



Wedding PHOTOGRAPHY

*A Step by Step Guide to
Capturing the Big Day*

By Rosie Parsons



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This book is dedicated to my husband Lee and children Jacob, Summer, Sienna and soon to be born Zac and to all the couples who have allowed me the privilege of being part of their wedding day. Thank you!

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Chapter One: Before the Big Day

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

– Abraham Lincoln

Why Read This Book?

Has a friend just asked you to photograph their wedding? Or maybe you have shot a few before but you want to brush up your skills?

For those of you who haven't photographed a wedding before, you may be experiencing a mixture of feelings. Have you made the right decision in saying yes? Can you really pull it off?

Don't panic! The secret is in the preparation. Yes, photographing a wedding is a lot of work and there is a lot at stake - but this guide, based on my seven years of wedding photography experience, shooting in all sorts of conditions, is going to take you through, step by step, everything you'll need to know to prepare you fully for this exciting challenge.

Throughout this book I'm going to share with you everything I wish I'd known when I started photographing weddings!

My background before weddings was in live music photography. I would shoot the likes of Destiny's Child and James Brown while also writing reviews as a music journalist. I had the basic understanding how to use my camera, particularly in low light situations, but I didn't have a clue about the intricacies of a wedding day and the challenges I'd face when I was first asked to photograph one of my friend's weddings!

In preparation of my first wedding I did try to get some experience in advance by asking local photographers if I could assist them, but the response was less than enthusiastic - so I had to figure it out the hard way!

Since then, I've learned how to photograph a wedding so that it's stress free and enjoyable. It's great to have now got to the stage where I'm fortunate enough to have had work published in OK! Magazine, Wedding Magazine, You & Your Wedding and the cover of Professional Photographer Magazine, and won Cosmo Bride Wedding Photographer of the Year 2010 (hurray!).

In this book, I want to show you how to tackle every part of the day, including a must have shot list with behind the scenes tips for how to capture each moment, example images to inspire you and my trade secrets for success in every situation.

I must admit that my wedding experience (and therefore my advice) is limited to church weddings, civil weddings and outdoor humanist ceremonies which all follow a similar pattern to the day. If you are asked to photograph another type of wedding with their own customs, such as a Jewish or large Asian wedding, then I would highly recommend doing additional research into what will be expected of you and making sure you talk through expectations and other elements of the day with your client.

I also haven't had wide experience in photographing same sex ceremonies - in fact I have only ever had the privilege of attending one as the professional photographer, which is why I haven't given specific advice on this topic. If you are looking for additional insight into this area, I would highly recommend reading [The New Art of Capturing Love](#) by Kathryn Hamm and Thea Dodds for some great tips.

What Kit Do I Need?

I use all prime (fixed focal length) lenses and shoot in manual mode. These two elements combined are a big factor in the creation of the photographic style of which I get booked for, so I am a big advocate of these, but I will try to give you alternative options too!

Of course you don't need to use exactly the same equipment as I do - you could choose a good all round zoom lens like a 24-70mm f/2.8 for example. The reason I use prime lenses with wide apertures is that they let in a huge amount of gorgeous natural light. This gives me confidence in any situation, so that if I'm faced with a dark bridal suite or candle lit church, I know I won't have to bump up my ISO really high and risk grainy images.

If you're wondering where to start with your kit, the main thing is to remember that you need to take lenses which will cover all bases. This includes wide angle shots of the venue and large groups, another more close up lens for portraits of the couple and discreet shots during the ceremony and ideally a macro lens for closeups of details like the rings and flowers. The faster the lens you have, the easier you will find it to shoot in low light conditions (there can be a lot of those at weddings!). That is why I shoot most of the day, apart from group shots, at f1.4.

Here is my essential wedding kit - take it as inspiration. If you don't have a wide, portrait or macro lens, see if you can borrow them from a friend or hire them from somewhere like [Calumet Rental](#). If you need to spend money hiring lenses, make sure that whatever you charge your client takes this extra cost into account.

My Essential Kit:

- My main digital camera body - I use a Canon 5D Mark II
- My second camera body as backup - I have a Canon 5D
- 50mm 1.4mm - I use this for the bulk of the day as it's brilliant for low light situations as often found in churches, and can be used for fairly wide shots and portraits if you have a full frame sensor camera like the 5D. If your camera is not full frame then you may want a wider lens for these type of shots
- 85 1.2mm - this is used for low light situations and portraits. It is an expensive lens but does make low light scenarios much less stressful! If renting a lens like this is too cost prohibitive, then a more cost effective version would be the 85 1.8. You can also use a zoom lens instead. I use it most during bridal prep and for bride and groom portraits
- 35 1.4mm - for wide angles of the venue, setting the scene and larger group shots
- 100mm 2.8 macro - used once or twice during the day, for the close up of the rings and other intricate details
- At least four fully charged camera batteries plus a battery charger for emergencies
- 8 x 16GB CF cards - I'd recommend four times as many as you think you'll need. For a wedding I would take 8 x 16GB to be on the safe side - I shoot in RAW - but I might only use 5 cards on the day
- Two External flashes - one as backup
- Three changes of AA batteries for your flash - 12 in total

If this seems like a lot of kit, especially for someone who may not be planning on doing weddings professionally, then the bare basics I'd suggest taking to shoot a wedding would be:

- Two cameras - one as your backup
- A wide angle lens
- A lens 50mm or longer for portraits
- Two flashes - one as your backup
- A minimum of 80GB in memory cards if shooting RAW
- Three fully charged camera batteries
- Three sets of AA batteries - a total of 12 - for your flash

What to Charge and Getting Paid

This is a very difficult one. Experienced wedding photographers often charge around £2,000 for a wedding, but included for this price is a wealth of experience shooting in different situations and expertise that will enable a wedding to run smoothly. Plus they've invested in the latest equipment including state of the art computers and image backup systems, have comprehensive insurance should anything go wrong on the day, are full time wedding photographers so the client will get the images back quickly after the wedding and have an existing style that the client knows they are going to like.

But even if you don't have all of the above, there is a huge amount of work involved in photographing a wedding, so unless you want to offer it as a wedding gift to your friends, then you should definitely charge a reasonable amount.

Think about whether you will want to hire any lenses for the wedding and whether you will want to get insurance (advised - I will talk more about insurance shortly). Think about how many hours you will be working including your travel time, any venue visits you want to do and your time editing afterwards. Once you have the total number of hours you'll be working on their wedding, consider how much per hour you think is reasonable to work for. If you're happy working for £15 per hour, it might look something like this:

- 2 hour round trip travel to visit the venue
- 1 hour looking around venue with clients
- 12 hours shooting on the wedding day including travel to and from the venue
- 10 hours editing afterwards

Total hours: 25

£15 x 25 hours = £375

Plus hire of lenses = £200

Plus insurance = approximately £200. This would cover you for the year so if you are planning on doing more than one wedding you could split the cost.

Additional equipment bought specifically for this wedding, e.g CF cards, extra batteries unless you plan on doing more weddings, in which case split the cost again = £100

Total = £875

This is how I would calculate my price for my first few weddings.

Deposits

Whatever happens, unless you are shooting the wedding for free as a gift to the bride and groom, do make sure that you get a non-refundable deposit from them to secure your services. I would suggest £250 as a ballpark figure. This gives you the security of knowing you will definitely be working that weekend and to go ahead and hire the lenses etc. If you don't get a deposit, then the couple could easily change their mind at the last minute and ask someone else, leaving you out of pocket.

I would suggest taking a deposit only in conjunction with a signed contract, even if this is just laying out the location of the day, the date, what you have agreed in terms of package/hours of coverage and what the couple will get afterwards - e.g CD or album and the total cost. I will talk about contracts shortly.

Pricing Quick Tips

- Consider all the costs involved in photographing the wedding, don't forget petrol and a hotel if necessary
- Think about what a fair hourly rate would be and multiply that by all the hours you will work, including travel and editing, as well as the wedding itself
- Consider whether you plan to do more than this one wedding. If so, don't count all of the cost for new batteries and CF cards as you will use them many times over
- Put boundaries in place with time or events, such as total 9 hours with a stipulated overtime cost, or agreeing that you will end 20 minutes into the evening dancing regardless of timing, so both parties know when you will start and end
- Make sure you take a deposit to protect you from a client's change of heart

Insurance

I would highly recommend getting insurance cover even if you don't plan on shooting more weddings in the future. If you do want to photograph weddings regularly then I'd recommend joining a professional trade association such as SWPP (the Society of Wedding and Portrait Photographers) or if you go full time with photography, MPA (Master Photographers Association). They can offer their members special offers for insurance and credit card processing.

Types of Insurance:

Public Liability - some venues will not let you shoot on their premises unless you have proof of public liability insurance. This type of insurance will cover you for compensation and legal expenses if a member of the public, e.g a guest, experiences loss or injury due to your actions, for example if you left a camera bag on the floor and someone tripped over it and broke their leg.

Professional Indemnity - this type of insurance covers you against negligence, error or omission where the client experiences a loss. So if you drop a memory card and can't find it, then you are covered for their compensation and your legal expenses.

It is worth pointing out that insurers will need you to have the client sign a contract and they may want to see this in advance, so make sure you organise it in plenty of time.

As always, make sure you read the small print yourself and ensure the insurance is suitable for what you need. I'd recommend ringing one of the providers below and chatting through your particular circumstances and seeing what they would recommend.

Specialist photography insurance companies:

Towergate Camerasure www.towergatecamerasure.co.uk/ - they have a semi professional photographer insurance policy for those who have a full time job but also shoot some weddings part time. This would probably be most suitable if you are just starting out in weddings:

www.towergatecamerasure.co.uk/semi-professional.aspx

This includes public liability but you would still ideally want to get professional indemnity insurance with them too.

Aaduki <http://www.aaduki.com/>

Photo Guard <http://www.photoguard.co.uk/>

Photo Shield <http://www.photoshield.co.uk/>

I can't recommend one place above another as I've never had to make a claim but this should give you a good starting point for your own research.

Contracts

Even if the wedding is for a friend, or you don't intend on shooting many more weddings in the future, it's still important that you lay out your terms in a contract to make sure everyone is on the same page.

A contract should cover what happens if you can't photograph the wedding through illness or if the wedding gets cancelled. It lays out what you agreed with the couple about you using the images after the wedding, how much they have agreed to pay and when the payment is due, how long you will take to edit the images afterwards and how they will be supplied to the bride and groom etc. It is good to think about every scenario such as what happens if you don't photograph one of the very important guests.

To buy a copy of the contract I use for my clients, which you can customise for your own needs, go to the following link:

<https://www.etsy.com/listing/204350809/uk-professional-wedding-photography>

To Shoot RAW or JPEG?

I would always recommend shooting RAW as it gives you much more flexibility if you make a mistake with under or over exposing an image. If your camera has the capability then certainly opt to shoot both RAW and Jpeg at the same time (remember this will take up additional memory so buy some extra cards!) - it's good to have the additional backup should any file corrupt on a card.

I use a Canon 5D Mark II for my main camera body - it only has one card slot and fortunately I've never had an issue with cards corrupting. However if you are hiring a camera, or about to buy a new one, you could consider an SLR with dual card slots. This will give you added peace of mind as the camera simultaneously records two separate copies of every image. Remember that you will need to purchase double the amount of memory cards though!

For shooting RAW, you will need to have software that can read RAW files, like Photoshop, Photoshop Elements or Lightroom - currently £8.78 a month via adobe.com. If you don't have this software then you will need to shoot in jpeg but it will be even more important to keep a close eye on your settings to make sure you are achieving the correct exposure as you shoot each image.

Editing Software

Photoshop is great, and I used it as my main editing software for years. However since I discovered Lightroom, it has really cut down the amount of time it takes me to edit and finish a wedding - think 5 hours total instead of a week!

