning is over!

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, 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 us to provide you with the BEST experience possible.

If we haven't pulled together an engagement session, that should be our next step. Engagement sessions are always free and they're a fantastic tool for helping you get comfortable in front of the camera. After your engagement session we can start chatting about wedding day details as we get closer to your date!

We're beyond excited to be working with you!!

If you haven't already, follow us on social media.

www.facebook.com/SablePark

www.instagram.com/SableParkPhotography

WHO IS SABLE PARK?

I've pulled together a handful of the most amazing and talented photographers and videographers in the area to help me on the wedding day! All of them shoot professionally and most have degrees in photography. We are absolutely passionate about photography and making sure your wedding photography experience is top-notch.



This is me! I'm the lead photographer and will be your point of contact throughout your wedding planning. I will be the primary photographer on your wedding day and during your engagement session. However, Sable Park Photography would not be possible without the entire team. My strengths are my creativity and my easy-going demeanor. It helps that I'm surrounded by a fearless and talented team which is pretty much willing to try anything. My wife, Anna, is our social media guru and organizational expert.

You may not meet her directly, but Sable Park Photography would not exist without her. She's also an expert prop shopper and the tour-de-force behind our popular photo booths. A group of six other photographers/videographers dedicate their skills (and weekends) to make sure your wedding day coverage goes off without a hitch. I'll be sure to let you know who will be joining me on your wedding day and introduce them to you first thing that morning.



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YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Once you've gotten engaged you can move on to the fun parts of wedding planning. Congratulations and hooray!

Engagement sessions are and should be fun. Remember that with Sable Park Photography, engagement shoots are totally free and really important.

During your engagement 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, 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!

Your engagement session can be scheduled anytime before your wedding day. I normally suggest booking it at least 3-6 months in advance to avoid stress.

Because my weekends are typically full with weddings, I shoot engagement sessions on weekday evenings, (except in winter months). Most sessions normally start ninety minutes before sunset.

In the winter months, 3-5pm is a normal time frame for an engagement shoot. During winter, I'll book on weekends as it's often difficult for couples to start that early during the week.

As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, you will need to start thinking about potential locations. I love it when couples pick a location that is special or sentimental to them in some way! Perhaps it's where you met, or where you got engaged. If you can't think of a specific location to shoot at, I have lots of suggestions on our website.

As long as the light is great, I can make any location look awesome. I shoot at farms, campuses, downtown alleys, and parks. Anywhere we can find beautiful light. I do not shy away from crazy ideas. The more creative, the better! Be sure to keep reading to find out more on outfit ideas and inspiration.

ENGAGEMENT PREP

It can be little intimidating having your picture taken... even if it's taken by a friend. We all want to look nice, make sure nothing is in our teeth, and ensure that our hair is behaving. Preparing for your engagement session may feel a little overwhelming. Here are some tips for outfits and accessories that will make the shoot preparation a little more manage.



- Don't try to match. Try to pick outfits and accessories that coordinate instead.
- Don't be afraid to be bold. Accessorize and make your outfits your own. Scarves, bold necklaces and fun shoes are always welcomed.
- Most patterns are actually okay. However, graphics are not favorable for portraits. If you're wearing a pattern, just make sure it's not overwhelming and distracting.
- Empty your pockets. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets. (This is for the guys especially!)
- Often couples like to have one casual outfit and then one outfit that is dressier. This will give your shoot two totally different "looks." I recommend beginning with the dressy outfit first.
- Other "accessories" like your dog(s) or props (balloons/blankets) are fun to include as well. For dogs, I recommend bringing a friend to help watch the dog, as you will likely want some pics without your pet.
- And relax! Don't think of an engagement session as a photo shoot. It's really more of a fun date night. The two of you already love hanging out together. You do that part, and I'll handle the photography. You probably don't spend your lives in front of a camera, so it's completely natural to feel a bit awkward at first. That's why you hired me. I promise that the session will be fun and something you'll look back on with joy.



OUTFIT INSPIRATION





ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Approximate Start Times

WINTER

Nov-Mar: 3pm

During November through mid-March you can plan on your engagement session taking place around 3-5pm. Weekends are great! However, once the time changes in mid-March I like to stick to weekdays if possible.

SUMMER

Jun-Aug: 7pm

Summer engagements, just like all engagements, take place ninety minutes before sunset. Given later sunset time in the summer, sessions typically occur during the cooler part of the day.

