



THE
WEDDING
EXPERIENCE

a guide for our fantastic, none-else-like-them, three-cheers-for-you, brides & grooms



W E L C O M E

Welcome, welcome! What an honor and privilege it is to be writing this note to you, our treasured photo friend. This is such an exciting time! I'm sure your mind is racing with all that needs to be planned. It's all very exciting, and...yet it can also be somewhat overwhelming, too. Our goal as wedding photographers 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 should you receive beautiful images, you should also receive an amazing photographic experience. This guide is here to help you plan your wedding day in a way that will allow us to provide you with the BEST experience possible. We're beyond excited to be working with you!! Thank you for the great honor of being your photographers... And welcome to the Steph & Chris Photography family!!



OUR WHY

The summer of 2010 -- We'd just returned from our honeymoon to find a bag on our front porch. Inside was a gift from a dear family friend -- our wedding invitation framed with a picture she took while we exchanged vows. "Hang this in your bathroom," the note attached read. "Every time that you brush your teeth, look at the picture and remember..."

Remember the joy, remember the excitement, remember how you felt. Because, she wrote, not every day in your marriage is going to be like that day. You will both do things in marriage that make the other mad, hurt, and maybe even bewildered why you ever married in the first place.

Every day I looked at that picture and remembered, and by our first anniversary I was convinced. There is GREAT impact in imagery and the role it plays in remembering. I was overwhelmed by the role our wedding photographs had on our marriage... and I realized, I want to do THIS for other marriages.

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So we did.

Since the very beginning, our mission in photography has been to build up marriage and family through photography. When we photograph a wedding day, it's through the vision that those images will be the ones you hang on your wall as a reminder to love. They're the ones that you'll pack last and carefully wrap when you move homes. They're the images that your grandchildren will pour over. They're the silver frame on the shelf.

They're not just for day one of your marriage -- they're for year five, ten, twenty, fifty. They walk with you through your marriage as a reminder of your commitment, and it is an ABSOLUTE privilege and honor to serve you.

M E E T T H E T E A M



STEPH

*Shared stories and celebrations are my love languages. Consider me your personal cheerleader.

*I am a COMPLETE overuser of the smiley emoticon. :) :)

*In my life, I've only had one boyfriend, and I was pretty thrilled when he asked me to marry him.

*I'm a big picture thinker while Chris is the detailed oriented one. Together we make a pretty perfect team.



CHRIS

*Chris loves -- and I mean LOVES -- crispy waffles... and coffee and fried fish. Yum.

*Chris wakes daily at 5:30 a.m. Super human, I say.

*Chris has read every manual for every piece of photography equipment we own. (As a comparison, Steph has read exactly zero.)

*Chris believes running shoes can be worn for all occasions... except your wedding. :)

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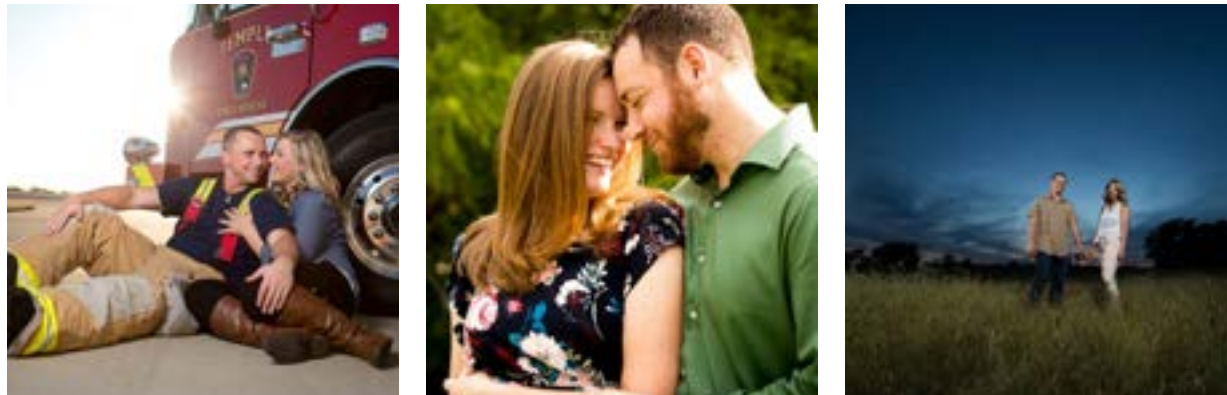
YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Now that you have picked a date, a photographer, and probably a venue, let's celebrate! You have made some of the toughest decisions in wedding planning! Now on to the fun stuff... like your engagement session! We include engagement sessions in this magazine because we truly believe that they are a VITAL part of the entire process. During your engagement session, you'll have the chance to get to know us, experience how we shoot and how we handle posing and lighting. This session will make a HUGE impact on how the wedding day flows. We'll arrive on your wedding day already knowing how you two interact, what your best poses are and how to photograph you in a genuine way! What we learn about you during your engagement session is invaluable! You will feel like 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 at least 3-6 months in advance to avoid stress. Because our weekends are filled with weddings, we try to shoot most engagements on weekday evenings, normally from 5-7 p.m. depending on the light and the time of the year. In the winter months, 3-5 p.m. is a normal time frame. During summer, 6-8 p.m. is a good guess. As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, we can start brainstorming location ideas. If you can't think of anywhere specific that you would like to shoot, we can help you decide on a location! We've shot at farms, campuses, downtown alleys and even green houses! Do not shy away from what you think may be a crazy idea! The more creative, the better! Keep reading to find out more about outfit ideas and inspiration!

ENGAGEMENT PREP

It's always a little intimidating to have your picture taken, and we realize that preparing for your engagement session can bring up some questions. Here are some tips for outfits and accessories we hope will give you great confidence that your session is going to be the greatest!