You can download a trial here: <http://www.adobe.com/uk/products/photoshop-lightroom.html>

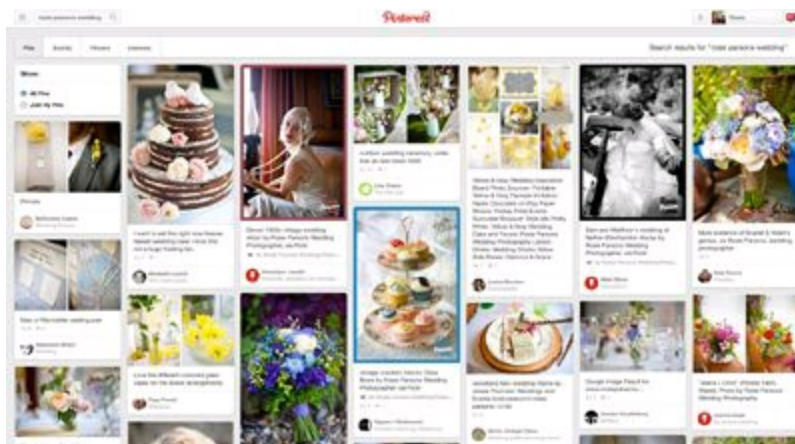
And if you wish to buy it then you can get Photoshop and Lightroom on Adobe's Creative Cloud (currently £8.78 a month) from <http://www.adobe.com> - I find Photoshop is still useful for resizing images and converting to black and white, although these can be done in Lightroom too.



Getting Inspiration

Although the relentless stream of perfect highly stylised weddings/bridal shoots can feel a bit intimidating even to established pros, [Pinterest](#) and wedding blogs like [Love My Dress](#), [Rock My Wedding](#) and [Rock n Roll Bride](#) in the UK or [Style Me Pretty](#), [Ruffled](#) and [Green Wedding Shoes](#) in the US are an excellent place to get inspired about how the leading wedding photographers pose their couples and shoot details.

Try to look through and find images you would like to emulate. Try not to copy them, but study what it is about the image that you particularly like - is it the shallow depth of field? Then you could either use fast lenses at f/1.4 or less, use a lens with a long focal length, like a 70-200mm, or you could make sure there is a good distance between your subject and the background. Or if you find it's the connection between the couple you love, then think about how you can encourage those real moments and smiles rather than staged posed grins. We'll talk specifically about tips in this area later in the book.



- Look at Pinterest and wedding blogs for inspiration
- Don't copy images directly, but try to work out why you like a particular photograph
- Let other people's images inspire you to shoot things from different angles and alternative viewpoints

Engagement Shoots

Offering to do an engagement session with your couple can be a great ice breaker! It's a chance for you to practice posing couples, which may not have been something you've had to do much previously and it can flag up areas that you feel you need to improve on. It's good to know any weaknesses in your approach before the pressure of photographing the bride and groom on the wedding day itself!

An engagement shoot will also give you an insight into how the couple feel in front of the camera. A lot of people are very shy. It can be intimidating to be asked to pose or even look natural in front of the camera (and you thought it was just you feeling the heat!). During an engagement shoot you can use the experience to encourage the couple that they do look good, that the posing is working and have some fun building up the rapport, so that on the wedding day itself they feel a lot more comfortable about having the camera pointed at them.

Think about including the engagement shoot as part of your overall wedding price as a "freebie" as it will benefit both yourself and the couple, particularly if you are not experienced in directing people with poses.

Engagement shoots can take place anywhere - maybe you've spotted a good location near where you live, or the bride and groom may have a special place that they'd like to have the photoshoot. Try and take into account the personalities of the couple when choosing a location and talk to them before making a final decision. A gritty inner city urban shoot can be great, but some brides might prefer something a bit softer! Also think about backup plans should the weather not be great - either somewhere else you can shoot indoors or under cover, or plans that you will reschedule until a dry day.

What the couple should wear will really depend on the location, but bright bold colours always work well - ultimately though you want the couple to wear outfits that characterise them.

I encourage couples to bring a change of clothes so that if we shoot in more than one location they have a totally different look which gives them different options for prints

on the wall afterwards.

Some couples might want to do a more stylised shoot such as a picnic with balloons etc, but I leave that up to them to organise and then would be happy to photograph their set up.

Once I've photographed the couple's engagement shoot, I provide them with the high resolution images on disc and let them use them for anything they'd like, for example prints and enlargements or a guestbook. I would however ask that they link to my website and credit me if they post them on Facebook.



- Think about doing a free engagement shoot (only once a deposit has been paid towards the wedding day) to help the couple get used to being in front of the camera and relax quicker on the wedding day
- Practice your posing techniques and have a test run without as much pressure as the wedding itself
- Build the relationship with the clients so they feel relaxed and confident with you

directing them

- Talk to the couple about locations and pick somewhere that will reflect their personalities

Setting Expectations

Before you even start thinking about what you'll do on the actual wedding day, there are several steps you'll need to complete to make sure the day runs without a hitch.

Setting expectations with your clients/friends will mean that you both should have a realistic idea of what's achievable, and you'll also be able to let them know what you need as the photographer to help make taking photos easier - don't worry, I'll fill you in!

Timings

Try to set up a meeting with the couple to chat through their wedding day timings. If they haven't decided everything yet, that's fantastic - it means you can gently guide them into giving you the time you'll need to capture everything they'll be expecting. If they have decided already, then you'll need to look through and see whether they have factored in enough time for what you need to be doing, and if not then you might need to ask them to either adjust their times or to cut down in other areas (like less group shots). Whatever happens, do not just assume you'll manage somehow or that they will know what you need without explaining.

If you don't double check on the timings then you'll be setting yourself up for running out of time on the day and potential fall out with the couple about missing shots after the wedding. My goal is to save you stress - so without further ado, let's take a look at what a typical wedding day timetable would look like for me. Every wedding is different, so I've left out any travel time between venues - you'll need to research this and add this into your own schedule.

- Bridal Preps (1.5 hours)
- Pre Ceremony - guests arriving, groom with groomsmen, talk with vicar/registrar about photography and await arrival of bride (45 minutes)
- Ceremony (1 hour)
- Post Ceremony confetti/mingling (20 minutes)
- Cocktail Hour at reception venue (total 1.5 hours - breakdown below)
 - Table details (15 minutes)
 - Group shots* (30 minutes)
 - Bride and groom portraits (30 minutes)
 - Candid shots of guests (15 minutes)
- Meal - your break and speeches (2 hours)
- Break to clear room - candid shots (1 hour)
- Dancing (30 minutes)

*Group Shot Timings

A special note here on group shot timings; you should be aiming to complete these within a half hour window. Further on in the book I'll be talking you through exactly which shots you should be expecting to achieve within this time frame and how to create your list, but to summarise, this half hour should be for immediate family and bridal party groups only. If any additional group shots are requested, then you should allow an extra five minutes per group. It is important that you manage the bride and groom's expectations about what is achievable and advise them that if they do want to add extra groups that they should make allowances in the schedule - and potentially push their dinner time back - for this.

This is what I need to have scheduled in order for the timings of a wedding day to work out for photography. If anything on this list is planned to be much shorter or longer, apart from the ceremony, then there becomes a huge pressure on me to get all the shots I need for the couple in an unrealistic timeframe. I would recommend spending time with your couple to run through their timings and see if they correlate with the above timings plus any travel.

Wedding Day Timings Quick Tips

- Be clear what length of time you'll need to capture everything expected from each point in the day
- Go through timings with the bride and groom to make sure their plans tally up with the time you'll need
- Plan to spend half an hour on group photos. If the bride and groom add more groups than what is suggested later on in this book, then you'll need to allocate an additional five minutes per extra group
- Make the couple aware that they may not get as many bride and groom portraits or candid photos if the bride arrives late to the ceremony or other things run over schedule
- Ask if the ushers will be able to help with organising people for group shots

What Is Possible and Achievable/Realistic

It's hard when you're not necessarily confident about shooting a wedding to stand up for what is possible and what isn't. However don't make the mistake of agreeing to everything the client wants and then leaving them disappointed when you can't deliver.

For example, the client may want a big group shot of everyone in the wedding. For this to happen, there needs to be a big enough space and for you to be able to get enough height so you can see everyone's faces. This can be as simple as a big garden and a spare chair. However if you can't see anywhere where this could happen then you need to let the client know that you don't think it will be possible.

Obviously be open to them coming up with a solution, but don't simply say ok and then worry about it later, because the issue won't go away. If you don't address any concerns now, the client will think that everything they've asked for is possible and they will be upset if it doesn't happen.

Likewise think about the scenario if it rains - will you still be able to use the space for a big group shot if it is bad weather? Guests won't appreciate being forced to go outside, and if there is a big space inside like a staircase that the client suggests instead, is there enough natural light or do you have the right lighting to make sure everyone can be seen in the photo? If not then this is something you'll need to confidently discuss with the client. If you are concerned it is better to talk it through beforehand and agree to try an alternative such as more small group shots if it's raining for example.

Also be sure to look through the timings of the day with the client and think about your travel time and what you need to do during each section of the day. Has the client left enough time between you leaving the bridal preps and the ceremony starting? What happens if a road is closed or there is a traffic jam? You'll need to make sure the client builds in enough time for each part of what you'll be doing, but you'll need to guide them on this. For specific ideas on what you'll need timewise, check out my "On the Day" chapter.

- Don't be afraid to be realistic about what you can do - be honest long before the wedding if you don't think you can achieve something that has been asked of you.
- Think of alternatives, like more small group shots instead of one large one is space and is an issue.
- Consider whether you will still be able to do certain shots if the weather is bad. If not, discuss it before the wedding with the client.

Talk About Using the Images Afterwards

This may be one of the first weddings you've ever photographed, but have you thought about whether you might like to do more in the future? If you think the answer may be yes, then it's a good idea to chat with the client and check that they are happy to have their wedding featured on your blog, website and advertising in the future.

Also check if the client is happy with you posting the images on Facebook (if you plan to) and whether they would prefer you to wait until they have the disc first. Most couples would want to have seen their wedding photos themselves before you post any on Facebook for their friends and family to see, so be careful to check before assuming!

- Confirm if the client is happy with you using the photos afterwards
- Talk about when you can post any on Facebook/your blog - do they want to see the full gallery first?

Client Forms and Information Gathering

I always ask the client to fill in a series of simple Q&A forms before the wedding, as well as a contract. This is kept in a folder that I can pick up at any point to know everything about their wedding and is much less stressful than trying to find lots of bits of information over past emails.

You can download copies of my client forms at the following links:

Client Information Forms: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/205507356/rosie-parsons-wedding-photography-client?>

Wedding Contract: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/204350809/uk-professional-wedding-photography?>

The type of questions I ask include:

- Names and contact details of both bride and groom and an emergency contact
- Addresses for all venues involved in the day, with accurate postcodes for sat nav
- Family details - who is in the bride and groom's immediate family, bridal party and any particularly special guests - this enables me to prepare a suggested group shot list
- Wedding schedule and timings
- Suppliers details - to help me create a blog post afterwards

Preparing A Suggested Group Shot List

Based on the answers to my forms about immediate family, I am able to formulate a suggested group shot list that I can realistically do within a half hour period on the day. The reason I ask for a list of family members is because so many families are separated or often the bride or groom may be bereaved, so I don't want to assume anything.

Also if you ask the bride and groom to come up with their own list, it may end up at the bottom of their to do pile and you may not get an answer until right near the wedding date. This could be disastrous as by which time it may be too late to discuss that having 30 group photos will take at least an hour and leave other guests feeling disgruntled!

