



## Ten Tips for Smooth Wedding Day Photography

***One: Build in extra time for pre-ceremony preparations.*** Ask any officiant for the most common reason weddings start late and I'll guarantee you he or she will answer with one word: *hair*. I've seen it happen many times myself: the hair appointment takes longer than anticipated. If your stylist says it will take one hour to do your hair, allow for an hour and a half. Same thing for nails and make-up. Get it done early! Hair can be re-pinned, make-up can be touched up before the ceremony. If you end up with extra time on your hands, use it for a little deep breathing.

***Two: Put your gown on early.*** You've dreamed about this gown for so long...put that baby on! So many brides don't want to put their dress on early for fear of something happening to it before the ceremony. Getting dressed early will ensure that there's plenty of time for wedding day portraits. This is especially crucial if you decided against a formal portrait session before the wedding. If you're running behind, it's no fun to have to throw your dress on, then rush off to the ceremony. Plus, there will be no time for fun pictures with your bridesmaids and the formals will be rushed if there's time for them at all. *Besides, you only get one day to wear your wedding dress!* Getting ready early will also allow you to take advantage of Top Ten Tip number three.

***Three: Plan to do as much photography as possible before the wedding.*** I've yet to meet the bride and groom (let alone their family members) who enjoy hanging around endlessly after the wedding at the church getting dozens of pictures taken. It's no fun to be dragged off the dance floor right when the DJ spins "Superfreak" because there wasn't time to do pictures with your Mom's side of the family before the wedding. Let members of the bridal party and your families know that the bulk of your photography will be done before the wedding in order to get them to the reception even sooner and they'll be more willing to show up early with smiles on their faces.

*Four: Consider -- just stay with me now -- doing couple pictures before the wedding.*

Nobody likes it when I suggest this, but these photos are the most important ones of the day and too often, I'm rushing to finish up just when my creative juices really start flowing. Plus, pre-ceremony couple pictures gets you to the reception even sooner (possibly avoiding a costly cocktail hour). The whole "don't see the bride before the wedding" tradition got started ages ago because marriages were typically arranged by the bride's and groom's families. Often, the bride's family was afraid the groom would refuse to go through with the wedding if he saw her face, so he didn't get to see her before the actual moment he accepted her as his wife. You know that's not the case for you and your sweetie, so why cave to societal pressure to conform? (I'm kidding. I know you want that special moment when he sees you for the first time, but I promise you we can capture "that" moment better if we shoot it before the actual ceremony!) If you really don't want to see each other before the wedding, yet you want those gorgeous, intimate portraits as husband and wife, you must set aside some time -- a minimum of 30 minutes -- either after the wedding or during the reception for couple portraits. If you're still with me, let's move on to Top Ten Tip number five.

*Five: Communicate, communicate, communicate.* With your photographer, your parents and families and your bridal party. Talk to your photographer about your priorities for your wedding photography. Better yet, show him or her pictures from bridal magazines that you love. We won't be offended! It really helps us get a sense of your style and what's important to you when it comes to your wedding pictures. Talk to your parents about your wedding day photography priorities and the schedule you've agreed on with your photographer. If you don't want a lot of post-ceremony formals, tell your parents. If they want those traditional photos, compromise by setting aside time during the reception. Talk to your bridal party about the photographs you'll be doing before the wedding and why it's so important for them to be on time, dressed and ready to go. Make sure everyone knows where they need to be and when. Better yet, arrange for a family member or close friend who's not in the bridal party to do this for you.

*Six: Don't forget about the guys!* Too often, the groomsmen get short shrift in wedding day photography. If it's important to your groom to have some cool pictures with his guys, make sure you appoint a time and place for them all to meet for photographs. I think because the guys don't always get dressed at the same place the way the bride and her bridesmaids are likely to, they often just show up at the church twenty minutes before the wedding. That leaves next to no time for photographs. Now, I'm aware that no guy wants to put that tuxedo on any sooner than he has to, but it's as important for the groomsmen to get dressed early as it is for anyone else being photographed. If the wedding starts at 4:00, tell your groom and groomsmen to be ready for photographs with corsages on (if possible) by 3:00 (earlier if they will have to travel to the wedding site

from the photography location). Better yet, tell them 2:30. That way, when someone is late, and someone is ALWAYS late, it won't throw a monkey wrench into the schedule.

*Seven: Appoint a photo wrangler:* Got someone you'd like to include in the wedding, but can't add any more bridesmaids or groomsmen? Ask that person to be the photographer's liaison. This person knows what the wedding day photography priorities are and acts to keep everyone on schedule, whether that's gently encouraging the bride to go ahead and get in her gown, locating members of the bridal party who are running late, helping the photographer to identify family members who need to be included in group shots and keeping people from drifting away from photography locations while waiting to have their picture taken.

*Eight: Seriously consider hiring a wedding coordinator:* You know it and I know it: weddings are expensive. Many couples choose to economize by doing it all themselves and see wedding planners as an extravagance. Many brides love the entire wedding-planning process, want to be in control of every detail and don't see the need to hire a wedding planner. But professional wedding coordinators are worth their weight in gold when it comes to keeping things running smoothly on your wedding day, including keeping the photography on schedule. Photographers get distracted too, especially when pulled in several different directions by family members who don't know what the bride and groom's priorities are for photography. Most professional planners have different packages to choose from that allow couples to select exactly how involved they need or want their planner to be. Tracy L. Adams of [Adams and Events](#) has a package for "those who plan the entire wedding, but need help on the actual day of." For more information on the many ways a professional wedding coordinator can help on your wedding day, check out the Triangle Bridal Association's website: [www.trianglebridal.com](http://www.trianglebridal.com).

*Nine: Remember, when it comes to wedding photography: "Cheap is never good. Good is never cheap."* If you choose to economize by hiring your photographer to shoot for a few hours only, please don't expect him or her to dash around like crazy trying to cover everything in a brief window of time. A great wedding photographer needs time on your wedding day to craft beautiful photographs that will tell your story. Decide early on how important your wedding day photography is and be willing to pay a professional to capture all those details you've worked so hard on, all the friends and family gathered to celebrate with you and especially, the moments that will pass by too quickly.

*Ten: Feed your photographer:* It's a long day. We start to drag around hour four. And save us the biggest piece of wedding cake. We need the sugar rush to get us through the bouquet toss and sparkler send-off. A glass of chardonnay doesn't hurt either.

*Happy planning!*