SPRING

Apr-May: Varies

The sunset time drastically changes throughout the course of these two months and so our shooting times change as well. You can plan on approximately 6pm in April and 6:30pm in May.

FALL

Sept-Nov: Varies

The sunset time also varies during these three months. September sessions usually start about 6:30pm, but will start earlier as the months progress.

LOGISTICS:

We recommend a maximum of two locations for engagement shoots. As a general rule, more locations mean more variety, however, it may leave us less time for actual photos.

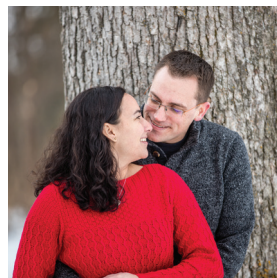
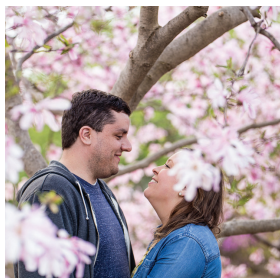
We love to travel to shoots. Our travel area for free engagement shoots is 30 minutes outside of Madison. If you want a location outside of that radius, we charge a small mileage fee. We generally recommend up to two looks in one location for your free 90 minute session.

You'll receive 30-50 edited and retouched photos in a private online gallery. From your gallery, you can view, download and print to your hearts' desire. Lots of couples use the images for save-the-date cards.

If you've opted to include a Reception Album/ Guest Book, select 15-20 of those images, we'll create a beautiful hard-cover book filled with photos where your guests can leave messages of love and support .







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. We receive so many emails from brides who are worried that their groom won't be into it and I have great news for you... you both are more photogenic than you think! We are constantly surprising couples by discovering their hidden modeling skills and our most common response from our grooms is "That was actually pretty fun." Boom! Mission accomplished! When the groom says that taking pictures was FUN, we have done our job well. Your engagement session is supposed to be fun 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 sitting down with your guy and showing him 2-3 of your favorite engagement sessions that I have photographed. Spend some time together scrolling through a few blog posts, 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! 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 with us!



YOUR
WEDDING
DAY



SAMPLE TIMELINE

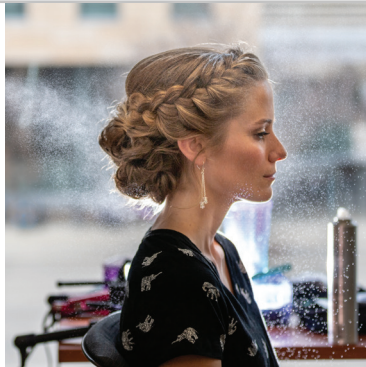
Wedding Details 12:30-1:30



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.

First Look 2:00

Every bride loves having those beautiful shots of her bridal details. 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 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 bridal party getting ready! If the groom is getting ready nearby, Kayla or another 2nd photographer will begin photographing his squad about 40 minutes before the first look since it always takes them less time to get dressed!



1:30-2:00 Bridal Prep



This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day. I will find the perfect location for my couple's First Look prior to the getting ready portion of the day! Don't stress about that one bit! I will make sure the location is private and as secluded as possible.

Here's the page that can be somewhat intimidating. The TIMELINE! I know this isn't the most exciting aspect of the wedding day, but this is the one thing that can make or break your photography. These next two pages will outline an ideal wedding day working off of a 4pm ceremony timeframe. This ideal timeline is also based off of a wedding day that includes a First Look. 90% of my couples choose to do a first look, and you can read more about that option a few pages over. Remember that all wedding days are different, and your timeline may differ due to travel times and unique situations.

Portraits 2:15-2:45



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 2:45-3:15



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, Kayla and I will make sure to take some....

great shots of both groups 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.



3:15 Bride in Hiding

THE TIMELINE CONTINUED...

Guests Arriving

3:30-3:50



It's time to get married!! Most ceremonies are 30 minutes long. If your ceremony is longer than 30 minutes, we'll make adjustments to the timeline. Cherish these moments! Your ceremony will pass by so quickly. If you're having an outdoor ceremony, we'd love to take an aerial photo at the very end of your program.

Family Portraits

4:40-5:10

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.

If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I will use this time to have the 2nd photographer shoot the reception decor UNTOUCHED, while I capture the excitement of your guests. 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

4:00-4:30



We'll need about 30 minutes for family formals and I will send a questionnaire before the wedding where you can list 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!