Based on the answers to their family information form - but bearing in mind that each wedding is different - my ideal group shot list would look like this:

Bride's Family:

- Bride and groom with bride's immediate family (e.g parents, siblings and partners/children, grandparents)
- Bride and groom with bride's grandparents
- Bride and groom with bride's parents
- Bride with immediate family (parents, siblings)
- Bride with her mum
- Bride with her dad
- Bride with siblings

Groom's Family:

- Bride and groom with groom's immediate family (e.g parents, siblings and partners/children, grandparents)
- Bride and groom with groom's grandparents

- Bride and groom with groom's parents
- Groom with immediate family (parents, siblings)
- Groom with his mum
- Groom with his dad
- Groom with his siblings

Bridal Party:

- Bride with bridesmaids
- Bride with chief bridesmaid/maid of honour
- Groom with groomsmen
- Groom with best man

Other:

- Any other requested group shots (such as Godparents or a big shot of uni friends etc)

If parents were separated I would show the bride and groom my typical list and ask them how they would like to handle it. Some parents are happy being in photos together and some definitely aren't. Best to ask in advance to prevent a difficult situation on the day!

I would then email this list to the bride and groom to confirm they are happy.

A list like this would take me half an hour to photograph on the day with help enlisted from the ushers in gathering people together. Make sure you print out several copies of the list to give to the ushers to help you.

If several more group shots are added by the bride and groom, such as Aunts and Uncles or University friends etc then you can let them know that each group will take approximately five minutes additional time - it takes quite a while to round people up at a wedding! Make sure that you are still left the time you need to photograph the

table details, candid group shots and their bride and groom portraits - and if you are starting to feel worried about timings then do discuss that with the couple.

- Don't just leave it up to the couple to decide their group shot list - create your own list based on the answers in their information forms and email it to the client to amend/confirm
- Where parents are separated, it's best to ask the client how they would like to handle these family photos
- Average time spent on group shots based on my list should be about half an hour
- Additional groups will take about five minutes per group
- Print several copies of your group shot list to give to ushers on the day

The Pre-Wedding Venue Visit

Going with the couple to look around their ceremony and reception venue before the wedding day is an excellent idea.

Firstly, it will familiarise you with where the actual location is. Often postcodes can send sat navs to the wrong country lane or back entrance to a venue. It really does take a lot of pressure off to recognise where you are going on the day and not have to worry about getting lost.

Secondly, you can double check which entrances are being used by the bride on the day. Many churches have two entrances and you really don't want to be waiting for the bridal car next to the wrong one!

The lighting will change for the wedding itself, but you can still get a good idea whether their venue is particularly dark, in which case it would be wise to use fast lenses with a wide aperture, and for spots that you might want to use during the wedding for the most discreet positioning.

During the visit you can also get some ideas of where would be good to do group shots and any more private areas which would be nice for the bride and groom portraits. It's a good plan to think about two or three different areas as a lot will depend on the light on the day. You won't want to shoot in the same location if there is direct sunlight beaming onto the guests and making them squint at the camera, so try to plan a few different options - including what you'll do if it rains.

- Familiarise yourself with all the locations so you don't get lost on the day
- Double check exactly where the car will drop off the bride before the ceremony
- Think about where you might want to stand during the ceremony
- Scout out a few possible locations for group shots and bride and groom portraits

Preparing a Route

Even if you have a sat nav, it is really important to also plan out your route between home, bridal preps, ceremony and reception on a map service like Google Maps. Seeing the route on screen in its entirety can help you make decisions should you get involved in a traffic jam or road block between any of your destinations.

It is also worth printing out the route in case your sat nav fails to connect for any reason. It has happened to me but fortunately I had a spare backup sat nav!

- Plan the entire day's route in Google Maps, look at alternatives if there should be a road block and print out directions/a map of the route
- Ask a friend to borrow a spare sat nav for the day in case of emergency

Second Shooting for Experience

It's not easy to come by the opportunities, but if you can get the chance to assist another photographer at a wedding or two before you shoot your own then it will give you invaluable experience. It's a great chance to see how another photographer would tackle different scenarios, and you can think how you would have done it.

To see if there are any second shooting opportunities available, follow photographers who you admire on Twitter and send them a tweet with a link to your website/portfolio. Most will only pay experienced second shooters, so until you have shot a few weddings yourself be prepared to offer your services for free in return for the experience and don't expect to be able to do much with the images afterwards. This is strictly about learning for you, with the benefit of some additional images for the photographer to give to their clients.

There are also some second shooters groups on Facebook but they do usually require you knowing someone to get an invite (as most will be recommendation based). Do a search to find the latest groups and see what's available.

Second shooting will give you valuable experience that will give you confidence when you are the lead photographer Find opportunities by following your favourite local photographers on Twitter Search for second shooter groups on Facebook

Hiring A Second Shooter to Help You

You may want to consider asking another photographer to join you to shoot the wedding. The idea would still be that the job would be your booking, but they would come to assist you and help with getting additional shots. Don't forget that the responsibility will still fall to you to get all the shots you need for the client, so don't rely heavily on your second shooter - but it may be of benefit to have extra shots and a different take on events.

If you do go down this route, set clear expectations with your second shooter in advance. Cover any payment/expenses you are willing to offer, whose memory cards they will shoot on, who will edit the images, what if anything they can do with the images afterwards, e.g can they use for their blog/portfolio/advertising and who owns the copyright etc.

The more you ask from your second shooter in terms of restricting their use of the images afterwards, the more you would expect to pay them. However in general terms, second shooters with some experience of weddings would expect to get paid in the region of £150 for a full day. If you can find someone who wants the experience then they may be willing to work for free, but be careful that their work matches the quality of your own otherwise there may not be many shots you can use afterwards.

- Your own second shooter can provide valuable additional images from a different perspective.
- Choose someone who has a similar style to you and ideally meet with them in person before agreeing to work together
- Make sure you agree in advance how things will work in terms of copyright, editing and whether the photographer can use the images on their site
- Think about whether you are able to pay someone - you will get a much higher quality shooter if you can pay the going rate of £150-£200 for a day

Back Up Plans and Illness on the Day

I mentioned earlier about having back up equipment and making sure you know your route on Google Maps as well as having a sat nav, but you should also make back up plans for if you get ill or cannot attend the wedding for any reason.

It is wise to befriend some other local photographers with a similar style and price to yours who would be able to step in to help you out if you are very ill and can't photograph the wedding. Take a look online at local photographers you like and drop them a line to meet for coffee.

Once you are established as a wedding photographer and regularly shooting your own weddings, you should also join the emergency cover group on Facebook so that you can immediately access a large group of photographers across the UK. Sign up here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/249049605216123/>

If you know far enough in advance that you won't be able to attend, then you can offer to refund the client any money paid and let them find another photographer (although it would be kind to have done some legwork first and send them some links to photographers who are available).

If it is very close to the wedding you may not have this option, so you might need to send someone in your place or face a very stressed out bride! When you go for coffee with other local photographers, see if you can have them as contacts should an emergency arise. If the worst happens, you can give your list of contacts a call and then when ringing the bride and groom you at least have a plan of action rather than leaving them without a photographer.

Obviously it should go without saying that a wedding day is one of the most important days of a person's life, so unless it's a life or death situation then I would always bend over backwards to make sure I am there, even if I am very poorly.

- Make a plan for what will happen if you are too ill to photograph the wedding or can't attend due to an emergency
- Have a list of backup photographers you can call on

What to Pack

As well as your essential kit list (see the start of this chapter) there are some other essentials I would suggest bringing with you on a wedding day.

- Bottles of water (x 3) - it is very easy to get dehydrated while you are constantly on the move. Keep one in your camera bag and a couple in the car to grab between venues.
- Keeping hydrated will also help with the “wedding hangover” the next day when you feel exhausted and sore!
- Snacks - you’ll need to grab snacks whenever you get the opportunity to keep your energy levels up. Wedding days are long and photography equipment is heavy.
- Sandwiches - unless you’re friends with the bride and groom and will be sitting with guests for the main wedding meal, then I’d suggest bringing your own packed dinner. I’d advocate this even if you have been promised a meal but will be seated away from the guests, as in my experience caterers will often forget the photographer and as they are coping with a high pressure service can get quite rude if you go in to remind them. Best to have a back up with you just in case you get forgotten!
- Phone/iPad plus charger. Most of the wedding day you will be working at 100mph, but when all the guests are seated for dinner it is time for you to also take a break. Serving 100+ guests a three course meal takes a long time, usually 2 hours, so this is a long break for you - unless you are seated with everyone else you’ll want to make sure you have something to do!
- Your paper print outs of the group shot list
- Your file with client information forms all filled out and Google Maps route
- Sat nav pre programmed with all venue postcodes

Chapter Two: How to Photograph The Wedding Day

“The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.”

– Sylvia Plath, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*

My Approach and Camera Settings

Under each image, I have given my camera settings. You'll see that I primarily use prime lenses and set my ISO as low as possible given the circumstances, so that the pictures stay nice and sharp. I also shoot with a very wide aperture as I love this soft look for my photos, but it's important to be very careful about what you focus on if you shoot around f/1.4. If you focus on someone's nose rather than their eyes, the whole shot will be ruined.

I shoot in manual mode - I don't meter for exposure as I have a rough idea of what settings I'll need based on experience from shooting in similar conditions and there is no shame in a quick double check on the back of the camera to make sure you are in the ballpark area. Shooting in manual gives you much greater control over how the final image looks as the camera won't be trying to second guess you.

If you are not comfortable estimating the settings you'll need for exposure, below is a rough guide to how I would set the camera in varying situations. I would then adjust the settings to get them just right after taking a test shot, always keeping the ISO as low as possible to get a nice sharp image. If you use a smaller aperture than I do then you will need to compensate either by lowering your shutter speed or increasing your ISO. For my shutter speed I try to never go under 1/100 sec as I will inevitably get camera shake and a blurry image. You may have a steadier hand than me though!

Indoors, Dark

ISO 250

f/1.4

shutter speed 1/400 sec

white balance auto

focus auto

Indoors, Light

ISO 100

f/1.4

shutter speed 1/400 sec

white balance auto

focus auto

Outdoors, Sunny

ISO 100

f/2

shutter speed 1/2000 sec

white balance auto

focus auto

Outdoors, Overcast

ISO 100

f/1.4

shutter speed 1/800 sec

white balance auto

focus auto

You can see there are two areas where I do not use manual controls as in my opinion really there is no need - I use automatic white balance and auto focus. Auto white balance is usually very accurate, and if not can be easily rectified in Lightroom (when shooting RAW) afterwards. Auto focus is also much simpler than relying on eyesight, and you really don't need to create any more work for yourself than necessary during a wedding.

The images I share below have been edited and are the finished files that have been given to clients. This means that some adjustment has taken place, so don't worry if you don't get images like this straight out of the camera!

Alternative Approach for New Photographers

If you are not comfortable shooting in manual then there are other options, but it's important to understand why manual will give you more pleasing results.

The two main semi automatic modes for you on the camera dial are A or Av and T or Tv, depending if you are of Nikon or Canon persuasion!

- A (Av) means aperture priority where you set your preferred aperture and the camera will choose your shutter speed.
- T (Tv) means shutter priority where you set your shutter speed and the camera will choose your aperture.

When I started out, I always shot in Av mode. This is because I wanted to use the lowest aperture available to let in the most light. The results were okay, but I was often frustrated that the images seemed more underexposed than I wanted. This is the risk when you allow the camera to choose some of your settings for you - it has to guess what you are trying to achieve.

When I began shooting in manual mode the improvement in my images really surprised me. I was able to get a much better exposure and felt more in control of my images. However, if you are not confident, then a wedding is probably not the time to trial shooting in manual! As time progresses and you gain confidence then I would certainly encourage you to aim towards shooting each entire wedding in manual mode, but as they are such fast paced events then to start with A (or Av) is a good alternative.

Likewise, you may not feel ready to shoot most of the wedding with an aperture of f/1.2 or f/1.4. There are big risks shooting at this shallow depth of field. You must be absolutely spot on with your focusing, otherwise the shot may be lost. Unless your focus is pin sharp on the eyes of your subject, the whole image will appear blurred and out of focus.

