

MAKE IT CLICK

FIND, HIRE AND WORK WITH A WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER YOU
CONNECT WITH. HERE'S HOW.

You know the phrase, "Time flies when you're having fun?" Well, take it from recent brides and grooms everywhere (myself included): If there's one day in your life when time flies by way faster than all the rest, it's your wedding day. One minute, you're putting the finishing touches on your makeup, and the next thing you know, the DJ is announcing the final song of the evening (of course, you're having the

time of your life in between). Your wedding should be an unforgettable celebration for you, your new spouse, and your guests, which is why, for most newlyweds, the 10 or 12 hours of hugs and toasts, drinking and dancing, laughter and happy tears, are somewhat of a blur. But that doesn't mean your photos should be. Which is why finding your perfect wedding photographer is so important.

WRITER EMILY BLASIK | PHOTO J. COGLIANDRO PHOTOGRAPHY



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- ADAM NYHOLT

ASK AROUND

Soon after getting engaged, you and your spouse-to-be might decide to chill on Cloud Nine for a few days (or weeks) before diving into the wedding-planning process.

While a bit of downtime to share your good news with family and friends, and enjoy it yourselves, is definitely encouraged, researching potential photographers should be one of your first priorities once you've picked a date, according to Holly Guillaume of Inspired Image Artists—especially if you plan to have engagement photos taken. “Many wedding photographers book up months or even years in

advance,” she says, so don’t wait until the last minute to make a decision.

Choosing the right photographer, kind of like finding the love of your life, takes time: You want someone who is reliable and trustworthy, has a good sense of humor and a positive attitude (even in the most stressful situations), and who truly gets you. But if you have no idea where to begin, photographer Adam Nyholt says it’s a good idea to “ask for referrals from people you trust,” and who have a similar style as you. “This could be a friend who was recently married or your wedding

planner,” or a trusted resource such as Weddings in Houston.

FEEL THE SPARK

Once you have a few reliable recommendations on hand, let the browsing begin. Most professional photographers have their own website and blog, which makes it extremely easy for prospective clients and curious brides like yourself to peruse their photos, read about their experiences on the job, and get a feel for their artistic style.

Don’t be afraid to cyber-stalk their sites for inspiration, and then let your

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- HOLLY GUILLAUME

emotions do the deciding: “Samples of a photographer’s work should spark a feeling inside of you,” says photographer Christa Elyce, who describes her photographic style as reflecting “an all-over feel of romance.”

Lindsay Elizabeth Strode of Lindsay Elizabeth Photography says that the easiest way to determine your favorite photography style is by “picking images you’re drawn to.” In other words, think of your future wedding photos as paintings on a wall. What kind of art pieces would you choose to hang up in your own home? “If a couple would love to see

bright, clean and airy photos of themselves, they should look for a photographer who specializes in shooting natural light,” adds Strode.

If edgy, artistic photos are more your thing, go with a photographer who can use shadows, dim lighting and sharp lines to their advantage. When you find yourself completely enamored by a photo or collection of photos from a certain photographer, chances are you’ve found your style doppelganger. Add them to your list, and set up a phone call or in-person appointment, pronto.

PLAY DETECTIVE

You’ve received several promising reviews of local photographers from friends, scoured the internet for WOW-factor wedding photos, and constructed a list of at least three to five potentials that you can easily see documenting your momentous trek down the aisle. So far, so good!

When you’re ready to reach out to these photographers, it can be tempting to skip the phone chat altogether and simply rely on email to do the talking for you. This is fine for introductory inquiries, like pricing and availability, but David Jones of D. Jones Photography encour-



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- LINDSAY ELIZABETH STRODE

ages brides- and grooms-to-be to “interview or meet with the photographer” in person as well. Aside from being confident in their photo-taking abilities, you also want to find out if they are someone with whom “you truly feel comfortable,” he adds, “since there are a lot of emotions that clients will experience on the big day.” The only way to know if the two of you will click? Face-to-face communication!

If you’re not sure exactly what to ask, take a cue from the professionals. Photographer Steve Lee suggests that couples first inquire about the turnaround time, or the time it will take after

the wedding is over to receive your edited photos: “I’ve heard many horror stories about couples who had to wait six months or longer,” says Lee, whose team takes no more than two to three weeks to get photos back to the couple.

According to Elyce, it’s also crucial to “find out what the photographer does to protect their images and prevent them from being lost, corrupted, or misplaced.”

Ideally, you want a photographer who has a backup plan—and insurance—for any worst-case-scenario disasters that might arise on the big day. “There are no do-overs at a wedding,” says Jones, who, in

his 23 years of experience, has seen it all. Accidents happen, and the ideal candidate is someone who will be totally prepared come showtime.

On a lighter note, Nyholt recommends asking a few fun questions as well—such as, “How would you define your approach and style, how would you describe your ideal client, and what gets you excited about a shoot?”—in order to grasp the personality of your potential photographer. “These three questions will reveal a photographer’s passion and vision, and you want a photographer that is passionate about the same things you are,” he adds.



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- CHRISTA ELYCE

ENGAGE AND CONNECT

Choosing one photographer over another can be as simple as going with your gut. So, once you've found the perfect fit, don't hesitate to book that person for your big day.

If time (and budget) allows, consider scheduling an engagement session as well. This is a great opportunity to really get to know your photographer, and, more importantly, for them to get to know you. "I find out what makes my clients laugh, the features they love about themselves, and their personal history as a couple—plus we'll take some amazing photos in the process," says Strode.

A pre-wedding photo shoot can also serve as a "quick lesson on how to position yourself so you will look your best in images," says Guillaume, who then helps her clients determine which style they'd like to incorporate on their wedding day, whether it be classic (think timeless, like your grandmother's wedding photos), artistic (creative and unusual), photo-journalistic (candid), styled (formal and posed), or a mix of all four!

ENJOY YOUR DAY

By the time your wedding day rolls around, there will be so much going on that the last thing YOU need to worry

about is documenting your big occasion.

"The photographer's job is to make the couple feel at ease and free to be themselves," says Zia Ahmed of Aventography Studios, so just sit back, relax, and let your photographer do his thing. That's why you hired an expert, after all!

"Fifty years from now when you're looking back at your wedding photos, you won't remember the tiny details everyone gets so wrapped up in," says Strode. "But you will be reminded of the beauty and fun of your big day," two things that a talented wedding photographer will capture completely. "So enjoy every minute," she adds, "because it's over in a flash."



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