“Just Married” Portraits 5:15-6:00



Depending on the time of year, we may have an opportunity later in the evening for some ‘sunset portraits,’ but that isn’t always the case. I’ll happily take as much time as you’ll give me to capture some beautiful post-ceremony portraits of you both.

Reception Time! 6:00



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. When shooting outside, I like to 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 .

If you’re interested in having your exit photographed, there are several options for this! I can stay late or we can plan a faux exit with just your wedding party. We have had GREAT success with this and the party never stops! I have more information at the end of this guide about controlled exits.



The Exit 9:30

Timeline Help

Once you have picked the ceremony time, let me know. I love helping pull together the timeline.

If we haven’t done it already, I’ll make sure we step through it at our Final Details Meeting (2-4 weeks before the wedding).

A romantic scene of a young man and woman walking through a dense field of bright yellow flowers. The man is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and light-colored shorts, and the woman is wearing a dark blue dress with a colorful floral pattern and glasses. They are holding hands and looking at each other. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, creating a soft, bokeh effect. The overall mood is peaceful and celebratory.

WEDDINGS &
SEASONS



Portrait & Timing Tips for: WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER & FALL

WINTER

Winter weddings are gorgeous! However, they do take some additional planning simply because of the sunset time. The hard part about a winter timeline is the fact that the sun sets around 4pm. In Wisconsin we also have to factor in the temperature. Shooting outside can make for some stunning portraits. If we can, let's go for it! This might mean shooting in quick bursts near a spot to warm up. Including shawls or some sort of covering can be a big help as well.

SPRING

Spring weddings are wonderful because they are the perfect temperature! However, I recommend having plenty of Claritin and Zyrtec on hand just in case allergies start to flare up during portrait time. 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 8:30pm! So, if you're having a summer wedding, let's plan on slipping out of the reception while the sun is still up for your sunset portraits. You will NOT regret this. This is the absolute best light of the day and you're going to want to have portraits during this time period. Often 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! The temperatures are perfect and the colors cannot be beat. Most of my fall brides worry about color, and I just want to assure you that all I need is one tree with some color in order to make it look like fall. A little bit of color can go a long way. Your portrait time will vary depending on your wedding date. We'll be sure to discuss this when we come up with our final timeline together.

BEFORE THE CEREMONY





Let the day begin!

