

Questions to Ask a Wedding Photographer



You've put so much time and effort into planning your wedding you'll want every special moment captured in photos. But how do you know which photographer is right for you? Whether you're considering any of our *Certified By The Guide* wedding photographers or another professional, you need to do your homework.

Here are the questions you should ask those photographers who've made your short list, to ensure that the one you ultimately choose is a good fit for you and your wedding.

The Basics

1. Do you have my date available? **NOTE:** *Obviously, if the answer is NO and you're not willing or able to change your date, don't bother asking the rest of these questions.*
2. How far in advance do I need to book with you?
3. How long have you been in business?
4. How many weddings have you shot? Have you done many that were similar to mine in size and style?
5. How would you describe your photography style (e.g. traditional, photojournalistic, creative)? **NOTE:** *It's helpful to know the differences between wedding photography styles so that you can discuss your preferences with your photographer. For descriptions of the various styles, see the next page.*
6. How would you describe your working style? **NOTE:** *The answer should help you determine whether this is a photographer who blends into the background and shoots what unfolds naturally, or creates a more visible presence by taking charge and choreographing shots.*
7. What do you think distinguishes your work from that of other photographers?
8. Do you have a portfolio I can review? Are all of the images yours, and is the work recent?
9. What type of equipment do you use?
10. Are you shooting in digital or film format or both? **NOTE:** *The general consensus seems to be that either format yields excellent photos in the hands of an experienced professional, and that most people can't tell the difference between film and digital images anyway. However, film takes longer to process than digital.*
11. Do you shoot in color and black & white? Infrared? **NOTE:** *Photographers who shoot in a digital format can make black & white or sepia versions of color photos.*
12. Can I give you a list of specific shots we would like?
13. Can you put together a slideshow of the engagement session (along with other photos the couple provides) and show it during the cocktail hour?

What about an "instant" slideshow of the ceremony?

14. What information do you need from me before the wedding day?
15. Have you ever worked with my florist? DJ? Coordinator, etc.? **NOTE:** *Great working relationships between vendors can make things go more smoothly. It's especially helpful if your videographer and photographer work well together.*
16. May I have a list of references? **NOTE:** *The photographer should not hesitate to provide this.*

The Shoot

17. Are you the photographer who will shoot my wedding? If so, will you have any assistants with you on that day? If not, who will be taking the pictures and can I meet them before my wedding? **NOTE:** *You should ask the questions on this list of whoever is going to be the primary photographer at your event, and that photographer's name should be on your contract.*
18. Do you have backup equipment? What about a backup plan if you (or my scheduled photographer) are unable to shoot my wedding for some reason?
19. If my wedding site is out of your area, do you charge a travel fee and what does that cover?
20. Are you photographing other events on the same day as mine?
21. How will you (and your assistants) be dressed? **NOTE:** *The photographer and his/her staff should look professional and fit in with the style of your event.*
22. Is it okay if other people take photos while you're taking photos?
23. Have you ever worked at my wedding site before? If not, do you plan to check it out in advance? **NOTE:** *Photographers who familiarize themselves with a location ahead of time will be prepared for any lighting issues or restrictions, and will know how best to incorporate the site's architectural elements into the photos.*

24. What time will you arrive at the site and for how long will you shoot?
25. If my event lasts longer than expected, will you stay? Is there an additional charge?

Packages, Proofs and Prints

26. What packages do you offer?
27. Can I customize a package based on my needs?
28. Do you include engagement photos in your packages?
29. What type of album designs do you offer? Do you provide any assistance in creating an album?
30. Do you provide retouching, color adjustment or other corrective services?
31. How long after the wedding will I get the proofs? Will they be viewable online? On a CD?
32. What is the ordering process?
33. How long after I order my photos/album will I get them?
34. Will you give me the negatives or the digital images, and is there a fee for that?

Contracts and Policies

35. When will I receive a written contract? **TIP: Don't book a photographer—or any vendor—who won't provide a written contract.**
36. How much of a deposit do you require and when is it due? Do you offer a payment plan?
37. What is your refund/cancellation policy?
38. Do you have liability insurance?

Questions to Ask Yourself:

1. Do I feel a connection with this photographer as well as his/her photos? Are our personalities a good match?
2. Am I comfortable with this person's work and communication style?
3. Has this photographer listened well and addressed all my concerns?

TIP: Check references. Ask the photographer for at least 5 references, preferably of couples whose weddings were similar to yours in size and/or style. Getting feedback from several people who have actually hired the photographer in question can really help you decide if that person is right for you. Be sure to check out the photographers on HereComesTheGuide.com. They're some of the best in the business and have all been Certified By The Guide.

Photography Style Glossary

Though there are no standard "dictionary definitions" of photographic styles, it's still a good idea to have an understanding of the following approaches before you interview photographers:

Traditional, Classic: The main idea behind this timeless style is to produce posed photographs for display in a portrait album. The photographer works from a "shot list," ensuring he or she covers all the elements the bride and groom have requested. To make sure every detail of the shots is perfect, the photographer and her assistants not only adjust their equipment, but also the background, the subject's body alignment, and even the attire.

Photojournalism: Originally favored by the news media, this informal, reality-based approach is the current rage in wedding photography. Rather than posing your pictures, the photographer follows you and your guests throughout the wedding day, capturing events as they unfold in order to tell the story of your wedding. The photographer has to be able to fade into the background and become "invisible" to the crowd in order to get these candid or unposed shots. Since the photojournalist does not give direction, (s)he'll need a keen eye and a willingness to "do what it takes to get the shot." Many photographers refer to this style of photography as a "documentary" style.

Illustrative Photography: This style, which is often used for engagement photos, is a pleasing blend of traditional and photojournalistic, with an emphasis on composition, lighting and background. The photographer places subjects together in an interesting environment and encourages them to relax and interact. Illustrative captures some of the spontaneity of candid, while offering the technical control of posed shots.

Portraiture: Traditional photographers generally excel at the precision required in portraiture—formal, posed pictures that emphasize one or more people. Couples interested in a more edgy result may prefer Fine Art Portraiture, with its dramatic lighting, unique angles and European flavor. In the wedding world, you may hear this style referred to as the "formal portraits." These formal photographs include posed shots of the bride and groom, as well as portraits with family members.

High Fashion: Commercial photographers excel at creating striking, simple photographs that dramatize the subject—and, of course, the clothes! Though not a style generally included in wedding photography, you may want to choose a photographer with high fashion experience if looking artsy and glamorous while showing off your dress is important to you...or if you want your wedding photos to end up in a stylish bridal magazine or blog!

Natural Light: Rather than using a camera flash, photographers use the natural light found in a setting, usually daylight. The look is warm and, well, natural—yet the photographer must be skilled to deal with shadows and other lighting challenges.