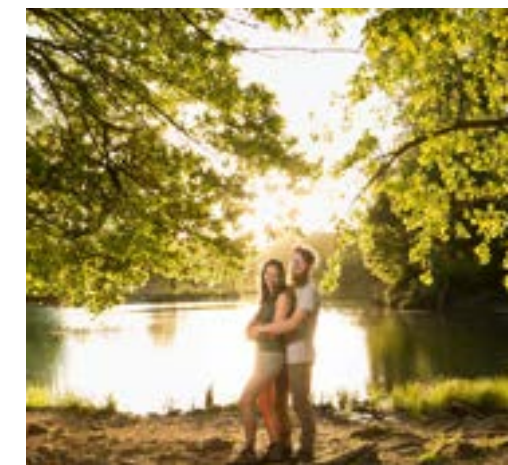
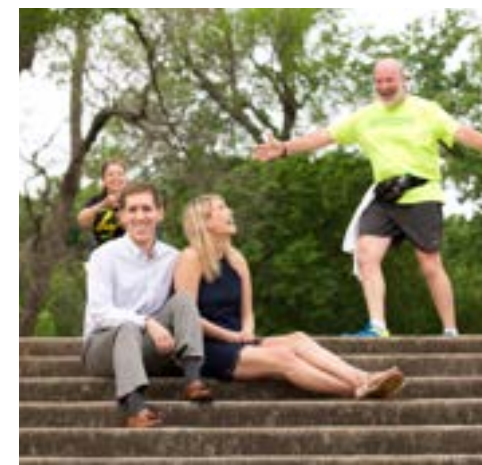
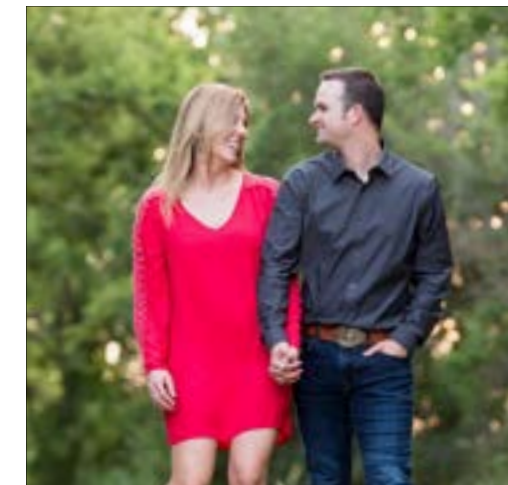
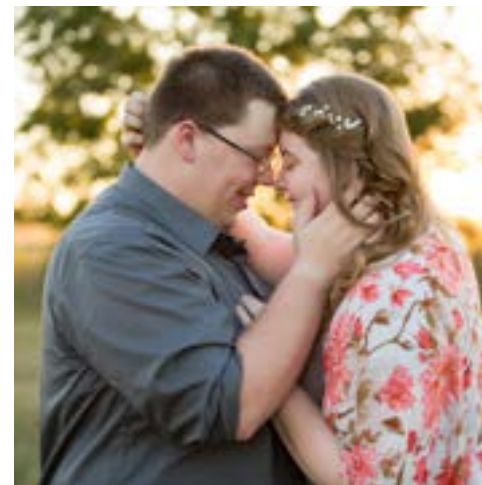


- Instead of trying to MATCH, pick outfits and accessories that COORDINATE. Plan outfits within color families that complement one another.
- TEXTURES AND LAYERS photograph super well. Don't be afraid to be bold! Accessorize and make your outfits your own! Vests in all textures, scarves and bold necklaces are always welcome.
- MOST PATTERNS photograph great. If wearing a pattern, make sure you're not matching with your fiancé. Also, no dueling stripes or plaids. :)
- Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets. (This is for the guys especially!)
- Sometimes, couples like to have one casual, everyday outfit and then one outfit that is dressier. This will give your shoot two totally different "looks." I recommend beginning with the casual outfit first!
- Make sure you're comfortable in what you're wearing. Choose classic clothing that will stand the test of time.
- BE ON TIME! The sun is only out for so long! The later you arrive, the less time we have to shoot! And nobody wants that. :)
- Release any stress you have. This will be a fun time! No matter what you wear it's going to be GREAT! We'll take care of everything. All you need to do is be ready to laugh and have a great time with your fiancé!





OUTFIT INSPIRATION





ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Approximate Start Times

WINTER

Dec-Mar 3-5p.m.

During Dec. through mid-March, you can plan on your engagement session taking place around 3-5 p.m. However, the time changes in mid-March, so that will make the start time one hour later.

SUMMER

Jun-Aug 6:30-8:30p.m.

Summer engagements, just like all engagements, take place two hours before sunset. This will hopefully mean that the shoot will be 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 5:30-7:30 in April and 6-8 in May.

FALL

Sept-Nov - Varies

The sunset time changes drastically during this season. In Sept., plan on 5:30-7:30 until the third week and then you can plan on 5-7 p.m. until mid-Oct. After the first week of Nov, 3-5 p.m.

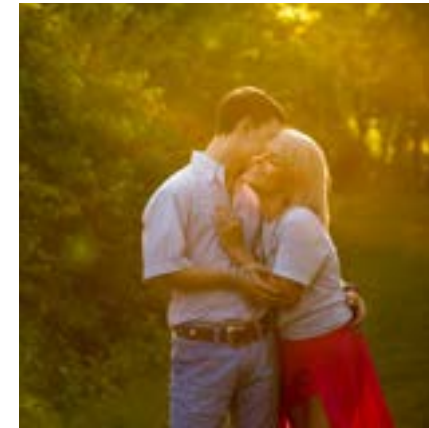
LOGISTICS:

- For the most part, we photograph engagement sessions on weekday evenings because our weekends are dedicated to photographing weddings.
- We love shooting at gorgeous locations. We recommend no more than two locations for engagement sessions. By keeping your session to one or two locations, time isn't spent driving when we could be shooting. If it helps to know what's popular, the majority of our sessions only use one location.
- We can do sunrise sessions if necessary! We encourage sunrise shoots for those who want to take portraits in a very crowded location.





