

SHOTS OF YOU

PHOTOGRAPHY

Every Image has a Story... Yours

Wedding Photography Guide 2011



Introduction

Firstly we want to say a big Thank You to requesting this Wedding Photography Guide. We hope that it will allow you to make informed and happy decisions when selecting your photography style and wedding photographer.

This guide is by no means comprehensive as there are so many options available in the wedding photography market. However, this should give any Bride and Groom an ideal starting point for the major considerations when planning and selecting their wedding photographer.

We are often asked to supply information for our perspective clients. We thought that by producing a guide identifying the key points would allow us to discuss our wedding photography with our clients on a more informed basis and allow for better understanding between both parties.

We hope that you find this guide informative and enjoy the topics enclosed.

Should you have any questions please drop us an email at contact@shotsofyouphotography.co.uk or give us a call on 07817 693343 to discuss.

Shots of You photography

A) Wedding Photography Styles

The average wedding in the UK costs anywhere between £12,000 and £22,000 depending on where you look. In addition to documenting one of the most wonderful moments of your life you're also going to want to record the fabulousness of your dress, the gorgeousness of your flowers, the stunning venue, the sumptuous food and of course your delightful friends and family. Good wedding photography is the answer. However, there are thousands of wedding photographers out there touting for business – how do you know which one to choose? Get it right and you'll be enjoying the images with your grandchild, get it wrong and you'll be kicking yourself forever.

The first thing you've got to consider is what type of wedding photography do you want. Flick through any wedding magazine and you'll get a sense of the various styles of images that are in vogue. Do you want a formal approach or a more casual style? Make this decision at the beginning of your search and you'll save yourself loads of time.

These are your wedding pictures and not those of your parents or grandparents. Wedding photography has changed over the years and generally speaking stiff formal group shots are out and a more casual reportage style is in, so while it's nice to please everyone the style of photography needs to reflect you.

Reportage

What is the 'reportage' style that's so popular at the moment? It's a style of photography that is seemingly 'unplanned' and more laid back. A good reportage approach will tell the story of your wedding day as it unfolds with a poetic grace. However, shooting in this way is not as easy as it looks. A photographer takes photographs as the day unfolds capturing moments as they happen rather than taking posed shots. Not to be confused with natural shots, reportage will not show any specific group or have any kind of structure. Natural shots can be slightly posed without being forced and will mean that certain photographs can be requested such as one of the flower girl and page boy or one of the Groom with his Best Man and Ushers. Reportage looks great in an album but most people like some slightly more posed shots that they can frame and send to Granny for her mantelpiece.

Formal

The true definition of a formal photograph is one where the family members can be clearly seen and depicted. A photographer will put the group at ease and ensure the pose is natural and without being forced. Often treasured in years to come, these images are a great family record of the wedding. Keep in mind that a posed shot might take from five minutes, in case of two three people, up to twenty minutes for large groups.

Avant-garde

This style is best used sparingly to really add something special to the album. Angles and lines are used frequently as a backdrop with the Bride and Groom being the main focal point. Perspective can be used to add interest and the overall effect is usually very dramatic. This style is also known as Modern.

Photojournalism

Wedding Photojournalism has become a very popular style of wedding photography and is essentially a series of candid photographs covering the events of the entire day. It appeals to the Bride and Groom that require a series of unique photographs designed to “tell a story” or narrate the wedding day.

This style is also known as Contemporary.

It's essential to see samples of a photographer's work. A professional wedding photographer is likely to post their absolute best shots on their site – with good reason. However, it's important that you also see what a wedding looks like in full. Choose a shot you like and ask to see all the images from that wedding, it'll give you a better idea of what the photographer's made of. A good wedding photographer will have sample albums – this way, not only can you see a full wedding you'll also be able to see printed versions of the final images. It's much easier to make a wedding photo look good on a computer screen than it is in print.

Browsing the web is a good place to start looking, however, don't be seduced by cool web design and fancy music – you're looking for a good photographer not a web designer.

B) Your chosen venue location

When choosing your wedding location and venue it's advisable to consider how your images will represent your day, and it's important that you think about the issues.

It's important to remember the images you will be able to produce at the wedding location and venue will only be influenced by the visual conditions available. If you have any concerns at this stage then consider your options. A compromise as to style and location could still give a great album whereas inflexibility may restrict your choices. At this stage you should research and compile image styles that will allow you to have a clear idea of what types of images that they want from the photographer.