I shoot at these wide apertures because I love the beautiful amount of light it lets in. It means I can use much lower ISOs, usually around 100-250, which keep my images sharp. If you are starting out, it may suit you to shoot at an aperture more around the f/2.8 mark or higher. This will give you more grace for focusing, e.g a shot won't be totally lost because you focused on a nose rather than an eye, but it will make it harder for you in terms of available light. If you're faced with dark lighting situations you will need to either choose a higher ISO or turn to your flashgun.

What to Wear

Different photographers approach this in different ways. Many female photographers I know opt to dress stylishly like a guest and that works well for them. I prefer to differentiate myself by dressing in all black so that it is obvious I'm the photographer and not a guest, particularly as so many guests now have SLRs themselves, and I wear comfortable black flat shoes. For men, most photographers I work with would wear smart trousers and a shirt, but usually not a full suit and tie which would look overly formal.

- Either dress smartly like a guest or all in black.
- Comfortable shoes are a must.

Wedding Day Timings

We touched on this briefly in chapter one, and now I want to go through each stage of the wedding in detail to talk through what shots you would be expecting to get, show you how I would photograph each part and cover all the tips I can give you.

Travel Time

The further away the wedding is, the more chance of a traffic jam on the way. If the wedding was an hour away, I would want to give myself three hours for the journey in order to account for any problems on the way. Assuming there weren't any issues on the road then I would just find a nice cafe near the bridal prep location for a hearty breakfast - it will be a while until you get another meal!

Bridal Prep

Upon arriving at the bridal prep venue, whether bride's house or a hotel, I would usually introduce myself to all the bridesmaids and family and make some small talk about how the day is going so far. I'd then ask if someone could show me where the dress is hanging up along with details like the shoes, flowers, any jewellery and gifts that the bride might want to have photographed. By photographing these items - usually in a bedroom that isn't being used, it gives me a bit of time to get into the 'zone' without any of the high paced pressure that will accompany the rest of the day!

I would always ask the bride before moving the dress, but usually it would need to be moved to a more photogenic location. Also ask if you can remove any tissue paper etc to get the best shot. I find it is nice to do a wide full length shot of the dress and some closeups of the detailing/beading.

With the flowers, again it is worth asking if it's ok to move them out of their container and find a nice background. Think outside of the box here, literally - there may be a nice garden or wall that would make a good background, or a pretty chair.

With jewellery/gifts, I usually try and find a well lit room with lots of natural light and photograph them with a macro lens against a plain background like a white duvet - you won't be able to tell it's a duvet afterwards.

After photographing all these details, I would return to where all the action is taking place and get some candid photos of the bride and bridesmaids having make-up applied, toasting each other with champagne etc. It's nice to also take closeups of the make-up itself, any bottles of bubbly, cards and nice messages around the room.

Must Have Shot List:

- The dress - full length and detailing
- Bridal shoes
- Jewellery inc engagement ring
- Gift/card from the groom
- Flowers (out of their packaging)
- Details around the room - champagne bottle, filled glasses, make-up with brushes
- Candid shots of hairstyling/ make-up being applied, laughing and general candid moments - making sure you get a shot of every person there
- First look of parents at their daughter in the dress



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Don't be afraid to ask to remove the flowers out of their packaging and to take them off somewhere with a beautiful background. For this photo I took the bouquet out into the garden and placed it among the flowerpots. The shady spot with dappled sunlight coupled with a shallow depth of field gives a pretty and soft light to the image.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 160

If you can't get outside due to the weather or other limitations, then think creatively indoors.

For the above photo, I noticed this gorgeous simple chair in the corner of the room. It had bags and clothes in a pile on it, but I simply checked it was okay to move things around a little and then was able to get this elegant shot. To get the best photos, you'll often need to act as stylist as well as photographer, so don't be afraid to see beyond what is exactly in front of you and, with permission, move things around to create the best shot.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 320

Like the bride's bouquet, her shoes deserve to have a beautiful photo as well. I'll often shoot them near where I've photographed the flowers as having a similar background will look nice if the couple put them together in a wedding album afterwards.

I deliberately try not to style the shoes too much - I find it can look a bit contrived. Instead I simply take a photo of them straight on, as above, or from the side.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.2 ISO 250



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 160



Shot with Canon EF100mm Macro f/2.8 USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/2.8 ISO 800

Photographing the jewellery is the one time during the day I would particularly want to bring out my macro lens (Canon 100mm f/2.8) so I can get a really nice close up. I would photograph it in a room with good natural daylight and against a plain backdrop - either a duvet, throw or even a scarf.



Shot with Canon EF100mm f/2.8 Macro USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/2.8 ISO 1250



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 320

I think it's also important to ask which perfume the bride is wearing and to get a photo of the bottle. It's another aspect of the day that she will have thought long and hard about, so it's likely she will appreciate a picture. You could either photograph it where you took the jewellery shots, or just bathed in natural light with a shallow depth of field is fine. Just remember to remove any table clutter before you take the shot.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250

The dress... It's one of the most important parts of the day, probably the first thing the bride thought about when planning her wedding, so you definitely want to get a beautiful shot of it hanging up before it gets worn.

Usually it will be covered in a bag and have tissue paper over it, so have a look around the house or hotel room to find a good location with nice natural light and little clutter, or the ability to move it, plus somewhere with an easy place to hang the dress. Then ask if you are allowed to move the dress for the purposes of the photo and request help from a bridesmaid to get it out of the packaging.

Some photographers will also bring along a nice coat hanger in case the dress is hanging on a cheap plastic coat hanger that doesn't look very photogenic.

I would use either a 50mm 1.4 or a 35 1.4 lens for this depending on the size of the room.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.4 ISO 400

Most bridal suites will be busy, full of bags and clutter - you simply need to ask if it's

ok to rearrange things and move them to the sides of the room so all the bits and pieces are just out of the frame enough to give you a clear shot.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/1.4 ISO 320

Initially I was struggling to find a good spot for this beautiful dress in the photo above. The room was fairly small, had low ceilings - so it was difficult to find somewhere to hang it from and had quite a few people and bags in it.

I spotted a small hole in the loft hatch and moved the bags from the floor. I then asked

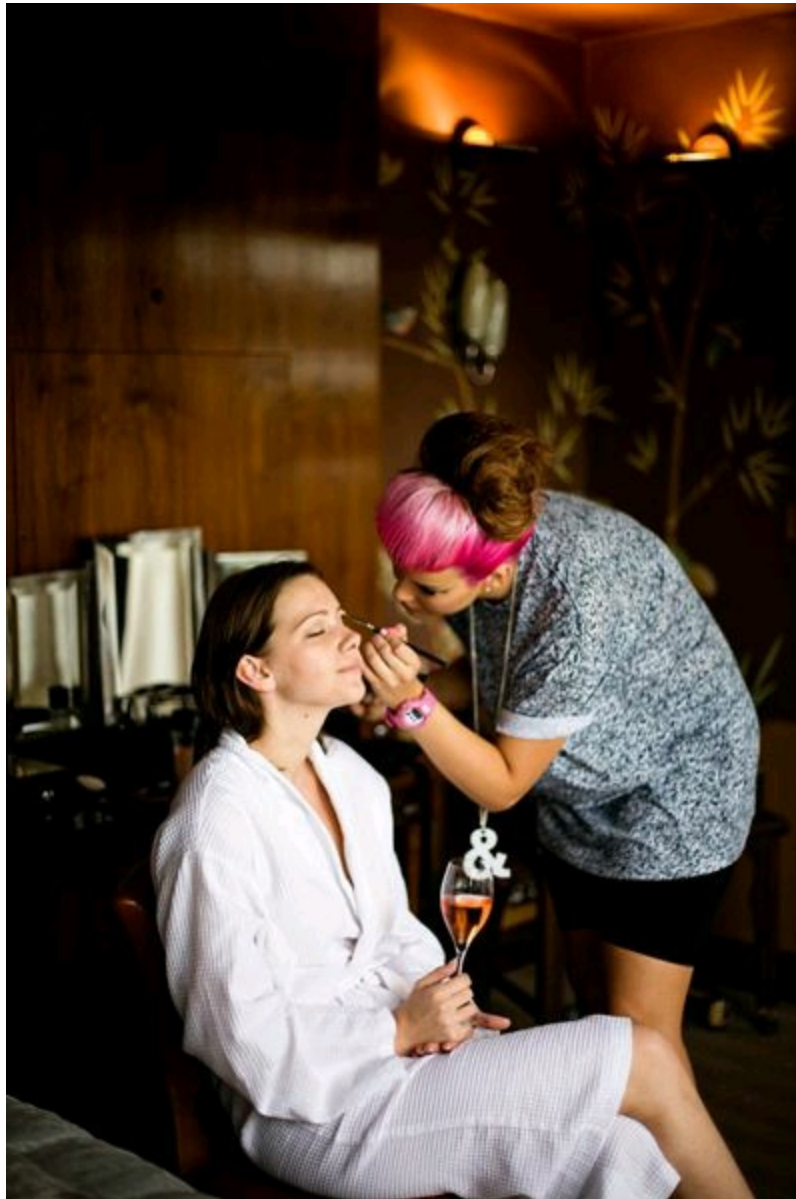
everyone to move to the sides of the room while I took the photo, which to get a full length shot had to be from inside the bathroom. Notice how the left side of the photo has a blurred out door frame. This enabled me to keep the image clean - if I had stood in front of the door frame or slightly more to the right, I would have got the TV in the shot. I was fortunate that the mirror was also placed in a good location as this brings an extra dimension to the shot.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.2 ISO 160

The main reason I love my 85 1.2 lens is that in any lighting situation I know that I can get beautiful images. This room wasn't necessarily dark, but where the bride was

sitting was not the ideal lighting scenario. I didn't want to move her as I wanted to get natural candid images, so it was great to be able to rely on the lens and shoot at 1.2 to get this soft portrait of her chatting to her friends.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.2 ISO 400

Some nice simple shots of the bride having her make-up applied is a must. Walk around her to get some nice different angles and use a combination of lenses to get a picture of both the overall scene and more close up images.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/1.2 ISO 400



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.2 ISO 500

There can be lots of special candid moments between others in the house as well. Once you've completed the 'must have' shots, the details in particular, then you have a bit more spare time to observe what is going on. I would always shoot the details and the bride getting ready first because I can then fill the rest of the time left before I need to leave with getting candid shots. If I did the candid first, I might not leave myself enough time for the flowers and the dress which would be a disaster!



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/1.2 ISO 125

Watch out for special moments like this one between the mother and father of the bride. I was getting myself a cup of tea in the kitchen and noticed this lovely moment happening, so was able to quickly pull my camera up and get the shot. For some photos you may not be able to check your settings to perfection; if you're in real danger of missing the moment, you should shoot it first and then adjust your settings to take the shot again. As long as you are shooting in RAW you can always play around with exposure in Lightroom or Photoshop afterwards.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/2 ISO 320

Listen to the conversations between people and be prepared for spontaneous moments like this one above. If someone suggests opening a bottle of bubbly, the chances are that within a few minutes they will toast each other. This would signal to me that as soon as the bottle starts being opened I should get my wide angle lens on in readiness. I also try and get some images of the bottle being opened as well, as that can be quite fun (see image below!).



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 320



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 1000

When the bride is almost ready, I ask if she is planning on doing a first look with everyone (particularly her dad). A lot of brides may not have thought about it, so if she hasn't then I do encourage it as it can be a lovely moment and make for emotional images.

I position myself at the bottom of the stairs, or just to the side of the father of the bride so that I can swing between getting photos of the pride and emotion on his face as he sees his daughter as a bride for the first time and also capture the bride making her entrance.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 1000

Bridal Prep Quick Tips

- Start with the details first such as the shoes, flowers, dress and jewellery - it will give you time to get your settings right and get into the “zone” without the pressure
- Don’t just assume you have to photograph items exactly where they are. Act as stylist and get creative! It’s especially important to get beautiful shots of the flowers, dress and shoes, so move them out of their packaging to different spots

until you get photographs you are happy with

- Walls, gardens, chairs and duvets can all make great backgrounds for bouquets and shoes, don't panic if you can't see somewhere immediately - try and think creatively
- Remember to get wide angles of the whole scene as well as closeups
- Find out if the bride is planning on doing a first look with the family. If she hasn't thought about it, suggest it!