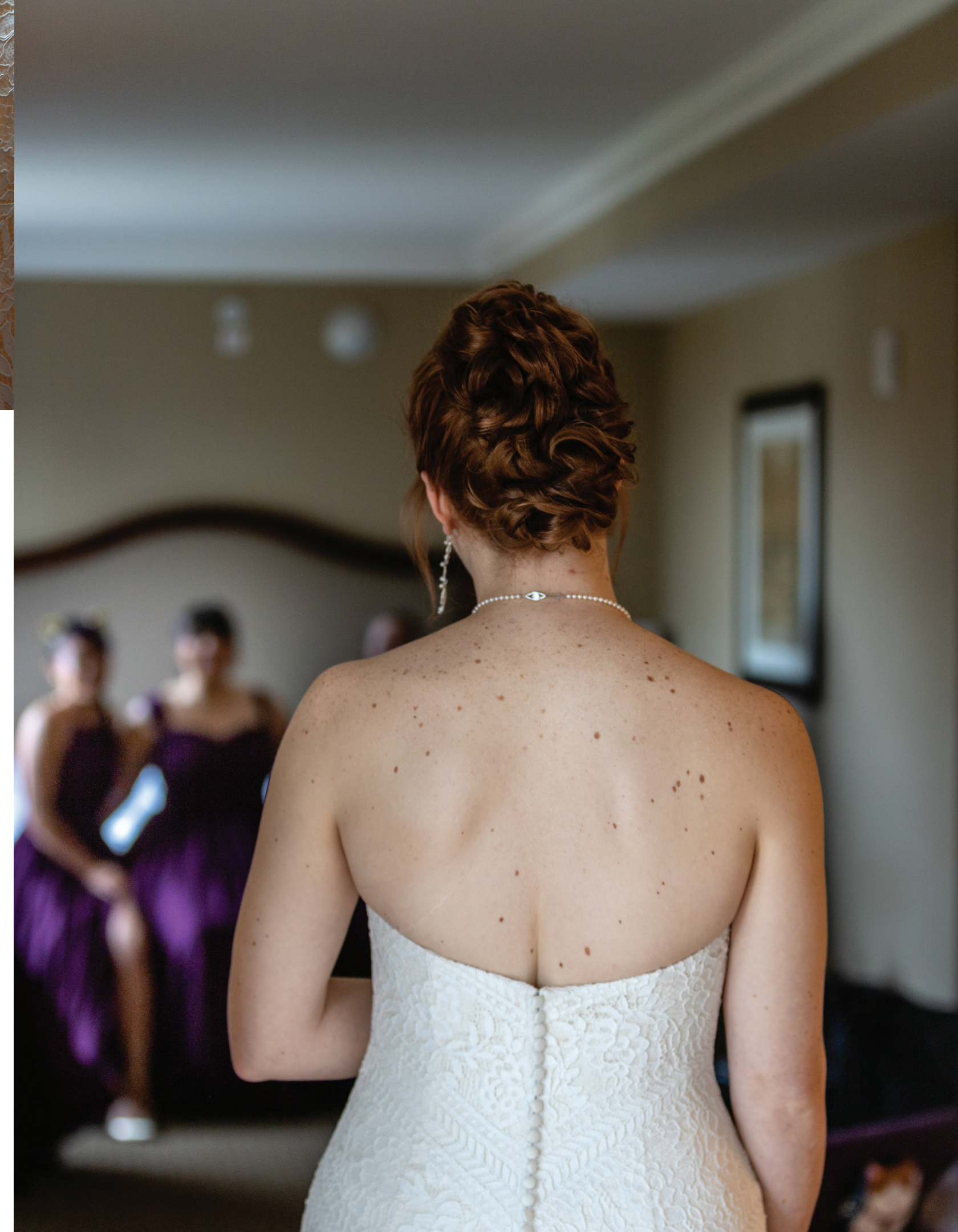
This portion of The Wedding Experience really sets the stage for the entire wedding day. The next few pages will share tips and tricks that will ensure a seamless morning of bridal preparation and beautiful portraits.



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 tasks 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 several 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? 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 get dressed, refrain from putting any jewelry on. I love shooting all of those final steps once you're in your gown. Speaking of the gown, if your gown is on a plastic hanger, it's no big deal. I will bring along a padded silk hanger for you. But if you have a special hanger of your own, I'll be sure to use yours instead. Keep reading for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare.







THE
W I N D O W
E F F E C T

By having just a simple 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!



RINGS, SHOES, JEWELS

The whole day begins with the DETAILS! This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day, because it allows me to prepare and get my creative side warmed up. I love having ample time to stylize, and 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, introduce you to the 2nd photographer, and then begin with all the goodies! (Please assure your mom that I will take GREAT care of the dress, I promise.)



WHAT TO BRING

dress
veil / hair pieces
rings (all three)
shoes
bouquet
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 party.

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. 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!

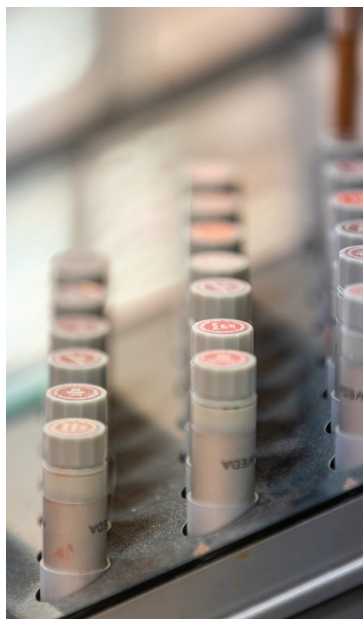
KEEP all three rings.

The most common detail missing when I arrive is 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, including your engagement ring, first thing.

BRING the bouquet.

Don’t forget the bouquet. Have the bouquets and boutonnières delivered to the bride before the first look so that she can have her bouquet in her portraits. 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 starts to feel rushed. 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 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.



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

My second shooter will photograph the guys getting ready if they are getting ready in the same location as the bride or within 10-15 minutes of travel time.

TIMING TIPS



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



THE BRIDAL BOUQUET

There are so many expenses when it comes to wedding planning. Many brides have to prioritize what they want to invest in. I just want to give a little tip that can save money and make a huge impact on the way your images turn out. If you're having trouble making a decision about your florals, here is what I suggest. I recommend making 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.