PREPARING FOR YOUR ENGAGEMENTS



PREPARING FOR YOUR ENGAGEMENTS

We receive so many emails from brides who are worried that their groom won't be into engagement portraits. I have great news for you... we are constantly surprising couples by how enjoyable engagement portraits can be! Our most common response after a session is how much fun our couples had and how they can't believe time passed so quickly! Truly, your engagement session is supposed to be fun and relaxed, not forced or awkward. If you're nervous, or if your groom is nervous, here are some steps you can take to ease your nerves. I highly recommend sitting down with your guy and showing him 2-3 of your favorite engagement sessions that we 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 allowing plenty of time to get to your session. There is nothing worse than the stressful feeling that comes when you know you're late! That will definitely damper the beginning of your experience! Most importantly, the very best thing you can do for great portraits is to show up ready to be yourself. You already like being together; we simply tap into that joy and document it for you! When it comes to "poses," we don't force anything -- we want to see how you naturally interact, how you make each other laugh, how you get close to one another. We put you in a beautiful place with beautiful light and guide through posing, but we document real moments that tell the story of you.

YOUR
WEDDING
DAY





PREPARING YOUR TIMELINE



PREPARING YOUR TIMELINE

Let's talk timelines.

Whether you are drawn toward a timeline that keeps your day running as does a captain on a tight ship, or you prefer going with the flow and have a “don't-fence-me-in” aesthetic, you need a timeline.

Whether your day is 5 hours or 12, you need a timeline.

Whether your wedding day takes place at the largest venue in town or in the backyard of the smallest house, you need a timeline.

You need a timeline. :)

Here's why -- A timeline makes sure that you have adequate time for portraits, and it gives you the most wonderful sense of peace knowing that it's all been thought through, and you're getting the best out your photographers.

Zero worries. We are right here to help.

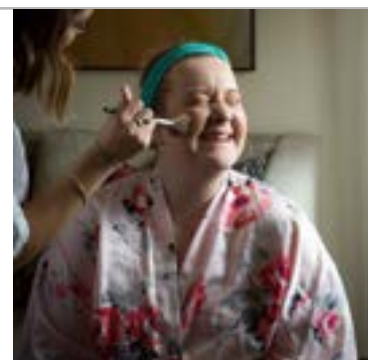
SAMPLE TIMELINE

Bridal Details + Reception Details 2:00-3:00



Keeping a tidy getting ready room can be a challenge but, oh boy, does it make a difference in your photos. As everyone is getting ready, pick one corner to hide all bags and clothes. Heads up for your mom -- I like to have your mom (or mom figure) help you with your final bridal details. Those quiet moments can make for a sweet and emotional portrait.

Bride + Bridesmaid Portraits 3-3:30



2:00-3:00 Bridal + Groom Prep



In addition to taking group portraits and candid photos of you and your bridesmaids, this is also a great time for solo portraits with your parents, siblings and bridesmaids. Let your family know to be ready.

Groom + Groomsmen Portraits 3:30-4:15



All the groomsmen (and the groom's mom, dad and siblings, if they're going to join us) need to be fully dressed by the time scheduled to start the groom's portraits. Groomsmen also need to all have their boutonnieres pinned and ready to go. The groom can be ready up to his pants and shirt and Chris will capture the final details. In addition to the groomsmen portraits, the groom will also be taking solo portraits with his parents and siblings, if desired.

Everyone in Hiding // Photograph Guests As They Arrive 4:30



It's time to get married!! Most ceremonies are 30 minutes long. If your ceremony is longer than 30 mins, we'll make adjustments to the timeline! Cherish these moments! Your ceremony will pass by so quickly!

When we ask our brides and grooms for the top most important things about their wedding, we continuously hear "family." When we photograph your guests as they arrive, we're looking for special moments of joy between your friends and family. These images help you see your day fully, even when you weren't present yet. This is also a good time to exchange letters, if doing so.



5-5:30 Ceremony

THE TIMELINE CONTINUED...

Bride + Groom in Hiding 5:30-5:40



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.

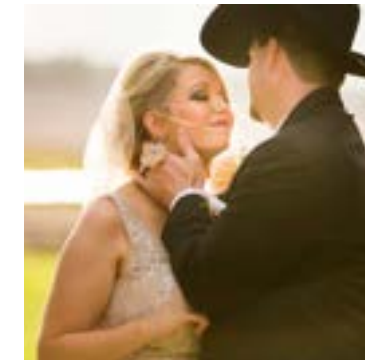
Bride + Groom Portraits 6:10-6:40

The best time for these is 30-45 minutes prior to sunset, but we can take stunning portraits of you no matter the time. :) We leave you time at the end to bustle your dress and take a breather before joining your reception!

Reception Begins 7:00



Optional: Sunset photos



Our most popular package includes 8 hours of coverage -- the example here has coverage ending at 10 p.m. If you plan on staying later than 10 p.m. and would like your exit photographed, there are several options for this! You can either add additional coverage or plan a faux exit! We have had GREAT success with this as it gives older relatives and out-of-town guests the chance to be in on the sendoff. Afterward, the party just keeps going!

We've found that one of the biggest risks of getting off the timeline happens right after the ceremony. As your guests leave the ceremony site, they want to stop and congratulate you -- and rightfully so! You're married!! However, this can postpone portraits and your entry to your reception, so we recommend hiding in a side room for about 10 minutes until the ceremony space clears.



Family Portraits 5:40-6:10

We'll need about 30 minutes for family formals. I will send a questionnaire before the wedding where you can list out the shots that you want. If you feel your list is getting too long, we can photograph family groups at the reception, as well.



Time to celebrate! The timeline gets a lot more loose once the reception begins. If you have any special surprises planned, we want to know about them!

For those brides and grooms who would like sunset photos but the timing doesn't work well with the start of the reception, we like to sneak out for 15 minutes while everyone else is dancing to capture a few portraits during the most beautifully-lit part of the day.



The Exit 10:00

APPROXIMATE TIMES:

DETAILS & PREP : 1 HOURS

BRIDAL PARTY : 30 MINS

GROOM + GROOMSMEN: 45 MINS

FAMILY FORMALS: 30 MINS

BRIDE + GROOM PORTRAITS : 30 MINS TO AS MUCH AS YOU'LL GIVE US!



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 4 p.m. This means that all of your portraits have to be done before then if you want any evening light. This isn't a problem if you're having a late afternoon wedding. However, if you're planning on having a late evening wedding, we should talk about your options for getting just the kind of images you desire.