Pre Ceremony

I aim to arrive at the ceremony location an hour before the service is due to start. This is to give myself 15 minutes in case of traffic/parking issues and then 45 minutes to capture the following:

Must Have Shots and To-Do List:

- Wide angle of the venue from outside (multiple angles)
- Portrait of the groom and groomsmen
- Shots of the empty ceremony room/church
- Detail shots inside the ceremony such as flowers, order of service
- Closeup of the rings
- Candid and relaxed posed shots of guests arriving
- I try to find out discreetly who the groom's parents/siblings are so that I can get extra candid shots of them before the ceremony. If possible I would try and get a photograph of the parents together, if they are not separated, as well
- I would also make sure I found the vicar/registrars and introduce myself, and find out where I'm allowed to go during the service
- Finally I would head out to the entrance where the bride is due to arrive, about 15 minutes before the ceremony is due to start. I would use this time to photograph more guests arriving
- Bridesmaids
- Bridal car arriving
- Bride getting out of car
- Bride with father (or person giving her away)
- Bride with bridesmaids
- Bride walking towards the church/ceremony

Venue Shots

It's best to do this as soon as you arrive, as it's nice to get this shot without guests in the frame. Walk around the whole building and take a few images from different angles to see what works best.

As well as a wide shot of the outside, make sure you get a wide angle of the empty interior and detail shots such as the flowers on the pew ends, the hymn list etc.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/6400 sec at f/2 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/2.8 ISO 1600



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.2 ISO 800

Portrait of the Groom and Groomsmen

I try to get a photo of the groom with the groomsmen as soon as possible after I arrive. This is because all the ushers will have jobs to do and will need to go in different directions - and if it is a civil wedding ceremony the registrar will also need to take

the groom away to do a ten minute interview fairly early on. As guests arrive the groomsmen will be busy handing out the order of service, which would be much harder to interrupt. So if you spot or can create an opportunity for this photo shortly after you arrive, do seize the initiative!

My style of photography is relaxed, so I'm not looking for formal posing from the groomsmen. I ask them to stand with the groom and best man (or men) in the middle, and for everyone to stand with their hands in their pockets, and not to stand directly face on to me as this can look too forced. I specifically tell them I am looking for a relaxed shot, otherwise they will try and recreate what they think a formal groomsmen photo should be. For me this gives a nice, genuine relaxed and friendly shot. After a few shots, I would also ask them to all smile or say something funny at the groom. This usually makes them all feel sufficiently awkward that they burst out laughing, which makes for a great photo (I'm always looking for genuine emotion in my images).



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.6 ISO 100

I got a few odd looks doing this photo! I had to get on the floor in a very busy street in Bristol to get this angle, but it was worth it because I really wanted the sunflare. Again the groom and groomsmen have their hands in their pockets and to me, the low down angle adds a sense of movie scene drama.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

In this photo of the groom and his groomsmen (and bridesmaid) I placed them against the grey of an old industrial building and used the double yellow lines to add a bold splash of colour. Offsetting the group makes the image more creative than shooting a straight portrait.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

If you've found a great location for the groomsmen photo, then use it for the groom's portrait too!



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec at f/1.2 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/3.2 ISO 100

Find out if the groomsmen are all wearing something special from the groom, like coordinating socks, as it can make a fun photo!

As soon as I have the shot of all the groomsmen, I ask to take a photo of the groom with the best man and then just the groom on his own. This will be a very simple portrait - just with hands in pockets and smiling at the camera. I'll take a close up of his buttonhole, and if he is wearing a particularly snazzy outfit then I would shoot a landscape photo of him adjusting his bow tie etc.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/2 ISO 125



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/2 ISO 125



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/3.2 ISO 100

Groom and Groomsmen Quick Tips

Photograph the groom and groomsmen as soon as possible after you arrive at the ceremony as when the guests arrive they will have many jobs to do.

Get a relaxed look to the photo by asking them to undo their jackets and put their hands in their pockets. After a few shots of them looking at the camera, ask them to all smile at the groom. This will make them feel a little silly and usually burst out laughing for some great genuine smiles.

Remember to get some closeups of the groom's boutonhole and other details.

Order of Service and The Rings

Next on my to do list is the order of service and a close up of the rings. Borrow a copy of the order of service from one of the ushers and head outside to find good light and a nice background. I usually seek out some nice foliage/flowers in which to place the order of service, or something simple like a chair would also work.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125

For the rings, this is the one time you will really need to rely on a macro lens. If it wasn't for the rings, I probably wouldn't take a macro lens with me to weddings - I use it so rarely during the rest of the day. But it's really hard to get a nice photo of the rings without one. I use the 100 2.8 macro for these type of shots.

You'll need to ask the best man to borrow the rings, and he rightly will be fairly anxious to keep an eye on them and get them back quickly so I don't take them too far away. The image will be very close up anyway - you should focus on any detail or inscription on the ring, so the lighting is much more important than the background. Try

and find somewhere as light as possible - a church porch is a good place with natural light and not too far away from a watchful best man!



Shot with Canon EF100mm f/2.8 Macro USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/2.8 ISO 800



Shot with Canon EF100mm f/2.8 Macro USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/2.8 ISO 1250

Get creative with the order of service and find some nice shady light with a beautiful background, such as among wild flowers or leaning in the branches of a tree, or if it's an inner city wedding a background with texture like an old window would be great.

You'll need a macro lens to photograph a closeup of the rings. Don't go too far from the best man and find somewhere with good natural light. Stone or wood is fine. See if there is an inscription within the rings and if so, focus on that. Return the rings immediately afterwards to save any trouble later!

Guests Arriving

With the venue, details and groom and groomsmen successfully captured, it's now time to photograph some of the guests arriving.

I try and do a balance between guests walking up to the ceremony, candid shots of them smiling and saying hello to the groom, and relaxed posed couple and family groups.

For the group shots, I'm not looking to set anything formal up - I simply ask people who walk up towards the ceremony together if I could just take a quick shot of the two/group of them. The posed shots are nice because it's really easy to get a lovely photo - candid where the person is unaware of the camera can also be great, and definitely an important part of the mix, but it can take longer to get the smile or expression you want. Asking couples for a quick photo means you're guaranteed a smile and it also means you are likely to capture more of the guests which will be nice for the bride and groom.

Very importantly, make sure you get candid shots of the groom before the ceremony both inside and outside the venue. The bride will love to see the photos of what was happening before she arrived.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Set the scene with relaxed shots of guests walking towards the ceremony.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.2 ISO 125



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.2 ISO 125

It's lovely to capture the emotion as friends and family greet the groom before the service.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Remember to capture the little moments like the buttonholes being pinned on.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Where possible, I will make sure that I get a photograph of the groom's parents together before the service (or with their respective partners/family if they are separated or widowed). This is a nice touch which often gets overlooked but will be appreciated by the family. You can also try to photograph a similar portrait of the bride's parents later in the day.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 160

As well as asking couples to take a quick photo as they arrive, I capture small groups of people who are already chatting. It's a nice way of getting informal group shots and captures people in a flattering way rather than just doing candid photos. Aim to do a balanced mix of candid shots and relaxed groups.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.2 ISO 800

Most importantly, make sure you get some nice candid moments of the groom before the ceremony.

Awaiting the Bride and Bridesmaids

About 15 minutes before the ceremony is due to begin, I head down to where the

bridal cars are due to drop off the bridesmaids and bride. This is in case they arrive a little early, and while I am waiting I can continue taking candid shots of guests.

Usually bridesmaids will arrive first in a separate car. I take note of where the driver pulls up and think about where best to position myself for when the bride's car arrives, as there is such a short moment of the bride getting out of the car, you don't want a car door or driver to be blocking your opportunity.

Once the bridesmaids are out of the car, I will have a couple of minutes before the bride arrives, so I ask to get a quick photo of the group of them. Like the groomsmen photo, I want the image to look relaxed, so I ask them to put their arms round one another, with one hand holding their bouquets. Double check that their flowers are all the same height and then you can get some nice images of them as a group.

If you have a bit more time, I'd then try and get some candid shots of the bridesmaids awaiting the bride - their smiles and laughter.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Make sure when you take photos of the bridesmaids (and later the bride) that they hold their flowers or bouquets low enough. Often they will naturally hold them very high which doesn't look right in the image. Just be aware of where the flowers are when you frame the shot and if any of them are holding them a bit high then ask them to hold them at waist height.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125

It's nice to ask the bridesmaids to put their arms around one another. This draws them in closer and creates a warm, friendly feel to the photo. Also ask the tallest bridesmaids to stand on either side of the group as this creates a good balance.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 160

Once you have the group shot of the bridesmaids and are still awaiting the bridal car, look out for precious candid moments between them whilst also keeping your eyes peeled on the road for the arrival of the bride.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125

You should capture the car coming down the road towards the church and if possible the bride through the window before she gets out. This will depend on the reflections on the window and the bride's expression inside of course, but it's worth trying to get.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Then you may need to hustle somewhat to get in position for a good shot of the bride getting out of the car - there will be bridesmaids, driver and dad all wanting to help the bride, which can make it difficult to get an unobstructed shot - particularly if umbrellas are involved. As soon as you can see which side of the car the bride will be making her exit from, move into position. Make sure your camera is shooting on rapid fire mode so you can get a series of images of the bride coming out of the car, and then choose the most elegant one when editing the photos afterwards.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250

Once the bride is out of the car, I ask to take a photo of her with the bridesmaids and then a photo with her dad (or the person who is giving her away).



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250

I try to ask the bridesmaids to turn in slightly towards the bride so they are not standing straight on towards me, as it's a more flattering angle. For the shot above, I also stood on a low wall which gives a nice perspective.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec at f/2 ISO 100

As long as the light is good with a bit of shade, simply photograph the bride with bridesmaids on the path that they will walk up to the ceremony on. It's the quickest location and also doesn't require the bride to potentially get her dress dirty from moving around too much before the service.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Once the bride has been photographed with the bridesmaids, I then ask the bride's dad to come and put his arm around his daughter in the same location.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Once these posed shots are done, it's time for me to move ahead towards the ceremony, but with one last shot back towards the bride walking up the path to the church.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/2 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/2.8 ISO 100

As soon as I am happy that I have a good shot, I head inside the venue to await the entrance of the bride - not forgetting to quickly change my settings to accommodate the darker interior.

Pre Ceremony Quick Tips

- Make sure you get a wide angle of the church or venue first before everyone starts arriving
- Get a nice shot with the groom and groomsmen before they are too in demand and disappear in different directions!
- Try to introduce yourself to the vicar or registrar and double check on any restrictions/where they are happy for you to stand during the service
- Photograph the rings and order of service before it gets too busy
- Then capture the guests arriving - a mixture of people walking up to the venue, relaxed posed shots of couples and groups and candid moments
- About fifteen minutes before the bride is due to arrive, head to where the car will drop her off to await her arrival. Here you can get photos of the bridesmaids as they arrive and some nice photos of the car and the bride with her dad
- Get some shots of the bride walking up the path towards the ceremony, but don't leave it too long - you'll need to get ahead to the front of the church to be in place to photograph the entrance of the bride and the ceremony

Ceremony

A lot of what you can photograph during the ceremony will depend on the restrictions imposed by the vicar or registrar. It's a good idea to make sure the bride and groom have spoken with whoever is conducting the service in advance so that everyone knows what is and isn't allowed. You don't want an upset couple after the wedding because they didn't know the vicar didn't allow any photography during the service at all!

It's only occasionally that a vicar or registrar won't allow any photography during the service. If this happens, then I suggest putting on your most charming smile and trying to get a little bit of leeway by saying you could just stay at the back and would like to photograph them coming up and down the aisle plus the first kiss when everyone will be clapping and making noise anyway. It sometimes works and is worth a try! Whatever happens, don't get drawn into an argument - it will only make matters worse!