VEIL OPTIONS

Since 90% of our couples opt for a First Look, we have options for the bridal veil! I recommend that the bride only wear her veil when she comes down the aisle and I recommend this for three different reasons.

1. This is something new for your groom to see when you're walking down the aisle.

2. A lot of times, during a First Look, the groom is so excited to see his bride that he accidentally pulls the veil out when he throws his arms around her.

3. Saving the veil for the ceremony ensures that I will get some "Just Married" portrait time with the couple because EVERY bride needs to have a "Veil Blowing in the Wind" shot of their own. This isn't a rule that we ask all brides to follow, it's simply a suggestion that we make after having photographed nearly 200 weddings!



A man in a dark suit is shown in profile, looking into a mirror. The mirror has a gold frame and is mounted on a wall. The man's expression is thoughtful. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk with some papers and a pen holder.

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 we would never want any of our couples to feel pressured to go with this option. However, we do want to make sure that we share all of the benefits of a First Look, because there is a reason 90% of our couples do this and LOVE it!



THE FIRST LOOK

e x p l a i n e d

You've met. You've gone on dates. You've fallen in love. You've realized this is the person you want to spend the rest of my life with. You've spent months planning your wedding and in an hour or so, you'll be married.

Now, ask yourself. "Is there any reason I wouldn't want to spend the last few moments of being single with the person I love most in the world?"

When I ask clients about doing a First Look, many of them haven't talked or even thought about it. I can think of just one good reason not to, and many great reasons why you should. First, let's address why you should.

A First Look is not about looking at each other. Sure, that's a part of what you'll do. It's even in the name. But the First Look is really a special time to reflect on your lives together. All those amazing moments that have led you to the day of your wedding. Yes, he'll look fantastic. And yes you probably want him to be surprised, maybe *fingers crossed* a bit emotional when he sees you in your wedding dress for the first time. He's going to want to hold you, kiss you, and may get a little teary. The First Look is the time to do it. When you can savor the moment, together.

Waiting can add stress. The whole day is focused on the two of you. You'll feel you need to look your best, you need to be on time, the groom has no idea what side the boutonniere is supposed to go on (left) and little by little... the tension grows.

The gravity of what is about to happen starts to sink in. The groom waits in a little room somewhere for his cue from the coordinator. It seems like it's taking FOREVER. Finally, the coordinator leans her head in and hurries the groom to get ready. With clammy hands, the groom enters the ceremony and what does he find? He finds 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. This is the farthest thing from a private, intimate moment.

Grooms normally become incredibly nervous on wedding day even if they seem cool and collected.

For most grooms, the nerves kick in before they see their bride because when they see her, everything becomes VERY real! So when the nerves start creeping up, instead of keeping the groom in a secluded space until his time to enter the ceremony, what if you took him to a private place... no people, no on-lookers, no distractions and you let his beautiful bride, the love of his life, quietly call his name and have him turn around to see her for the first time.

He would turn around and finally get his first look at his stunning bride and not only would he get to see her... he could embrace her... cry with her... kiss her... and ENJOY that moment with her for as LONG as they wanted. As she shows him her dress, twirls a few times and then asks him what he thinks... his nerves start to diminish. After all, she's the one who can make him most comfortable anyway.

Because they aren't on a time crunch, they casually move into their romantic portraits. No one is around, the coordinator isn't announcing "15 minutes left", and there is no pressure. It's just the two of them and their photographer capturing the excitement and the joy of their wedding day. This is their time to be TOGETHER and to be ALONE. When does that happen on a wedding day? Without a First Look, it doesn't. After their romantic portraits are done, they meet up with their best friends. Their bridal party joins them and because they still have plenty of time to spare. The bride touches up a little makeup while the groomsmen act like groomsmen. After a few minutes the bridal party portraits begin and they're FUN. They're FUN, because there is time to make them FUN. There aren't any guests waiting impatiently at the cocktail hour and there isn't a DJ coming to find the photographer to get a time check. It's wonderful!

Now let me put a disclaimer on here before we continue...my clients are not required to do a First Look by any means. I used to feel bad for sharing this option with couples who were against it, because I didn't want to push anything on them. However, I've seen the benefits of a First Look over and over again, and so I only share this because I want the BEST for my couples.

First Non-Look?