SPRING

Spring weddings are wonderful because they are the perfect temperature! If you've ever struggled with allergies, we recommend having a dose of your favorite allergy medication on hand just in case allergies start to flare up during portrait time. Spring weddings also 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 8:30 p.m.! So, if you're having a summer wedding, you'll need to plan on having a few minutes to slip out of the reception 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. Usually 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 so very lovely! The temperatures, the colors -- ahhh. We get a number of emails from fall brides worrying about color, and I just want to encourage 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 approve your final timeline!



PRE-CEREMONY



Let the day begin!

This portion of the day really sets the stage for the entire wedding celebration. 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! HOO-RAY! Chris and I traditionally arrive around one hour before the time scheduled for you (the bride) to be completely ready -- hair and makeup done -- and ready to step into your dress. During this hour, I am photographing any details you want documented -- your dress, bouquet, invitations, jewelry, any special family items. I'm also photographing candid moments of you and your bridesmaids together, you and your mom embracing, and all the little things you don't want to forget. When you are ready to step into your dress at the end of this hour, your bridesmaids and mom should be dressed and ready to go. Whether they will be helping you into your dress or not, they need to be picture ready. I will photograph you getting into

your dress and putting on your jewelry. (During this hour, Chris is with the guys. The groom and groomsmen should be dressed up to pants and shirt when we arrive. Chris will photograph the final details of the jacket, tie, cuff links. We will also use this hour to photograph the venue and your decorations.) Other things to consider about the "getting ready" portion of the day: Do you want to share a "first look" with your groom, your dad, or any other person who plays a huge role in your life? Will you and your groom be exchanging gifts or letters during this time? If so, who would you like to deliver them and when? Let's talk through the details. I will help you make time for every important moment.



THE
WINDOW
EFFECT

A simple window can change the look of your prep-shots. Moving you to the window for your makeup, veil placement, etc. will allow natural light to fill your face and the room. Lovely.



RINGS, SHOES, JEWELS ...

The whole day begins with the DETAILS! We photograph a bride's details in a way that matches and showcases the style of the entire wedding day. So, in some ways, the details set the stage for the look of the whole wedding and we love having time to document everything from the floral, to the jewelry, to grandma's handkerchief. To the right, you'll find a list of the most common details that we shoot. We we ask brides to gather any details they have before we arrive so that we can walk in, say hello, give you a big hug and then begin with all the goodies! (Please assure your mom that we'll take GREAT care of the dress, we promise!)

WHAT TO BRING



- dress
- veil / hair pieces
- rings (all three)
- shoes
- bouquet & bout
- jewelry
- perfume
- invitation suite
- heirloom items

DAY-OF REMINDERS



GATHER
the goods.

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 girls!

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 rustic-themed wedding, you could include a piece of burlap or lace, wooden decorative elements, or 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 are 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 for the bride to keep all three until the bridal party portraits so that I can shoot some great ring shots when we arrive! If you forget, no worries, I can always shoot the ring shot at the reception if there is extra time!

BRING
the bouquet.

Don’t forget the bouquet! Have the bouquets delivered to the bride before the first look or portraits with the bridesmaids. No worries, if it’s the weather is hot, we’ll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony!



your bridal party.

Let's chat about your bridal party! I know from experience that all brides want their closest friends to have an AMAZING time during their big day. I will make sure that happens! Bridal party portraits should be a ton of FUN! If all goes well, we will be able to accomplish ALL of your bridal party portraits BEFORE the ceremony. To use our time efficiently, make sure your groomsmen arrive at portrait time wearing their boutonnieres and your bridesmaids arrive with their bouquets!

how to place a boutonniere.

The boutonniere is placed on the left lapel, centered between seams. The pin used should be hidden on the backside of the lapel. To do so, start from the back of the lapel, going away from the man's chest, going through the thickest part of the stem, and then back behind the lapel. The pin should be centered, and if the flowers are heavy, more pins should be used for stability.

When you're planning a wedding day timeline, the best advice I could give is to **ADD CUSHION TIME!** Not everything will go as planned, and I promise you, that is completely normal. Stuff happens. It is 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. There are so many different things to think about when you're planning a wedding day. Here are some tips for the pre-ceremony timeline.



TIMING TIPS



BOUQUETS AND BOUTS

You will need your Bouquet & Bouts for your First Look and portraits. 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 make-up done before I start, as who wants a ton of shots without their makeup? Nobody. :)

GROOMSMEN PREP

Grooms, make sure you and your guys pin your bouts **BEFORE** portrait time. This can take time, so get started at least 15 minutes before portrait time begins.

PRE-CEREMONY PORTRAITS

Invite your parents to the pre-ceremony portrait time. We can take individual portraits (Bride + Mom/Dad & Groom + Mom/Dad) then. Time saver!

CREATE A CUSHION

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



THE BRIDAL BOUQUET

There are many expenses when it comes to wedding planning. Most brides have a budget. Here's a tip that can save money and make a huge impact on the outcome of your images. If you're having trouble making a decision about your florals, here is what I suggest. Make 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. If there are cuts to be made, I recommend investing less on the bridesmaids bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much.

VEIL OPTIONS

If you are opting for a First Look, 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! And 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 several years of weddings!



YOUR FIRST LOOK
EXPLAINED



FIRST LOOK | *Pros + Cons*



WHAT IS A FIRST LOOK?