Make sure you get a variety of wide 'setting the scene' photos and close up shots. If you need to stay in one spot you can still get a good selection of images just by using different lenses.

Must Have Shot List:

- Bride walking up the aisle
- First look between bride and groom
- Bridesmaids walking up the aisle
- Candid shots of guests during the service
- Candid shots of close family members
- Wide angle of whole scene
- Vows
- Exchange of rings
- Readings
- Signing of register including family congratulating the couple

- Exit down the aisle
- A kiss as they walk out of the building - remember to change your settings as it will be much brighter than indoors

Entrance of the Bride

Given the choice of where to stand, I would place myself at the front of the church or venue, a few steps behind the groom, to get photos of the bride coming up the aisle and I would usually be using my 50mm 1.4 lens at 1.4 (you'll need to be quick with your focusing and shooting to photograph at this depth of field though to make sure the bride stays in focus). You should be able to get some lovely photos of the bride exchanging her first looks with the groom from this angle and be well placed for nice ceremony shots too.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 640



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500

If you can't secure a place at the front - perhaps the vicar won't allow you there or there isn't room, then you'll need to station yourself at the back. This isn't the end of the world - you can get some nice shots of the bride coming through the entrance and then the back of her dress as she walks up the aisle.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 2000

It may be tricky to get a shot of the back of the bride's dress as she walks up the aisle if the bridesmaids come in after her, but if you're not allowed at the front then you can only do so much. If this is the case, just try and get some quick shots of the bride walking up the aisle before the bridesmaids catch up. If possible you could ask the bride in advance in which order she is planning on doing things. If you know the bridesmaids will be coming in second, then you could ask her to make sure they leave a few seconds gap between herself and them so you can get a clear shot of her making her way up the aisle.

Once the bride has reached the top, you will be in a good position to get a variety of wide angle and close up shots of the exchange of vows. Hopefully it will also be relatively easy for you to move around the sides of the ceremony and still remain discreet, so you can get some different shots.

Wherever you are based, if you need to move then the best time to do this is during the songs. Never move during the quiet parts - you'll be very conspicuous!

Ceremony Candids

It's lovely to get some candid during the ceremony, but I'm aware of the need to not go overboard here and start annoying the vicar or registrar with the click of the shutter. It is most important to get beautiful shots of the bride and groom during the key moments - the vows, the exchange of rings, the first kiss, the signing of the register. Any other images are bonuses, so if your officiant is not the most relaxed, then save the shutter clicks for these other important moments.

The best times to get candid ceremony moments are before the service begins and during the songs. During these times it's a bit easier to be discreet!

Particularly look to take candid of the immediate family of the bride and groom, the bridesmaids and groomsmen, all near the front.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 640

It's a special day for the parents too, so capturing a candid moment between them is really lovely.



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/2.8 ISO 1600



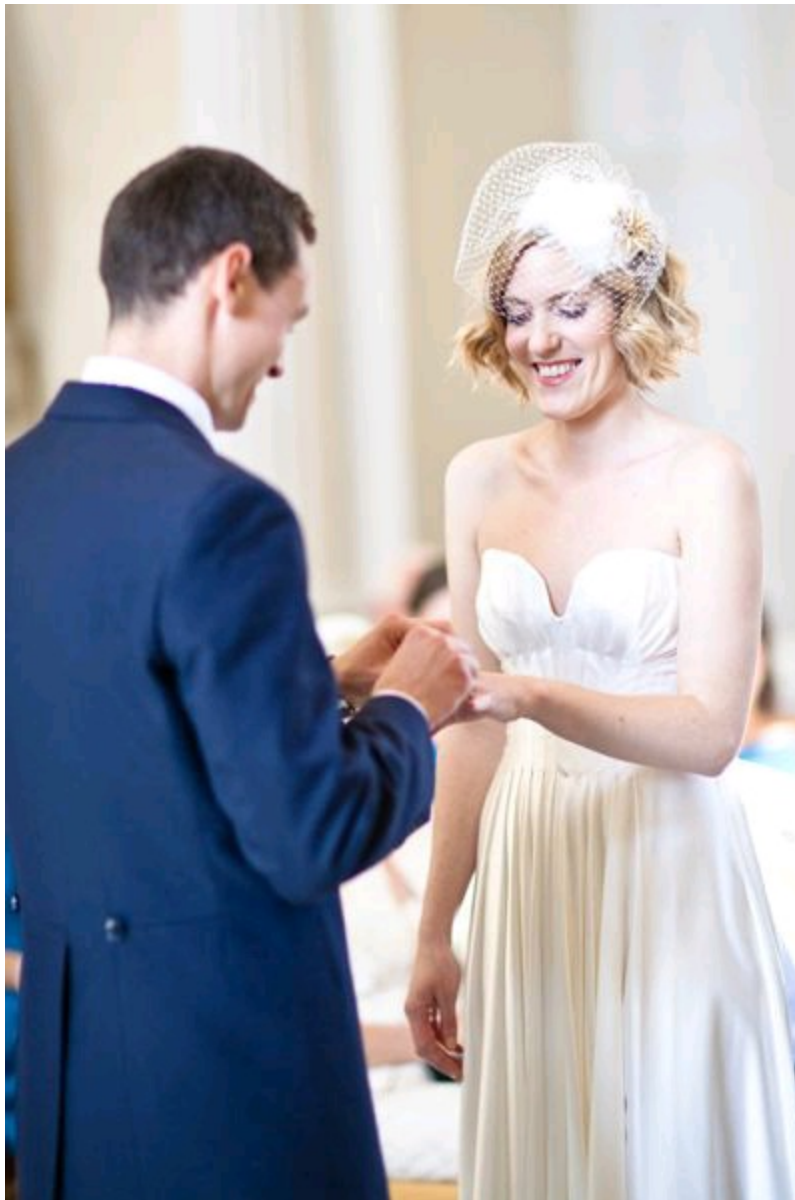
Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.2 ISO 800

Watch out for special looks between the bride and groom - if you get the shot ready while the couple are singing and remain waiting behind the camera, you can then wait until the bride turns towards the groom to take a photo. Then you can get a lovely moment like this one above.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/4000 sec at f/1.2 ISO 125

Look around and capture people and children watching the service take place, like these flower girls and page boys during this outdoor wedding.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 640

From my position at the front I wasn't able to move around much at this wedding, but by using three different lenses I was able to get a variety of images.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.2 ISO 125

As well as photographing the main action, keep your eyes peeled around the guests near the front for some nice candid shots. Another good time would be just after the first kiss has happened. Make sure you have the kiss shot and then look around for guests' reactions, like this lovely smile from the bride's sister above.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.2 ISO 800

Readings can be very short, so try and find out from the order of service when they will be happening and make sure you are in a good position to capture them.

Signing of the Register

The signing of the register can be a tricky part of the wedding to capture. Often it is done in small vestry at the back of the church with little room and even less light. If you find yourself in this situation, bearing in mind hopefully you'll know in advance as you've done a venue visit before the wedding, I'd recommend taking in your wide angle lens. If your lens isn't particularly fast (I'd be shooting at 1.4 for example) then you would also want to take in your external flash and bounce it off the ceiling.

I try to get some natural shots of the real signing if I'm allowed, and then usually I'm offered the opportunity to have a posed photo with the bride and groom. Assuming

there is a table with a seat rather than an altar, I would have the bride seated and the groom put his arm round her, look down at the page and bend down a bit. It can feel a bit forced, but often this will make them laugh which does make a nice shot!

Sometimes if the vicar or registrar is used to more formal photography, they would also offer for you to do group shots with the witnesses and family members. For me, most of my couples don't want to do this and I politely decline. If your couple are keen on it, then make sure you increase your aperture and decrease your shutter speed to compensate and have everyone in focus. You may also need to use your flash, bounced off the ceiling if it is in a dim room.

In addition to this, I try and get some photos of the bridal party congratulating the bride and groom.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.4 ISO 800



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125

Posed signing of the register shots don't have to look forced. I often ask the couple to both look down as one of them signs, which looks very natural.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 1000

Another posed shot - I asked the couple to get in close and look down at the groom pretending to sign. Notice how connected the couple look because of the bride's arms wrapped around the groom. The image would not have the same feeling if they simply stood side by side.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.2 ISO 800

Look out for special first moments after the signing of the register.

Leaving the Ceremony

As soon as I've finished photographing the signing of the register, I will head to the back of the venue to await the bride and groom leaving the ceremony. Occasionally the

vicar or registrar may present the bride and groom with their marriage certificate before they leave, but if this is the case I would simply photograph it from the back of the venue.

Before the couple process out, I double check my settings and then although I would photograph them the whole way down the aisle, I would be particularly trying to get as many shots as possible from halfway down. I would be able to get about five frames on rapid fire where they would be in perfect positioning (full length of the dress) and from those five I would then choose the best two or three with the nicest expressions.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 800



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/2.8 ISO 1600



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

I would stop photographing the couple walking down the aisle after these five or so shots had been taken as the next step is to hurry outside, change the ISO as you'll be going from a dark indoor ceremony to daylight and double check that I've got the right settings before they make their way out of the church. I would check my settings by getting ahead of them by a few seconds and taking a test shot of the empty door, then double checking the exposure on the back of my camera screen. You do not want to end up with overexposed images because you didn't change the ISO down in time!

Ceremony Quick Tips

- Stand just behind the groom at the front of the church when possible. From here you will get the bride's walk up the aisle, the first look between them and be in a good position for the ceremony
- The first kiss is usually straight after the exchange of rings when the vicar says "By the power vested in me" - you may need to step out behind the couple for a split second to get a better angle rather than the backs of their heads for this shot
- Aim to just shoot candid shots of the congregation during songs when your shutter fire will be less obvious
- Do a set up shot of the signing of the register. You can make this look less formal by getting the bride to take a seat and asking the groom to crouch down a little and putting his arm around her. They should both look at the register
- When the bride and groom make their exit, stop photographing them about halfway down the aisle and head outside quickly so you can get a good photo of them coming out of the building
- Make sure you take a test shot of the empty doors and double check your settings before they come outside so your images are not overexposed

Outside the Ceremony

As soon as the couple are out of the church or venue, it's a good idea to ask them to come away from the exit where everyone else will come out. This is because all the guests will want to congratulate the bride and groom and this will cause a backlog of people trying to get out of the church or building. By moving them away from the door, guests will get out of the church more quickly and you can get straight into organising a confetti shot along with help from the ushers.

For a confetti shot, I would usually use my 35mm lens on my full frame camera, so it would be quite wide. I like to get the guests throwing the confetti as well as the reaction of the bride and groom, all in the same frame. I usually ask people to gather around the bride and groom in a circle and throw the confetti on the count of three.

As well as organising the confetti shot, I am shooting as many candid photographs of guests as possible at this point. Everyone is outdoors and usually smiling. It's a great time to get natural shots. I do a combination of candids and relaxed posed shots of small groups, from couples up to a group of about six friends. This is the perfect time to try and get as many of the guests photographed as you can. Shooting small groups means that you are more likely to get a higher percentage of the guests on camera rather than taking totally candid shots one person at a time.

Unless there is a wedding planner, you should take responsibility for suggesting if the couple need to make a move to the reception in order to keep to timings. The bride and groom will be caught up in the moment and are usually happy to have some gentle direction! I usually expect couples to spend about 20 minutes for everyone to mingle after the service.

Must Have Shots

- Lots of candid and relaxed guest shots

- Bride and groom being congratulated
- Set up confetti shot
- Bride and groom with car
- Bride and groom being driven away/leaving the ceremony, friends waving

Confetti

I organise the confetti shot by asking guests to gather in a circle with myself, the bride and groom in the middle. On the count of three, I'd ask them to throw their confetti as high as possible (it makes a much nicer photo to have it fluttering down).