This is a key point for the Bride and Groom: a good photographer will not be able to recreate exotic locations or marble walls in a wedding album unless the location of the wedding is to be held at such a place. However, a good well skilled photographer will give your images flair and dramatic options. Not just church and group shots. Look at the photographer's works for images that capture your imagination, this way you know that they will get the best option.

When choosing your wedding venue be aware that some venues tend to recommend a list of 'preferred suppliers or partners' pretending to have long business relationship with them; in actual fact, both the venue and the supplier – many of those are wedding photographers – get a commission from your choice. This is because both businesses want to supply you their services so they recommend one each other and what happens is that the final price, what you pay for your wedding photography, has to be increased to pay back the commission. So distrust those preferred partners' recommendations when booking your venue and, indeed, do your research to independently find the right wedding photographer.

Our 'secret recipe'

Some of the most memorable images we have taken have been captured off site from the wedding and reception venue, opportunities whilst travelling from the church to the venue can often give some surprising results. From trolley buses, sunny corn fields to country lanes on summer days, the time between the couple without guests often allows for that special time together for individual photographs, ones for the Bride and Groom alone.

Allowing twenty to thirty minutes while guests are served drinks and canapés, it's a precious time to take magical romantic shots of the married couple that will make a huge difference in the album and give them a very special memories because of the stress-free situation.

C) Find a wedding photographer

Congratulations, it sounds like you're about to set the date and you're thinking of recording your big day with photographs, albums and pictures for you, your parents and your family and friends.

Photographs are the lasting reminder of your wedding day. They record the atmosphere of your wedding, your choice of dress, colours, venues and guests. They will be on display in your home, and the homes of the people who shared the day with you, or those who were unable to attend. They are a record of the most special day of your life for you to look back on with future generations.

It is important then to find a photographer who is well qualified, experienced and aware of the requirements for your special day. You need to feel absolutely sure that the photographer you choose will capture the essence of your wedding and be able to make you and your guests look a million dollars.

There are many wedding photographers out there, few hundred per county. It must be difficult to understand which one is the right one for you because many of them may 'look' the same, but in reality, there are huge differences.

The first thing most couples do is to go straight to the internet and search "wedding photographer". Inevitably 16,100,000 results pop up in 0.14 seconds and from page one you've got the list. As the list is still long, a good practice is to go and meet personally wedding photographers at wedding shows/fairs. Here you can look at their portfolio, ask the many questions you have and, if it's worthwhile, arrange a free, no obligation meeting.

Professional photographers should be able to offer you such meeting, absolutely free of charge, because it's a way to show you their works and the various photography solutions available to you. Also, the meeting should end with no pressure at all on your decisions – if that is the right photographer, he/she will wait for your decisions to be taken freely.

There are many things to take into account when meeting a wedding photographer. A couple of which are particularly important.

Check that the photographer is a 'professional' one, not a hobbyist or a weekender, by asking him/her the accreditation to a professional association and the technical preparation. The affiliation will not necessarily guarantee quality or service but you will know that the photographer takes the service that provides seriously to their clients.

Then check if he/she fully insured. He/she should have a Public Liability insurance: should a simple accident occur with him/her, any of their equipment or any third party injury or claim you can rest assured that your family and guests are covered. Also, he/she should have the Professional Liability insurance, which covers the Bride and Groom against the loss of images due to photography issues and offers levels of compensation for a variety of occurrences.

Other important things to look for:

- A professional, working photographer should be updating his/her book regularly
- The ability to capture a moment, an emotion in a creative and unique style
- A flair for making the ordinary appear beautiful
- The ability to make the images tell a story, not only by using a photobook
- The confidence to work under any weather, light condition and time constraints
- Confidence in shooting one person or a group of 150+ people
- An eye for using different locations well to set the stage for the photographs
- Use of light to enhance the mood of the photographs
- Formal, posed photographs which work well to the eye when requested, while giving priority to spontaneous, relaxed un-posed images

Look at the work and decide if it speaks for itself.

If it does, you are ready and confident to move on to the next stage of the discussion: the fees.

The relationship with the Photographer

You are commissioning an artist, and if there is a lack of rapport between you, this could show up in the final product. If you want wedding photography which feels personal, your photographer should invest time in getting to know you and even in visiting your venue and pre-planning shots. It's about building a relationship. After all, this is the person who is producing the images of one of the most important days of your life.