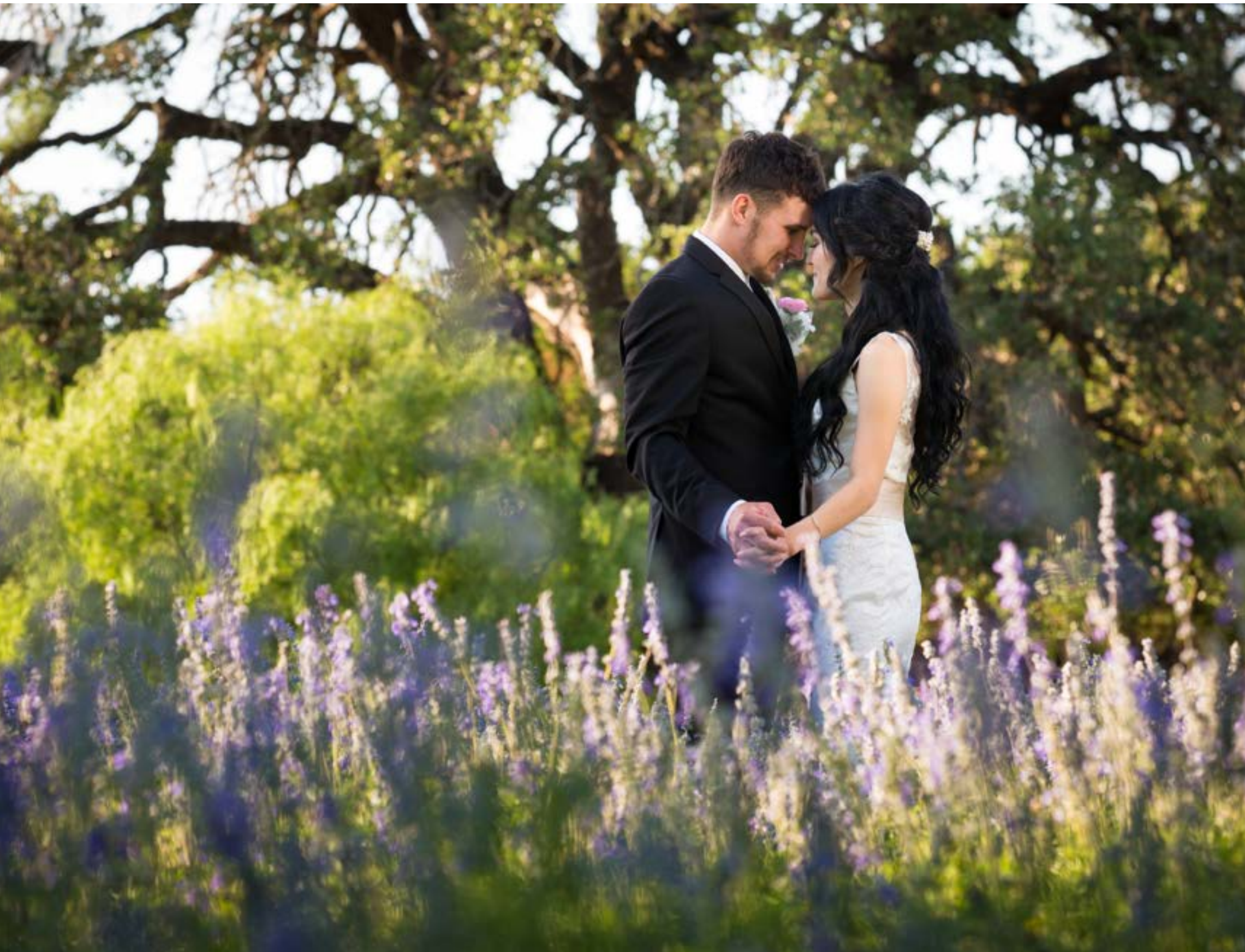
A “first look” is when a bride and groom see each other on their wedding day before their wedding ceremony. It’s a private moment, away from family and friends. It’s a fun and lovely newer wedding day tradition, but it’s not for everyone. Some of our couples do not do a first look for a variety of excellent reasons, and some of our couples want to do a first look for a variety of excellent reasons. :) You see the trend. It’s completely up to you. As your trusted advisor, I’m here to give you the pros and cons so that you can make a decision that is right for you.

WHY YOU MIGHT WANT TO DO A FIRST LOOK

You have more time. For our clients who don’t like an audience, a first look can calm your nerves. Seeing your beloved before the ceremony can be grounding -- and seeing your soon-to-be-spouse in privacy means that moment is yours and yours alone. There’s no rush and you have time to emote. You can hold each other and be in the moment as long as you’d like. Also, brides and grooms who do a first look usually have more time for portraits and you get to enjoy more time with your guests at the reception. When you wait to take your portraits until after the ceremony, things can quickly become hurried. By doing a first look, we can spend 30 minutes, an hour, or even longer taking portraits at multiple locations, if you desire. When a first look is built properly into the day, you have more time together, and that’s a real gift. One of the most popular reasons for a first look comes from winter weddings when it’s going to get dark early. A first look allows your portraits to be taken during daylight.

WHY A FIRST LOOK MIGHT NOT BE FOR YOU

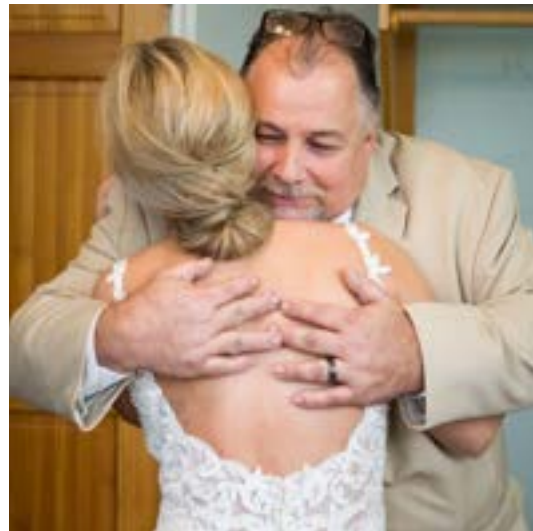
Waiting to see one another until the ceremony is a strong tradition. If it’s important to you or your groom, stick to it! Other reasons: If you do a first look on the wedding day, you have to get up earlier and be in your wedding clothes longer. That can be exhausting on an already full day. There’s also some difficulty in timing: Makeup and hair often run late. The floral delivery can be delayed. If anything runs late before the first look, everything following it runs late as well. We had an experience where the groom forgot his jacket and had to drive back to the hotel. The first look took place, but other image opportunities had to be cut out to make it happen. This was an added stress on the bride. Major delays only happen at a handful of weddings, but they do happen. Or, maybe you just feel weird about a first look -- there’s too much stress on how you or your spouse will react, or you just don’t like the expectation of reaction at all. And, something to consider -- you won’t be married in your portraits. That bothers some people. So, check your feelings: will it be less meaningful to look back on your portraits later?



IF YOU ARE STILL UNDECIDED...