It's totally OK if couples choose not to share a First Look. If you do not want to be seen, let's talk about a First Non-Look; most of the advantages of a First Look, but no actual seeing each other. We can do this by a door, or around a corner from each other. It's a perfect time to exchange a letter, hold hands and still share an amazing moment without revealing what you look like to each other.





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 40% MORE portraits of the two of you... and those are the images you will decorate your first home with! (Believe me, our house is PACKED full of our portraits!)

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. Weddings are amazing. You'll be surrounded by friends and family; the people who love you most. What you won't have much of, is time alone together. Couples sometimes cry and laugh and cry some more... and then that puts them in the PERFECT mood for romantic portraits. 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, with half 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 nerveracking it can be. I have testimonials from so many grooms who initially weren't a fan of the first look, but afterwards admitted to being SO much more relaxed and ready for the ceremony!





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 OK. Some guys show very little emotion when their bride is coming down the aisle and that's OK 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 we have noticed after shooting close to 200 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 Father / 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 Father/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 the 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 father/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 most brides, 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!



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, 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 **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!! Anna and I had a less than traditional wedding. We were married under a tree at a place I call Sable Park. It was a tiny ceremony with only a few close friends. Later in the year, we held a reception in our backyard and re-enacted our vows for the much larger group. And our dog Mo was our "ring-dog."



PROGRAMS & DETAILS

The BEST advice I have for the program-making process is to remember that not EVERY guest needs a program! We printed a program for everyone attending our wedding but quickly realized that most families only took one. We ended up with so many extra programs. Yikes! Also, before ordering your programs, have SEVERAL people check it for spelling and grammatical errors. Programs and the ceremony decor are things that the bride can plan in advance but then delegate the actual job of setting it up to a friend or coordinator. 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

Hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator is SO important. Brides realize very quickly that if they do not have someone in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility will automatically fall on the mother of the bride, the photographer or the BRIDE! When a photographer is in charge of the timeline and the coordination of the day, the images will suffer. All of my most 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.



FAMILY FORMALS

This is your wedding day and whatever is important to you, is important to us. Some couples place significant importance on family formals, while others would rather skip them entirely.

While it's not true in every case, we've discovered that many family members dread the post-ceremony family formals. Families would much rather head to the reception, and couples often express they would rather spend this time basking in post-ceremony bliss. After all, YOU JUST GOT MARRIED!

If you opt for family formals, beware the wedding websites that provide you a list of 50-100 family formal ideas. Our years of experience has shown us that keeping your actual formal count to around 8 groups of people significantly cuts down family frustration which in turn makes your time after your ceremony all the more enjoyable.

For time planning purposes, allow 4-5 minutes to gather up and shoot each group of family members. So you can expect 8 groups to take about 30-45 minutes.

Here's a sample group list we recommend.

- Group 1 - B&G with Bride's Immediate Family
- Group 2 - B&G with Groom's Immediate Family
- Group 3 - B&G with Grandparents and Parents
- Group 4 - B&G with Parents and Siblings
- Group 5 - Bride with her Parents
- Group 6 - Groom with his Parents

TIPS FOR FORMALS

SETTING EXPECTATIONS - Every wedding, we hear "Do I need to be here for these?" Help your family members out by telling them before the wedding, if they will be needed for family photos or if they are free to head to the reception after the ceremony.

RECEIVING LINE STRATEGY - If you plan on having a receiving line immediately after the ceremony, invite your family to sit back down if they're needed for formals. That way everyone you need will be in the same place when you're ready to move on to photos. If you're not planning on having a receiving line, I recommend moving away from the ceremony area right away as many well-wishers might linger in the area, which can be a distraction.

OUTDOOR PHOTOS - Taking your family formals outside can add beautiful splashes of color and there is no better light source than the sun. However, if the weather doesn't cooperate, or if tradition dictates indoor photos, we will set up additional lighting, if needed, and make your formals inside.

YOUR SPOUSE - You're married! You're now officially part of each other's family. So you should both be in each other's family photos.

EXTENDED FAMILY - Just because some family members might not be a part of your family formals, doesn't mean we won't take photos of them. We will be at your wedding as long as you like and we'll be thrilled to take photos of you and extended family during the reception. If you've opted for a photo booth as part of your reception, we also encourage your guests to take a family portrait there.



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 two will be alone 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 I LOVE shooting a few "just married" portraits after the ceremony 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 romantic portraits.