To help steer communication in a clear manner, a photographer should keep up to date with the details of your day, and should provide a contract or terms in which they sum up what is expected of them:

- What the photographer is expected to do and provide for the fee agreed
- What the clients are expected to provide in order to assist the photographer in getting the best shots possible
- Details of the shoot – where, when, schedule, guest list, check-list, etc
- Fees exchanged

Agreeing this few months in advance means that client and photographer are moving towards the same goal – everything running smoothly on the day that counts, and the resulting images being the best they possibly can be.

Getting on with your wedding photographer is more important than people give credit for. Naturally you want to appear relaxed and happy in your shots. This isn't going to happen if you're getting frustrated by an annoying weasel of a photographer. You don't need to be best buddies for the rest of your life but you do need to get on with each other. Arrange a meeting in person before you book. Not only will you get a sense of their personality you'll also have an opportunity to discuss details, and see hard copy examples of their images and albums.

Many photographers offer a pre-wedding or engagement shoot and this is a brilliant way for you to see how they work and get a sense of how they'll be interacting with you. It's also good for the photographer to get a sense of your good side before the big day.

10 questions to ask a wedding photographer

1. What is your photography style, do you shoot reportage (photojournalistic) or traditional (posed and formal) or a mixture of both?
2. How much do you charge and what exactly does this cover?
3. Will you be the photographer attending the wedding?
4. How will you show me the pictures after the wedding? Will I receive proof prints or an online gallery?
5. How will you make it easy for our guests to order reprints and how much are they?
6. Do you offer a pre-wedding shoot?
7. How long have you been a wedding photographer and how many weddings do you shoot a year?
8. Do you have a backup in the event that you're ill or cannot make it?
9. Will we be dealing with you after the wedding?
10. Do you have a contract and what is your payment policy?

Wedding Photographer prices

Your budget will have a big influence on which photographer you hire. The cost can vary dramatically from a few hundred pounds to a few thousand and more. To a certain extent, you get what you pay for. An experienced, confident, creative and reliable photographer who's been shooting weddings for years will most likely deliver on their promises and cost a premium. A new and inexperienced snapper just starting out should be a lot less expensive, but of course there's a gamble that it could all go pear-shaped. Think around 10-12% of the total wedding budget – perhaps about £1,500 – as a rough ball park.

Many photographers will factor in making additional cash from the sale of reprints, there's nothing wrong with this, it's an important part of the business model. However, make sure in advance that you're fully aware of what's included in your package, and exactly how much additional prints will cost.

Some photographers will offer to sell you a CD or DVD of all the images. While it's nice to have these you've got to consider that you're a lot less likely to be able to get decent prints from them than the photographer is able to get. Do you have a relationship with a professional lab and understand the jargon? If not leave it to the professionals.

Generally, photographers at the top of their game will not sell the original files or negatives. If you do negotiate buying the original files you'll also need to establish if they've been 'processed' to make them look better or if they're straight out of the camera. Again, if they're straight out of the camera and you're not confident with the major graphic and retouching techniques, leave it to the professionals

Quality

As a 'non-photographer' how do you assess the quality of a photographer's work? To an extent the work should speak for itself and good quality should be easy to spot. Many of the better wedding photographers get their bookings from word of mouth and this is still the best advertisement for them and the best peace of mind for you. However, you need to be sure that the results you get are in line with what the photographer is telling you they can achieve. Here are few things to look for in order to set your mind at ease.

- How many weddings has the photographer shot?
- Are there positive testimonials?
- Is the photographer qualified or affiliated with a professional organisation?
- What equipment does the photographer use – is it pro spec gear?
- Is this their full time job, a weekend job or something they just do for fun?
- Are the sample images taken from weddings they shot or ones they assisted on?
- Were any of the sample images taken at a wedding photography training session?
- Which photo lab do they use to make prints?
- Which album manufacturer do they use?
- Do the images look sharp, does the colour look natural, do they look too dark or too light?

What do you get?