OUR SUGGESTION

There are so many highly individualistic things to consider when deciding on a first look or not, so many that I can't give you a good answer here. Give me a call and let's talk through the timing of your day and your feelings. I will help you determine if it's a good idea or not, but know that ultimately the choice is up to you. We're on your team! Know we will support you in your choice, help you with your timeline, and make it the best it can possibly be! Also, there are other options. A "first touch" (holding hands around a door so you can feel but don't see your partner) can calm nerves. You can pray together. Exchanging letters can be very meaningful and emotional. And to keep portrait time short after the ceremony and get our Steph & Chris classic sunset-style portrait, we've had great success with sneaking out of your reception for portraits. All that to write, you can't go wrong, pal!



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 us 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 we highly encourage any daddy's girl to make time in their timeline for this moment. It doesn't take long at all. The hardest part is making sure dad shows up on time! Another sweet idea we've seen is having the father of the bride escort the bride to her first look with the groom!



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 five minute warning. The bride is about to walk down the aisle to the love of her life . . . and if she's like most, she's dreamed about this moment for a long time. Vows will be made and a legacy will be shared . . . 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 important. If you get married outdoors at noon, the lighting will be extremely harsh. Not only will there be shadows on your faces, you will also be squinting. I suggest planning an outdoor ceremony around 2 hours before sunset. 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, the rest of the bridal party cannot be photographed in even light. There will be shadows. It is better to have soft, even light across the whole altar. Depending on how uneven the light is, we might ask permission to turn off any harsh overhead lights in a sanctuary.

ORDER OF SERVICE

We've seen so many couples do AMAZING things during their ceremony. We've photographed couples washing each other's feet, symbolizing that they want to serve each other for the rest of their life. We've photographed goosebump-raising corporate worship. Some couples share in communion while some light a unity candle. We've seen sand ceremonies, rope ceremonies and the release of butterflies. One groom played the drums during the processional. The options are limitless!! This is your day!! Something to help the documentation of everything -- If your officiant is willing, ask them to stand with their back to your seated guests. That way, instead of only seeing your backs during the ceremony, we will be able to photograph your faces.

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 most families only took one. We ended up with soooo 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

You need to have someone in charge. There are lots of options to make this happen. You can hire a full-event planner, or a day-of coordinator. Some venues come with a day-of coordinator. Or, you can even ask a very organized friend -- maybe someone who was recently married -- to run the day for you. 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 or the BRIDE! When the bride is running around taking lead on floral, decorations and deliveries, the images can suffer. More important than pictures, though, is your experience on this most joyful of days! Make your plans and then pass the reins.

DESTINATION *Weddings*

If you are planning a destination wedding, a lot of the details in this guide will not apply to you! Your details, your timeline and even your preparation for the big day will be much simpler. However, it is a good idea to start thinking about a few key components of the day such as: your ceremony time and your ceremony/portrait locations (some destination weddings require some planning to find portrait locations without tourists in the background). Be sure to check the sunset time at your wedding location before settling on your ceremony time. As your wedding day draws closer, we'll begin to chat about the timeline of the day and the travel arrangements. Get excited!! This is going to be amazing!!





THE IMPORTANCE *of family portraits*

Some of our most treasured images from our own wedding day are our family portraits. We value them more and more with each passing year.

Yet, family formal portraits are no one's favorite part of the wedding day. . . and we totally get it! You just got married! You're joyous, celebrating with the people who love you most. Everything is seen with the haze of happiness! Who really wants to stop all that to line up and look at a camera?

Add to that the past experience of other weddings where family portrait time went long and you were left in the reception hall twiddling your thumbs until the happy couple arrived.

We completely understand this feeling! We strive to make make our family formals sessions fun, easy-going and highly efficient. It is our greatest hope to make family portraits for you that will serve your families for generations.

Here's how we do it -- advance preparation.

Several weeks before your wedding date, we send you our wedding day timeline worksheet. It's of great importance and will 100 percent make your day run smoother if you complete it fully. (It's also a no-stress assignment. If you are ever stumped about something, we can even complete it together on the phone).

It will cover the names of your wedding party, if you'll have a flower girl or ring bearer. We'll go over your parents' names, your siblings, your grandparents. I'll ask you about any situations (deaths/divorces) that we should know about and show sensitivity.

The worksheet helps you decide what family formals you'd like taken. It provides a checklist (also found on page 60) and leaves space for you to add any additional images you'd like taken. This is important so that we know how much time to budget for family formals. It also gives us our marching orders for after the ceremony. We will work directly from this list.

Plan on each grouping of more than five people to take four to five minutes. Smaller groups take approximately two minutes.

Make sure that everyone you'd like photographed knows that they should stay for family portraits. It's a time drain when we have to go searching for missing people.

Do you already have a location in mind for your family portraits? For convenience, it's often a good idea to remain at the ceremony site. If you would like to go elsewhere or have another idea, I would love to hear about it! I can also provide some options if you don't have a place in mind. Something to consider when choosing a location -- it needs to be large enough for your groups and for us. :)

The alter where you married can be a lovely choice for portraits, as it is usually decorated for the ceremony.

If you are marrying outdoors, the ceremony site can be an ideal and picturesque location. A simple background of trees or foliage work well. Staircases can be tricky, depending on how narrow they are.

If you ever feel like the list of family portraits is getting longer than the time you'd like to stay out of the reception, know that we can take as many portraits as you'd like at the reception, too. At the reception, as you make your way around to all your guests, we can photograph you with any and every grouping that you'd like.

We find, for larger families, it's best to photograph the majority of extended family at the reception. This way you're sure to have sunlight for your bride and groom portraits.





Sample List for

FAMILY FORMALS

- B&G with bride's immediate family
- B&G with bride's extended family
 - B&G with bride's parents
 - B&G with bride's grandparents
 - B&G with both sets of parents
- B&G with groom's immediate family
- B&G with groom's extended family
 - B&G with groom's parents
 - B&G with groom's grandparents



PORTRAITS OF THE BRIDE + GROOM

OK, pal.

Consider this.

You are married. You have taken all the important family images. You have been surrounded by people the whole day -- without a first look, the Bride and Groom Creative Portrait time is the first (and often only) quiet moment you have with just you and your spouse on your wedding day.

Deep breath. These are the first moments of your marriage. You are going to want to remember this.