TRUSTING PORTRAIT LOCATIONS

One of my favorite parts of my job is taking something ordinary and 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 us! Sometimes I select portrait locations that most people wouldn't consider attractive. For example, the image on this spread was taken on the 2nd floor of an old barn. The paint was peeling and it smelled a bit of rot. It was grungy and seemingly "ugly" from everyone else's point of view except mine! However, because my couple trusted me and were up for anything, they now have the most amazing portraits! So my encouragement is to just trust us. You don't have to worry about a thing. Trust our locations, and I promise you, you'll LOVE the results!



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 assure you that even if it rains, you will still have beautiful portraits and BRIGHT colors in your images! Overcast skies mean 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. It’s going to be JUST fine. Some of our best weddings have been on rainy wedding days. Here are a few things to remember:

1. All I need to create natural light portraits on a rainy wedding day is a 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, but then let your vendors do the work of handling the rest of the day if rain is in the forecast.
4. I travel with clear umbrellas, perfect for photos!







your bridal party.

Let's chat about your bridal party. This is when the fun REALLY 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 boutonnieres on, and your bridesmaids arrive with bouquets!

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. This is the job of your coordinator and your DJ/band. 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 likely be a mixture of dinner tables and hightop 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, make sure that you plan out all of the aspects of the evening. Your coordinator and 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 often happen at receptions:

- Bridal Party Introductions
- First Dance
- Father-Daughter Dance
- Mother-Son Dance
- Anniversary Dance
- Money Dance
- Traditional Religious Dances
- Welcome by Father of the Bride
- Blessing
- Cake Cutting
- Toasts
- Bouquet 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 and DJ should take care of making sure that everything stays on schedule so that you can enjoy your night. Here are some handy 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. Grandmas love seeing this sweet tradition!

KEEP IT MOVING - Chat with your 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 in the formalities and the details. 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 - 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!

UPLIGHTING CONSIDERATION - Few factors will impact your photos more than the color of the light in the room. DJs love to include colorful uplights at your reception. And colored lights can give your reception a fun and exciting feel. Your skin, dress and all details all reflect that light and will pick up those hues. If you have blue uplighting, these things will look blueish in your photos. Green light will turn things green. The most natural looking tones will come from white uplighting.



RECEPTION: CONTROLLED EXITS

Exits! If your coverage ends before your exit, you have the option of planning a faux 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 faux 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. Also, it's almost impossible to tell that the whole wedding party isn't there waving sparklers and sending off the happy couple. I dare you to look at my blog and see if you can pick out which exits were fake and which were real! This idea allows our couples to save money and still have all of the shots that they dreamed of.



