

Tips for choosing a wedding photographer

You're going to look at your wedding photos for the rest of your life and so will your children and their children, so here are a few questions to ask yourself when looking for a wedding photographer

- Do you like their style? This is the most important aspect. Look on their website, blog and Facebook page to get an overall idea. Often blogs and Facebook pages are the most frequently updated.
- Ask them about how they take their photos – do they offer an engagement shoot as part of their package? Will they coach you on how to get the best photos? Will they offer advice on posing, or direct you on the day? Even relaxed and natural photos need some direction and a good photographer should be able to put you at ease by talking, laughing, direction and general relaxing banter.
- The LAST thing you want to do with something so important is shop by price but you need to make sure are they in your budget. If not, are they worth the extra? Generally the answer is yes and sometimes it is worth reworking your budget and saving on other areas in favour of your photography. In any case, make sure you know what you are getting for your money.
- Is the photographer someone you “click” with – can you imagine yourself relaxing in front of the camera for them? If you can tick off style and budget, then request a meeting at their studio or local café and check to see if you hit it off. Rapport is important – out of all the people you hire for your wedding day, the photographer is the person you will spend the most time with.
- Be sure to check if your photographer belongs to any organisations such as the NZIPP – NZ Institute of Professional Photographers – the NZIPP is New Zealand's only qualifying body for photographers – members present a body of work to a panel of judges in order to be qualified and advertise themselves as a member. They can qualify in either Portrait or Wedding areas, but either gives the indication that your photographers work is of a high professional standard overall.

- Is there a limit to the time they will spend photographing your wedding? This isn't necessarily a bad thing if there is, but be sure you know the answer. If you want more coverage than they offer, ask about adding on extra hours, reception coverage or maybe even a second shooter.
- How long will it take to receive your finished product? Will you see any preview shots between your wedding day and the finish date? Will they blog about your wedding? Can you have your wedding photos put into an online gallery to share with family and friends?
- Do they have a contract? Make sure all the little details are included and spelled out clearly. This is to protect both you and the photographer in the event that you run into any problems. organisations such as the NZIPP can also act as, or arrange for mediators to help solve problems in the unlikely event of a dispute with your photographer.
- Ask about deposits, cancellations and what happens if THEY have to cancel. Sometimes accidents or the unthinkable happens -you want to make sure there are people on your side in this instance. Make sure your photographer knows how they can help you in this instance. Being a part of the NZIPP also means that there is a support network of qualified photographers at hand and they will do their best to try to find you a replacement.
- Ask about what it will cost if you want reprints and enlargements printed by your photographer. Can they offer canvasses or framed prints? Ask for a list of guaranteed prices that will still be valid when you will be ordering them.
- Do they offer albums? Can you order these after your wedding? Some photographers offer albums as part of a package and often this is where you can save money. Be sure to look at a sample album to be sure this is what you're after. Most high quality albums are only available through professional photographers and usually photographers will be reluctant to put together an album of another photographers work.
- Do you know someone that has had photos taken by the photographer you are considering? A personal reference speaks volumes – not only about the photos taken, but about the service received leading up to your big day, on your wedding day and in the weeks following when you receive your end product.

- Ask them if they will adhere to any requests about specific clothing you need them to wear on the wedding day. If you have certain religious requirements (eg. they must not wear pants or a certain colour) be sure to ask them if they can accommodate. A dedicated photographer should be able to meet these requirements as long as they are practical and they can still do their job effectively.
- Do they listen to your ideas and value your opinion? Use wedding magazines and the internet to communicate the styles and ideas you like. Sites such as Pinterest can be useful to show your photographer an overall mood board. Where possible try to provide examples of the photographers own work to show what you like. Be sure to point out anything you don't like. If you find yourself pointing out more than a couple of shots you don't like, consider whether you actually like their style as much as you originally thought.
- Make sure the photographer you talk to is the photographer that will actually photograph your wedding on the day. Some companies have multiple photographers and don't actually assign a specific photographer to you ahead of time. Also make sure that you ask to see several weddings shot by the photographer who will be shooting your day
- Are they prepared to visit your venue and desired locations to discuss your requirements? A good photographer will make themselves available for a pre-booking consultation, and at least one consultation at your venue after you have booked. It is most advantageous to meet at your venue a few weeks out from your wedding date so that the timing, lighting and conditions will be as close to your wedding as possible. It also means this is fresh in both your minds and you will almost be at the end of your planning phase so you can confirm final details. Some photographers like to attend a rehearsal – this is often helpful for them to see a run through of how things will take place.
- Be sure to inform your photographer if there are any parts of the ceremony where they should refrain from taking photographs – prayers etc.
- If you are having a videographer cover your day, offer their contact details to your photographer. Often it is useful for them to discuss where each other will be positioned and what their plan is for the day. This helps them avoid getting in each others way.

Above all else, make sure both you and your fiancé are comfortable around your photographer.

Feeling at ease in their presence is an essential part of getting relaxed and natural photographs.