Some photographers have the bride and groom walk down a path of people showering them with confetti. This can of course work too, but I find it's harder for me to get a good shot as I'll be walking backwards while taking photos and there will be less confetti involved because it will be thrown by one or two people at a time. Also they are likely to throw it at the couple rather than in the air, so it doesn't create quite the same effect for what I'd like to achieve.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

The moments after the confetti has been thrown are also great to get on camera.

Candids Outside The Ceremony

Once the confetti has been thrown, you can spend ten or fifteen minutes photographing candid moments of smiles and congratulations. I always make sure I start by getting

some nice photos of the bride and groom during this time as often you can think you have more time than you do and it would be a big shame to not get candid of them both during this point. Once I'm sure I have some nice images of them smiling then I will look around to see who I can photograph among their guests.

For candid shots, I'll be looking for people who are already standing in good light - shady or soft light, avoiding harsh sun when possible - and I'll be taking a mental note of who I have photographed so that later on in the day I can make sure I get as many other guests photographed as I can. I would be using my 50mm 1.4 at f1/4 during this period.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

It's lovely to capture the happiness after the ceremony with friends congratulating the bride and groom.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

If you see the bride smiling with guests, anticipate moments of laughter in advance and be ready to capture a series of shots.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Being friendly and having a chat with the mother of the bride (and others) during bridal prep times can make them feel more at ease in front of the camera later in the day. I love this shot of the bride's mother holding her granddaughter just after the ceremony. Because we talked at the house before the ceremony, the bride's mother smiles at me genuinely and shares the happiness of the day.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Look out for great shots of the parents watching the proceedings. This shot of the bride's father looks lovely and warm not only because of his proud expression but because of the subject being in the shade. This gives a soft light to the photo and the dappled sunlight, which was very bright, coming through the trees behind him adds depth and tone.

Photographing the Bridal Car



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

There are not many chances to take photos of the bridal car during the day and you definitely don't want to leave it until they arrive at the reception venue in case the driver has to get off quickly to another job. I would always try and shoot a few frames as the car arrives before the ceremony, but also before the couple head off afterwards. If I'm able to photograph it at the reception venue then I would also get some there.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Once the bride and groom are in the car, it's nice to have them wind down the windows and to get some photos of them inside - either laughing with guests or having a kiss.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/4000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Remember to check your settings by doing a few test shots of the empty car interior before taking photos of the bride and groom inside the car, as it will be darker than the candids you've just been photographing.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/2 ISO 100

The last shots for me outside the ceremony are of the bridal car leaving and everyone waving. Then, unless I've made plans with the bride and groom to stop somewhere en route for portraits, I head straight to my car for the drive to the reception venue.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200

When I first started photographing couples next to their car, I felt like I was being a bit cheesy and traditional. But I soon realised that you don't have to make the car centre stage - as long as the photo is about the connection between the bride and groom, you can make the vehicle a nice prop behind them.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200

These shots were taken en route to the reception venue at a place special to the groom and his family. It looks much better if you don't have guests milling around and the couple will be more relaxed for the photos too. Think about whether there is somewhere nice for portraits en route between the ceremony and reception venue that you could all stop for ten minutes.

Outside The Ceremony Quick Tips

- Lead the couple away from the main door to avoid long delays while guests filter out of the church
- As soon as all the guests are out, organise the confetti shot. Gather people with confetti in a circle around you and the couple and ask them to throw it as high as possible on the count of three
- Ask the bride and groom to look at one another during the confetti shot and to

hold hands

- Shoot candids of the bride and groom, and their immediate family first. Then move on to other guest candids
- Pay attention to the prettiest direction of light
- Just before you want the couple to head off to the reception, photograph the wedding car by itself and the bride and groom with the car
- Keep an eye on timings - if the bride and groom are still chatting beyond 15 minutes of coming out of the ceremony you need to take responsibility to gently advise them it might be time to move on to the reception

Cocktail Hour

Upon arrival at the reception venue, this is where I would have made sure during the planning stages that I had been allocated at least an hour and a half. This is the busiest time for me to shoot during the wedding.

Must Have Shot List:

- Arrival drinks
- Wide angle shots of the main reception room from all four angles - you may need to politely ask catering staff to hide for a moment while you take a shot if they are doing any final touches
- Detail shots from the tables including flowers, placenames for the bride and groom, bottles of wine, presents, any favours etc
- The cake
- Canapes if possible
- Wide shots of the venue
- Group shots based on your prepared group shot list
- Bride and groom creative portraits
- Candid and relaxed group guest shots
- Receiving line if applicable
- Bride and groom being called into dinner

Photographing the Room Set Up and Details

Once I've arrived I would always make sure I get a photo of the drinks being served, whether they be glasses of champagne or bottles of lemonade. A lot of couples will have given significant thought to the drinks they'll serve so it's nice to get photos of these - plus you don't want to leave it too late otherwise they will have all gone!

After this, I spend the first 15 minutes photographing the empty reception room with all the decorations. If you don't do this very shortly after arrival, guests will inevitably come and place coats and handbags on their chairs which would ruin a full shot of the scene.

So I start with wide angles first and shoot from each four corners of the room to get different perspectives.

I'd then focus on the table decorations and photograph the flowers, favours etc. I make sure that I move the salt and pepper which would be a distraction and then work around the tables to make sure I have photographed everything I need to. I'll pay special attention to the top table, and get a photo of the bride and groom's place names. I even photograph the bottles of wine as they may have sentimental value to the couple.

Arrival Drinks



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

The bride and groom may have chosen beautiful individual bottles of drinks for their guests, so make sure you get a photo or two!



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Get a shot of the arrival drinks as soon as you get to the venue before they get handed out to guests.

Wide Angle Shots of Reception and Details



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/4000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500

You don't necessarily have to shoot the entire room, sometimes focusing on part of the room will give a good sense of the setting.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 320



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200

Try focusing on the flowers on a table but still doing quite a wide shot to give a nice sense of the scene.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/1.6 ISO 1600



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.2 ISO 250

It's a must to get photos of the flowers in the centre of the table, but you'll want to make sure that you move items like the salt and pepper pots and any distracting bottles of wine to the side. It makes the shot a lot clearer and prettier.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.2 ISO 250



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 1250

Look out for the table plan which may be just outside the reception room.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Now is also a good time to get some photos of the cake. Try and photograph it from different angles and you could get creative with the cropping, like the photo above.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

If your timings are looking okay, then try and get a photo of the name of the venue - it will make a nice extra if the couple make an album.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Try and find someone handing out canapes and ask them if you can take a photo - it will help if they hold out the tray or board still for a moment.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

If there is a buffet or high tea then the food may go out on the tables in advance of the guests sitting down which makes some nice shots.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 320



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Watch out for funny moments like this one where the bride's dog took quite an interest in the seafood buffet!

Group Shots

Once I'd photographed the interior details and the canapes, I would head outside to

finalise my group shot location (by looking at the spots I'd identified previously during the venue visit and considering the current lighting), then find the ushers and ask them to help me get together the people needed for group shots.

You'll need to hand the ushers several copies of the group shot list and let them know where you will be taking the photos. If you recognise family members it is also worth telling them that you will need them now and to come on over. Make sure you also get the bride and groom before all the family, as people won't believe the group shots are happening until the bride and groom are in place. They will come over quicker if they see that you have started taking shots of the bride and groom and these images while you are waiting for everyone can be good test shots to make sure you have all your settings right.

For group shots, you'll need to make sure your aperture is at least f/5 so that everyone is in focus. I mention this because the rest of the day I would usually shoot at f1.4. If you don't adjust your aperture for the group shots at this stage it would be a disaster!

I aim for very relaxed family photos for my group shots. If you want to create more formal groups then you can take a look at posing techniques and inspiration online. For my group shots, I ask people to put arms around one another, get in nice and close and it's also important that they turn slightly towards the bride and groom.

To make these kind of shots look nice, you'll need to remember to ask the men to unbutton their jackets. Otherwise when they put their arm around someone, the jacket will stretch and look terrible.

Must Have Shots

(subject to the answers in the bride and groom's pre-wedding information forms):

- Bride and groom with bride's immediate family (e.g parents, siblings and partners/children, grandparents)
- Bride with grandparents (I do this first as they are often frail and will need to get

back to a seat asap)

- Bride and groom with bride's parents
- Bride with immediate family (parents, siblings)
- Bride with her mum
- Bride with her dad
- Bride with siblings
- Bride and groom with groom's immediate family (e.g parents, siblings and partners/children, grandparents)
- Groom with grandparents
- Bride and groom with groom's parents
- Groom with immediate family (parents, siblings)
- Groom with his mum
- Groom with his dad
- Groom with his siblings
- Bride with bridesmaids
- Bride with chief bridesmaid/maid of honour
- Groom with groomsmen
- Groom with best man



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/6.3 ISO 100

Bride and groom with bride's immediate family (e.g parents, siblings and partners/children, grandparents)

I would start the group shots off with all the bride's immediate family, including grandparents, siblings, partners and children. I ask the bride's father to stand next to her, and the bride's mother to stand next to the groom, then everyone else should balance both sides. I'd try to ask siblings to stand with their partners if applicable, but if this makes the photo particularly lop sided (i.e everyone is on just one side) then I would split them on opposite sides, aiming to roughly have male/female/male/female for balance. As you can see above on the far right, this is not a hard and fast rule, but is nice in general to give the photo some structure.

To me, it doesn't matter which way round the bride and groom stand as long as I fit the pattern that the parents are on either side and we aim for m/f/m/f.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/6.3 ISO 100

Bride and groom with bride's grandparents (I am usually requested by the family to do this first as the grandparents often need to sit down again quite quickly).



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/5.6 ISO 200

Bride and groom with bride's parents

Here I would have the bride's mother next to the groom, then the bride, then the bride's father. Remember to ask for the men's jackets to be undone so their jackets don't stretch when they put their arms around people.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/4 ISO 250

Bride with immediate family (parents, siblings)

I would usually ask the siblings to be in the middle of the picture with the bride for the immediate family picture, with the parents at each end.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/4.5 ISO 125

Bride with her mother

For the photograph of the bride with her mum, you should start by getting a full length photo which will show off the mother of the bride's outfit as well as the wedding dress. After this, a nice $\frac{3}{4}$ length portrait is ideal.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/6.3 ISO 100

Bride with her father

It doesn't matter too much which side the bride's dad stands, but just direct him to put his arm around her waist and lean in towards one another. Again I would photograph a full length photo and one more close up.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/3.5 ISO 250

Bride with siblings

Then I would repeat the same pattern on the groom's side of the family. I always get a lovely reaction from the mother of the groom when she gets to have her own photo taken with the groom, as it's not necessarily that common or expected but it is definitely appreciated!

- Bride and groom with groom's immediate family (e.g parents, siblings and partners/children, grandparents)
- Bride and groom with groom's grandparents
- Bride and groom with groom's parents
- Groom with immediate family (parents, siblings)
- Groom with his mum
- Groom with his dad
- Groom with his siblings

I then move on to the bridal party:



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/5.6 ISO 200

Bride with bridesmaids

For this photo, you want to balance the image by having similar height people on each side of the bride. Unless there was a big height difference, I would also put the chief bridesmaid next to the bride as she is her best friend. I ask the bridesmaids to all

slightly turn towards the bride - this gives a more flattering image.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/5.6 ISO 200

Bride with chief bridesmaid/maid of honour

I don't usually get a photo of the bride with every single bridesmaid as usually I am limited for time. But I do make sure that we get a photo of her chief bridesmaid as this is her best friend. If it is her sister, then I might already have got the shot when I took the bride with siblings image earlier. If so then I don't need to take it again now.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/4 ISO 250

Groom with groomsmen

The same tips apply here as for taking this shot before the ceremony. Have the groom stand in the middle, then the best man next to him and ask them all to undo their jackets and either put their arms around one another or have their hands in their pockets for a lovely relaxed shot.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec at f/5 ISO 250

Groom with best man

Just like the bride, I don't usually have time to get a photo of the groom with every groomsman, but the best man is an important shot. If there are two best men then get a photo of them all together and then one with the groom each individually.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/3.5 ISO 160

Any other requested group shots

Lastly I would do any additional shots requested by the bride and groom, such as Godparents, university friends etc. This is because the other shots are the most important, so I would rather get those done first and know I had them captured, in case of running over time.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/7.1 ISO 320

Big group shots which are over several people deep will require you to get some height so that you can get a clear shot of everyone's face. You can do this either by standing on a wall or at the top of steps, from an upstairs window if it is a very large group or by taking your shoes off and standing on a chair. For a large group do make sure you increase your aperture even more than the other group photos to compensate for the depth of field needed, so that everyone will be in focus.