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

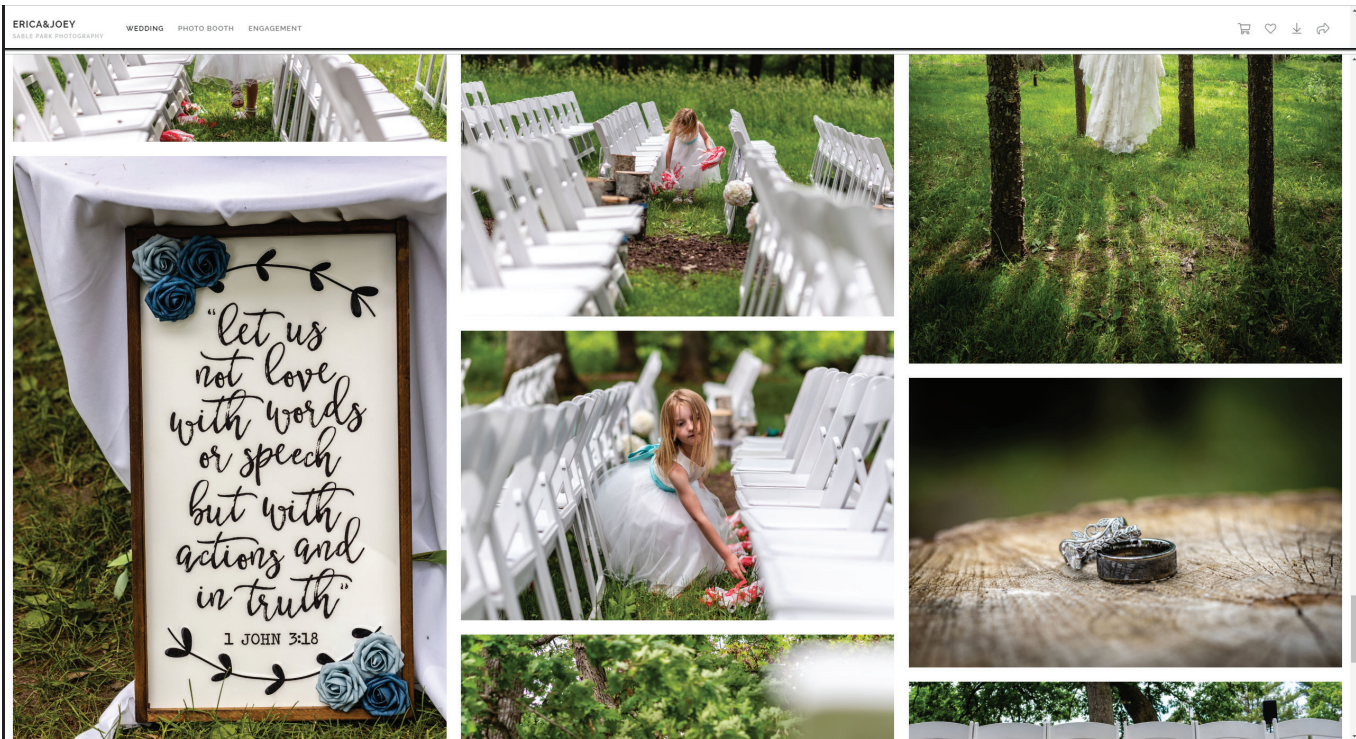


If you would like aerial photography at your wedding, just let me know. There are some geographic and weather restrictions we follow, but if we're able to fly, we absolutely will. It allows for photos from a perspective that is nearly impossible to replicate and helps make your wedding photos stand out.

One common request we receive is to make sure we get a picture of every guest at the wedding. While we strive to do that at every wedding already, it's so much fun to take a photo right after the ceremony that includes everyone in the same photo.







YOUR ONLINE GALLERY

Years ago you had to order prints of the images that you wanted to have forever. That isn't how we work around here. We want you to have ALL of your memories in your possession forever and ever! We also want you to share your images freely and without any hesitation. This is why we deliver your images via an online gallery! This means that you don't have to wait on a package in the mail, and you'll have access to them wherever you are! I've listed some important information that will help you understand your online gallery and all that it can do on the next page. Enjoy!

DOWNLOADING PHOTOS:

You will be able to download your edited images directly from your online gallery, and they will be high resolution! This process is very simple. All you have to do is click the “downwards arrow icon” and you will be prompted to enter your email and PIN. Once you enter them, you will be asked if you want to download just that one photo or if you would like to download all photos. Your photos will download directly to your “Downloads” folder. If you opt to download the entire gallery, you will be notified via email when your entire download is ready. It just takes a few minutes to prepare for hundreds of images to be downloaded!

ACCESSING YOUR PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE:

The online gallery system that we use can be accessed by your phone, but because your high resolution images will be quite large, you’ll need to download your images to a computer or laptop. When you download images, you can choose between high resolution images (great for printing) or web-resolution for posting on social media.

ORDERING PRINTS:

You can actually order professional and affordable prints from within your online gallery and have them shipped directly to your house! Print sizes are all under \$10 and are printed in a professional lab to ensure color and contrast accuracy. You are more than welcome to print images on your own. However, I would warn you to avoid Walmart, Target and Costco. I cannot promise that your colors will print true-to-life if you choose to print at those stores. If you don’t print through your gallery, I recommend using Nations Photo Lab.

SHARING, WATERMARKING & EDITING:

You have the freedom to share your images in any way that you choose! These are your images, and I want you to love them so much that you can’t help but share them. We don’t believe that it is necessary to watermark our images. All we ask for is some type of credit whenever you use an image on social media. For example ‘ - photo by Sable Park Photography.’ We only have ONE rule when it comes to what you can and cannot do with our work. please do not re-edit them. Let us do that hard work. If you have an image or two that you want to print at a very large size and you find an imperfection, we will gladly perfect it!



THANK YOU!

Last, but certainly not least, THANK YOU for trusting us with your special day. The team and I are so honored to be the ones capturing your memories, and we cannot WAIT to celebrate alongside of 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 ANY questions you may have along the way. Depending on your date, our next step would be to finalize an engagement session. Also, about 4 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.

Love, John, Anna, and the entire Sable Park Photography team