Be very clear from the beginning exactly what you're getting for your money. Some photographers offer overly complicated combination packages so make sure it's clear and written in a contract. In some cases you'll get the complete service which can include: pre wedding shoots, assistant photographers, a studio set up, trash the dress shots after the wedding, full coverage on the day, proof prints, online albums, deluxe albums, parent

albums framed prints and much more. But everything has to be defined and agreed at the time of booking, when you both sign the contract and agreed on all costs.

The important thing is to know what you're expecting to avoid disappointment. An average wedding package is likely to include full coverage on the day – from bride getting ready to the first dance – plus proof prints or online album and a basic photo album with 60 or so images.

Shop around

Good wedding photographers get booked up quickly, so once you've decided on your date and venue, make securing a photographer a top priority. The web is great place to look, as are wedding fairs and specialist bridal magazines. Once you've refined what you want, you've got a good idea of style and budget that works for you, start narrowing down to one or two. Arrange to meet in person so you can see what they're like and are able to see how their images and albums appear in print.

Post wedding photo packages

Proofs should usually be available in a week or two, often by the time you get back from your honeymoon. These are typically revealed online or as proof prints (which may be watermarked), from which you can order prints.

Many packages will include an album with a certain amount of pictures – between 60 and 100 is a good amount for an average sized wedding and should be sufficient to tell the story. We would recommend that you make this selection with the photographer as they'll have a good idea of the visual story and can help guide on key images and also supporting detail shots which will help construct the overall story of your day.

Payment

It's pretty standard to pay a deposit to secure a photographer's services for a specific day. Good pro photographers are in hot demand. Traditionally the balance used to be paid on the day, however it's becoming increasingly popular for this to be paid a few days or a couple of weeks prior to the event. There's an element of trust involved, but it does leave you free to enjoy your day without vendors lingering around for payment when you want to have fun.

Wedding photography contract

You must insist on a written contract that clearly indicates key expectations. It's pretty normal for photographers to have standard contracts that cover most of the points listed below. If your chosen photographer doesn't have one then that alone should raise some questions about their seriousness. Even if you're not using a full time professional it's fairly easy to put together a document. Here are some things that should be included:

- The name of the photographer that will be shooting your wedding.
- The time and location that cover when photography starts and finishes.
- When proof prints will be available.
- A detailed description of what's included, before the day, on the day and afterwards.
- A list of guaranteed reprint prices.
- All additional charges, services, travel and extra time.
- An explanation of the backup plan in case the photographer can't make the day.
- Deposits that have been made and amounts still owed and when final payments are expected.
- Your name, address and phone number. The names and addresses of the ceremony and reception locations.

D) Planning the Big Day

If the Bride and Groom wish to have images recorded of them both getting ready for the big day, generally they will be in two locations. So the photographer will either price for a second shooter or attend both locations if possible. If a second photographer is used cost may increase.

Considering to have a pre-wedding shoot not only allows you to have highly memorable images of you two in a more relaxed environment but also allows for a 'signature frame' to be produced for all the wedding guests to sign on the day, or for a nice image to be used on your Thank You for coming cards.

Images Check List

When meeting your chosen wedding photographer, it's good practice to go through the main shots of your wedding day to see which ones are really important to you and which can be left out.

You can think of a structured shooting day like this:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Pre-ceremony | Bride preparations (Groom preparation can be added) The boys at the church/ceremony site Other Arrivals Heading to the ceremony |
| Ceremony | |
| Reception site | Groups Couple alone The reception Speeches Close-ups Cut of the cake |
| Evening | First dance |

The most important part for any wedding photography check list is TIME.

A summer wedding out of the church at 3pm will be in daylight. A winter wedding out of the church at 3pm will be dark with limited ability for standard photography. Always consider your timings with regard to daylight hours.

The second issue to remember is the time for photography when planning your wedding day. Generally you should consider:

- 20 to 30 minutes for Groom, Bridesmaids, Best Man & Ushers portraits and arrivals
- 10 to 15 minutes for both parents and close family members to arrive
- 20 to 30 minutes post wedding ceremony groups (if any) and guests
- 10 to 30 minutes for venue photography
- 30 minutes for Bride & Groom alone - our 'secrete recipe'

A good professional photographer should help the couple with a prepared Check List and go through it with them so to accurately plan every step of your Big Day and giving you the best advice possible to run a smooth wedding day.

Remember, the wedding photographer is the only person in your party:

- who's not a guest to enjoy the party,
- who knows the plans for the day and so
- can help you sort things out for you in case of any troubles.