

Tips for choosing a wedding photographer

It's a tough job choosing just which wedding photographer you want to photograph your special day. There are a lot of photographers out there, they all seem to work differently, prices seem to vary enormously, and how can you actually know what you are going to get? Well, these are my tips for ensuring as much as you can that you are going to get exactly what you want on your day.

Style

Every photographer does have a way they like to work, but don't worry too much about a photographer's particular style. Actually, if they try too hard to push 'their' style on you that may be a sign that they're only comfortable shooting one way. Discuss with your photographer the sort of shots you want (relaxed, formal, a bit of a mix) and look at a lot of examples of their work! Make sure they know if you want any really bespoke shots, and make sure they work to a pre-agreed list you give them (and that they really do work to that list!).

Equipment

Make sure your photographer is fully equipped to photograph both indoors and outdoors in all lighting conditions. For example, do they have sufficient flash lighting, a variety of lenses, more than one camera? Ask to see if you're unsure – you don't need to know what everything does, but you should be just a little impressed at their gear!

Packages and Prices

Every photographer works differently so it can be quite hard to compare packages and prices. At the end of the day though you are paying for your photographer to be with you a certain amount of time, and to provide you with a finished product. So, check specifically how many hours they will be with you and make sure they start and finish when you want them to. Also check precisely what you will be receiving within the price you are paying once your photos have been taken and edited. Don't end up being sucked into paying for/buying more than you want or need: it happens. As a rule, the more transparent a photographer (and any service supplier) is with their pricing, the more confident you should feel. Make sure you also know how long it will take before you see your pictures and how long after you make your order you will receive your products.

Personality

This is a big one. You need to feel absolutely comfortable with your photographer, and you need to be as sure as you can be that your photographer will not make your guests uncomfortable at all on the day. You should get a good feel for your photographer when you meet them to make the booking, and they should offer to meet you again if necessary to go over your wedding timings/photo list etc, and maybe also to visit your venue together. Discuss with your photographer how they will interact with your guests: judge whether they will be polite, friendly and relaxed or possibly a bit overbearing and bossy on the day.

Experience

It's a little chicken and egg, this one, because every photographer has to start somewhere! So, if you are confident in your photographer, don't necessarily let the fact they've only done a few weddings put you off. However, there is very little substitute for experience. An experienced photographer will know how a wedding works, what can and cannot be done (for example, during a church service), how much time is needed for the different elements of the day, and so on. They should also be able to advise on the amount of time you would need them to cover all the parts of the day you would like covered and as an added bonus, they may also know your venue already.

Another important aspect of their experience is whether they undertake any other types of photography (eg family shoots, or corporate work). If they do, they will probably be comfortable in a greater variety of situations and with a greater cross section of people. This is a good thing! A further question you might

like to pose is whether or not photography is their full time job. If it is, you can be sure that they will take the greatest care over their work for you: it's their livelihood!

And what about the fact that your friend has offered to take your photos? Well, again, if you're confident and you trust them, great, but there is of course only one chance at this and using a professional photographer will give you the best opportunity to get the stunning set of photos you're after.

Recommendations

The very best recommendations are those of previous clients. Your photographer's website should have a good selection of these, so read them and make sure that they are saying the things you want to hear.

Contract/Security

Your photographer should ask you to sign a wedding agreement. This is standard practice and should not scare you. It should be simple and easy to read, maybe one side of A4. Make sure you are happy with the terms. Typically, you will be agreeing – amongst other things - to the terms of payment (ie the deposit and when the balance is due), the limit of the photographer's liability to you if they cannot do the job because they are ill or injured (which should be a full refund of all monies paid) and a model release where you will be allowing the photographer to use photos of you and your wedding for their own promotional purposes. Make sure the contract seems reasonable and ask questions if not.

For your own security and protection, make sure your photographer is fully insured. They should have public liability, professional indemnity and equipment insurance. Ask to see these if at all concerned. Also ask if your photographer is DBS checked. If they are, you can be sure that they will work professionally at all times with children and vulnerable adults.

Copyright

Put simply, by law, copyright in your photographs is owned by the photographer, and what you should get is a license to use and reprint (if applicable) your photographs as much as you wish for your own personal use. If a photographer tells you that you will get the copyright to the photographs, make sure that's what they mean (in a legal sense) and if it's important to you, get them to confirm it in writing. However, with an appropriate license, copyright is completely unnecessary and indeed a professional photographer is highly unlikely to give away their copyright, unless for a very large fee!

And so what about me?

How do I measure up to my own tips? Well, I work hard to ensure you get every photo you require by working specifically to a pre-agreed photo list and I have a full range of equipment which I am happy to show you. My prices are simple and transparent and there are no hidden costs: they are available for you to look at on my website at any time. I will also explain precisely what you will get for your money! Oh, and I take 4-6 weeks to give you your photos. I am friendly and polite and will not upset your guests or be bossy – a smile and a joke works far better. And I will meet you, and visit your venue (with you if you wish), and speak to your vicar if it's a church wedding. I'm a full time photographer and I've done well over 50 weddings: I also do regular family and corporate work as well. My website has lots of testimonials which you are free to read from a large number of wedding, family and commercial clients. I am fully insured, and DBS checked, and will happily explain the agreement to you that I will ask you to sign. And the license I give you for the personal use your photos is unlimited. I'd like to think that's not too bad!

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