TIME NEEDED

We request 30 minutes with our bride and groom for their creative portraits, but really, we'll take all that we can get! The impact of these portraits is not lost on us. These are the portraits that will hang on your wall for 50 years. They are the ones you bubble wrap and buckle in the front seat when you move. These are worth your time. The best time for these images to be taken is 30-to-45 minutes before the sun sets -- this allows us to capture you both in the best light and take full advantage of Texas' vibrant sunsets.

LOCATIONS

If the ceremony and reception site are the same, then choosing a location for portraits can be as simple as stepping outside. Sometimes, though, the ceremony and reception are at different locations. I'd love to hear more about your vision for this part of your wedding day. We can help schedule your timeline to make it reality. There are so many options -- If doing a first look, you can even build in enough time to leave your venue! Or, if you really value your reception decor and location, we can orchestrate a few portraits during the reception that feature your favorite parts

HOW WE POSE BRIDES + GROOMS

When we photograph you on your wedding day, there are two types of portraits that we do: they are either "camera aware" (aka: eyes at the camera) or "not camera aware" (aka: candid). Unless you tell us otherwise, only a small number of the images are going to be camera aware. The love, connection, emotion and laughter you see in our images are all real. All we do is lay a bit of groundwork -- we put you in the best light, give you posing direction and give you a prompt to complete -- so you can be authentically you. Our number one job is to make you comfortable. So, whatever your relationship and whatever your personality -- tender, joking, loud, quiet, emotional -- you do you. We'll be there to guide the moments, then step back and document them!

VARATIONS

The timing of your creative portraits is traditionally either right after your first look or right after your ceremony. However, if your ceremony ends hours before sunset, we can press pause on your creative portraits, and you can join the reception until the sun is at a more optimal place. Then you and your groom can sneak out of the reception for a few creative portraits. Another scenario, if you are having a daytime ceremony, you can choose to have your bride and groom creative portraits to be done after the party is over and everyone leaves. You have your grand exit, circle the block and then either come back to your venue for your portrait time or we can meet somewhere else

TRUSTING PORTRAIT LOCATIONS

One of our favorite creative parts of a wedding day is taking something ordinary about your surroundings and transforming it into something unique only to you. This happens most often when it comes to picking portrait locations. We love that our couples trust us because our portrait locations, at times, are not considered attractive. For example, the image on this spread was taken in a field behind the church where this bride and groom married. We weren't in the country, but rather right smack in the middle of town. A Wal-mart is directly behind them and other stores -- gas station, strip mall -- are all around. But by getting them on a small hill and us laying down in the grass, we were able to remove the distractions. Even at beautiful venues, there are ways to make your portraits unlike anyone else's. Thank you for trusting us!









THE CASE OF A RAINY WEDDING DAY

One of the most frequently asked questions we receive during wedding season is “Soooo, what do you do if it RAINS?!” I want to reassure you that even if it rains, you will still have beautiful portraits!

We will be your problem-solver. If it rains, if it snows, if it gets dark early, if hair and makeup run late, if we get stuck in traffic -- we’ve got you and your images are going to be amazing.

Here are a few things about a rainy wedding day:

1. All we need to create natural light portraits on a rainy wedding day is a porch! Just one porch!
2. Let us worry about the pictures. You have enough to think about. If there is a chance of rain, we’ll be sure to do some extra scouting to find an indoor or covered location for us to use.
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.



Sometimes there’s a winter wind howling and the rain doesn’t let up, so we do portraits indoors. Looking back over the years, these are some of my favorite creative portraits. Rain can’t keep us from taking beautiful images! No windows, no natural light, just a hallway leading to a nondescript coffee room. Don’t let the fear of rain steal your joy. You can’t control it, and we promise we will make the best of it!!!

RECEPTION DETAILS



The party is here!! Receptions are a blast! Your DJ, or coordinator will be able to help you keep everything running smoothly so you don't have to think about a thing. Here are some things to consider in your planning -- 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. 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 happen often 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 and Garter 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/or DJ should take care of making sure that everything stays on schedule so that you can enjoy your night. Here are some helpful tips that will make 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! If you don't have a coordinator, we can assist!*

- **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.*

- **DON'T GET CAUGHT UP** *in the details. They can steal the joy of the day. Plan your centerpieces, welcome table, etc. well before the wedding date, and tell your coordinator or family friend how you'd like them to look.*

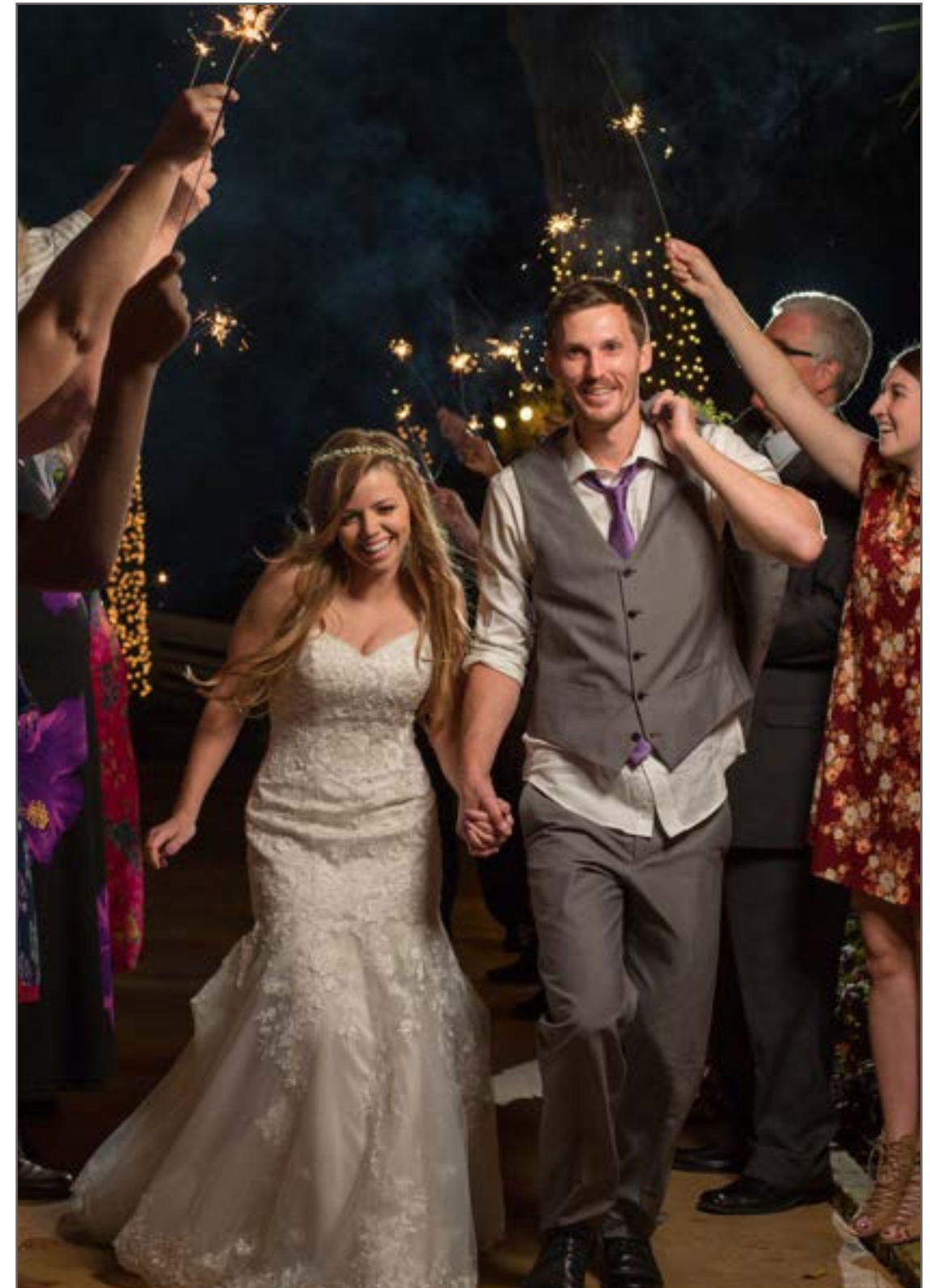
- **RECEPTION COVERAGE** : *If you haven't purchased enough coverage time for your photography to last until the exit, that's ok! We have several options! (See page 79.) I recommend planning your timeline so that you can have at least one hour of dancing photographed. The guests who dance during the 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!*





RECEPTION:
CONTROLLED
EXITS

Exits! If your coverage ends before your exit, you have the option of planning a faux exit! This option is more common than you 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! We've also done controlled exits that included all of your guests! I dare you to look at our blog and see if you can pick out which exits were fake and which were real!



HEIRLOOM ALBUMS



Chris and I have always said that we would grab our wedding album if our house was on fire! Could we always build another wedding album if something happened to this book? Yes. However, there is something special about creating your first heirloom. We made our wedding album right after we were married in 2010 and we treasure it! Having digital images is wonderful, but having a printed keepsake that tells a visual story of our wedding day is priceless! If you haven't already invested in an album of your own, you can always come back to us at any time and order one. We are so proud of every album that leaves our studio and are so honored to be part of creating the first heirloom you have as a new family.

SIZE OPTIONS:

8x8, 10x10, 12x12

SAY THANK YOU WITH A PARENT ALBUM :

Many of our clients don't have any trouble picking out their parents' Christmas gifts the year they get married. They surprise them with their very own albums on Christmas morning! After the wedding chaos is over and life returns to normal, or if you want to surprise your parents with their very own albums from your wedding for Christmas, let me know before November 1st so we can get them ordered!





YOUR ONLINE GALLERY

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 on the next page that will help you understand your online gallery and all that it can do! 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 name and email. Once you enter your name and email, 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.

ACCESSING YOUR PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE:

The online gallery system that we use has a mobile app that is free to download! In this free app, you'll be able to access your gallery (both wedding and engagement galleries) and you can download images to your phone for clear, crisp Instagrams!

ORDERING PRINTS:

You can order professional and affordable prints from within your online gallery and have them shipped directly to your house! You are more than welcome to print images on your own. However, I would warn you to avoid Walmart, Walgreens, 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 Mpix.com!

GALLERY EXPIRATION:

Your online gallery expires after one year. We recommend downloading and saving them in multiple places for safe keeping!

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, yet we would love some type of credit whenever you use an image on social media! We only have ONE rule when it comes to what you can and cannot do with our work. We always encourage our clients not to re-edit their images. Let us do that hard work! However, 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!

KIND WORDS FROM PAST BRIDES



“...best decision I made”

“Steph and Chris are amazing! Steph has such a wonderful and lovely personality. It felt like we had been friends forever the moment we met. They were so patient and flexible with me which was super helpful since I was planning the wedding from another state. They gave great advice and made every moment fun! I am not photogenic at all but they made the whole process easy! I can honestly say picking them as our photographers for our wedding was the best decision I made!”

-Sarah K.

“...all these worries instantly fell away”

“Such an amazing experience! I was so worried about taking pictures because I am not comfortable in front of a camera, but with Steph and Chris all of these worries instantly fell away! I have never had more genuine pictures taken, we were so relaxed and totally impressed with our pictures!”

-Jamie M.

“...they genuinely care”

“Steph and Chris have followed us through our marriage journey first with shooting our engagements then bridals and finally our big day! They are so much fun to work with and they genuinely care about their clients. They always made it priority to capture what we wanted and to represent us as the couple we truly are. All of our pictures came out even better that we could dreamed! We will cherish them for a lifetime as well as our wonderful experience with Steph and Chris!”

-Mallory M.

“...you will not be disdiappointed”

Where to begin?! Steph and Chris did our engagements, my bridal portraits, and our wedding day photos, all of which turned out fabulous! They provided us with beautiful images that captured the happiness and love we share! We were beyond please with the work they did and how they really paid attention to the special images we wanted as well as capturing some great candid moments. We cannot thank them enough for being such an important part of our big day! You will not be disappointed!”

-Devin S.



THANK YOU!

Last, but certainly not least, THANK YOU for trusting us with your special day. Chris 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 -- your marriage is the thing 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 wedding date and package, our next step would be to finalize an engagement session! Also, a few weeks before the wedding, you'll receive an email with a 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, Steph & Chris