When putting together a very large group, you'll want to make sure the sides are balanced so there aren't more people on one side than the other. Once you are happy with the set up, get people's attention by asking them to wave at the camera. It's a little cheesy, but for large groups, such as a huge shot of all the wedding guests, then you do need to get their attention so that you have as many people as possible looking at the camera.

Bride and Groom Portraits

As soon as the group shots are done, I ask to take the bride and groom off somewhere away from the crowds to do their couple portraits. It's important that you don't allow any guests to tag along (especially those with cameras) as you need the bride and groom to feel really relaxed and comfortable in front of the camera. I guarantee that if you let a guest come along and watch or take photos that they will make comments that will make the bride and groom feel uncomfortable. This will show in the images and not help create the genuine loving and happy emotions you want to capture.

When choosing a location for the bride and groom portraits it will be best to be out of sight of the guests - ideally somewhere in the grounds of the venue, or if that's not possible - perhaps there isn't much outside space, then you could plan to stop off somewhere en route to the reception.

You also want to pick somewhere with good light - this aspect is even more important than the background. The light you are looking for is soft and luminescent. How you can find it depends on the weather conditions:

Scorching hot day with shade available:

When the sun is beating down, you'll ideally be looking for somewhere shady under trees or in the shadow of a building to give you a soft diffused light, such as the images below. The second image was shot just in the porch of the couple's house as there was hardly any shade to be found! On a hot day, where possible also look out to include pretty backlight behind the couple, either golden sunlight or warm tones dappled through the trees which will give your images depth.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Scorching hot day with no shade available:

If there is no shade, don't worry - it is not as impossible as it may seem. You can get the couple to look at each other so they are not squinting at the camera, and increase your settings to a higher shutter speed and aperture to compensate for the very bright situation. If you want to then get a photo of them looking towards the camera they will need their back to the sun and for you to expose for their faces. This will give a nice natural backlight.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.8 ISO 100

Cloudy and overcast:

This is a nice diffused light to shoot in, however there will still be a direction where the light will look prettiest. Try walking around your couple before you start and look at the light on their faces. You'll notice that from one side their faces will look darker. You want to figure out where the sun is coming from (even though it is behind the clouds) by finding the side of their face that appears the most light. Take some test shots before you begin and check them on the back of your camera to make sure you are capturing the right side as it will make a huge difference to your photos.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.2 ISO 160



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125

Rainy and wet (indoor photography):

If the weather is really not playing ball, you'll probably need to be inside for the bride and groom portraits, but at least the light source is obvious! Unless you are proficient in off camera flash, then you'll want to seek out window light for your couple. Place yourself between the window and the couple to get soft light on their faces.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 2500



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500

Alternatively if you're inside but the room is fairly light then you may not need to photograph with the window behind you. This photo was shot in the bar area and I crouched down low to make sure I got the chandeliers in the mirror rather than myself or other distracting items.

Rainy and wet (outdoor photography):

If you have a really relaxed bride and groom who are very keen to get beautiful portraits whatever the cost, then you may have a couple who are willing to brave the rain! My bride and groom below were willing to climb this North Devon tor in hail and strong winds in order to get this shot (we had planned it in advance but had not expected such bad weather!). Moody skies and wind blowing through the bride's veil can make a striking combination.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Setting Up The Shot

Difficult Locations

Even if it seems like there is nowhere to go for your portraits, you can always find some little nook or cranny! For the shot below, the bride and groom were on a ferry down the Thames with all their guests en route to the reception. Time was getting on and I was concerned whether we would have enough time at the reception site for their portraits. I decided we needed to make use of the time on the boat to get some of their shots. I took them downstairs to the very front of the boat where there wouldn't be onlookers. The space was tiny, and I had to climb halfway up some stairs just to be able to get this shot, but it ended up being one of my favourites from the wedding. If time or the location is tight, get thinking and make use of what you've got - with the right posing and a bit of a creative eye you can still get some great pictures!



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/2.8 ISO 250

And this image below wasn't taken in a poppy field! It was actually by the side of a very busy road, with a few poppies along the pavement. Clever cropping is your friend!



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.2 ISO 100

Posing Your Couple

Once I've picked somewhere where I'm happy with the light and the background, I start by asking the couple to face each other and cuddle up. The most important thing is that their arms always stay touching - this gives a feeling of love and connectedness. The difference in photos where the bride and groom have their arms down by their side is striking - it looks very cold. And you'd be surprised how often their arms do

fall to their side when not directed, so you'll need to keep an eye on this and keep reminding them!



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.2 ISO 160

Before I start taking any photos, I give the couple some tips on how to pose naturally. These would include:

- When facing each other, try to stand in a V shape so that your bodies are more open towards me, which means I can see more of your faces
- Make sure your arms are always touching or connected to one another in some way, never just down by your side
- Feel free to move your arms and touch each other's faces or have a kiss
- Always keep your faces nice and close to each other; touching foreheads or noses is ideal!
- Feel free to whisper funny things to one another and make each other laugh!



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.2 ISO 160

I then step back and let them hold each other and talk and start to get the shots I need. I don't intervene with any more directions unless I can see something going wrong, like their heads aren't close enough or the groom's arms have dropped to his side.

You can get a lot of mileage from the same pose and location, like the two shots above, simply by using different lenses or just moving yourself around the couple to get different perspectives and coming in closer. I will say encouraging things about how beautiful the images are looking when they are in a really great pose as this will instil confidence in how they are standing and interacting.

This time is particularly precious for the bride and groom because it may be one of the first times they have been alone together the entire wedding day. I often get feedback saying this was their favourite time of the wedding because they got to have a bit of space together and felt most relaxed.

Letting them have this private time is part of getting a beautiful photo. It is a fine balance between letting them experience a moment to themselves so you can capture that genuine emotion and giving them subtle direction and encouragement to let them know things are going well. You definitely don't want to just be totally silent and just shoot candidly as they will start to worry that they aren't posing correctly and this will break the magic!

I specifically don't to ask my couples to kiss that much - maybe three set up shots maximum, although obviously spontaneous kisses are fine! Kissing shots can be very intimate and a little embarrassing to share with family and friends! Instead I build the feeling of intimacy through asking the couple to get their faces really nice and close together. It can even feel a little unnatural to have faces so close but not kiss - sometimes this can create laughter which is always great for the photo. If they are struggling with feeling awkward at all, I get them to touch noses to get the desired effect.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.2 ISO 100

I don't personally bring along any specific props for my bride and groom, but I'm happy to incorporate them if they have some themselves, like these giant balloons.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Alternatively, if your couple are a fun loving sort and you spot something that might make a good spur of the moment prop then definitely suggest it! These ice creams made a really fun photo, and the bride and groom enjoyed eating them too!



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.8 ISO 200

After setting up my shot and making sure the couple are in the location I want and have their arms and faces connected, I will ask the groom to whisper something funny in the bride's ear. I rarely know what they whisper but it does usually result in fantastic, genuine laughter from the bride, so make sure you are ready on hand to capture her reaction.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250

It's good to get a different perspective by asking the bride and groom to sit down (steps are ideal) - but make sure you bring a blanket for the bride to sit on, she won't appreciate getting her dress dirty! Get the groom to sit on one step higher than the bride and wrap his arms around her. Then make sure her hands rest on his to achieve the connectedness you want from the image. Giving gentle direction such as asking the groom to kiss the bride's cheek or to whisper something funny in her ear will give you beautiful joyful expressions.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125

Walk around the seated couple to get different perspectives. This means you'll get a variety of different images without constantly asking the bride and groom to move.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Try to include some nice wide shots which set the scene of where the wedding took place.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.6 ISO 800

If you are really stuck for outside space, like I was with this Bristol wedding, then try and focus on one main area of interest - for me this was the fun bright pink door of the venue. We then built most of the bride and groom portraits around it. I asked the groom to twirl the bride around, with him stood on the step above her, and photographed on rapid fire. In my editing I was then able to pick the best shot where the dress swirled out with a great expression on her face.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.6 ISO 800

Using the same door as the backdrop, I was able to shoot some close up photos. Notice how I photographed the couple at a slight angle which adds interest.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 160

Think about getting down low on the floor to get some different perspectives. Crouching down low was the only way for me to include this lovely blossom which was high up in the branches.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Also come in closer for sweet detail shots like the couple holding hands.



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/2.8 ISO 250

You can get some beautiful portraits by shooting with the sun behind the couple. In camera, the shot will look quite white, but you can add the golden colour in your editing process afterwards. This photo was shot mid afternoon in a busy Bristol street with lots of shoppers, right outside the registry office.

If you'd like to recreate this type of look for your shots I'd recommend you understand how to shoot in manual mode to get the right exposure in these more difficult lighting situations.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

It's nice to get some movement in your photos. Here I asked the bride and groom to slowly walk hand in hand towards the camera across the beach with the sun behind them. I asked the bride to carry her shoes to give the image a nice relaxed look.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Even after you've finished your portrait session and are heading back to the main party, walk a little ahead of the couple and keep your camera ready for any sweet unscripted moments like this one above.



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8 USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/2.8 ISO 100

Most importantly, do not forget that you need to get a shot of the bride and groom both looking at the camera. This will undoubtedly be the shot that will go on all the family's mantelpieces, so it's an important one not to forget! It can be easily done at the end of each session of more natural posing when the bride and groom are feeling relaxed. You just keep them in the pose that they are in and ask them to both look at you.

Bridal Portraits

After I've photographed the bride and groom together, I will get some individual portraits, starting with the bride as I will already have got some photos of the groom before the ceremony.

If you've already found a nice location for the bride and groom portraits, then start here to take some individual shots of the bride. You'll want to get some full length, mid length and close up portraits.

My style of photography doesn't use formal posing - I'm aiming for a much more relaxed look to my photographs, but there are some general rules to follow to get the most flattering pictures of the bride:

- Include a bit of movement in the scene to prevent a stiff unnatural pose - swooshing her dress a little bit or getting her to walk towards the camera can work
- Photograph from slightly higher than the bride where possible - this is where steps come in useful as you can have her sit down and photograph her from where you stand, creating a flattering angle
- If shooting any pictures from low down, make sure the bride raises her chin and is not looking down at the camera
- Always encourage her that the photos are beautiful - pick out things she is doing that work well and let her know. For example "The way you were smiling just then was perfect", or "When you touched your necklace then it looked really great, can you do it again?" If you can see a pose isn't working, just say that was great but move on to something else. The more relaxed and confident the bride feels, the better her photos will be
- Hands should always be doing something - such as holding her dress, shoes (if you're shooting a beach or informal wedding), clutch bag or bouquet
- Avoid arms simply hanging down by the bride's side as this is unflattering. Get a nicer look by asking the bride to put her free hand on her hip
- Never photograph the bride straight on - you'll always get a more flattering photograph if you ask her to stand at a 45 degree angle to you
- For standing shots, have her put her weight on her back foot, which should be the

furthest from you

- Try a few different poses, from simply standing, to leaning against something, perching on a swing or wall (with blanket to sit on) and sitting on steps

In every pose, take full length, mid length and close up photos of her plus details like the back of her dress or her hands holding the bouquet. Also move around to get different perspectives from the same set up. You'll manage to get a lot more variety in your photos in a shorter amount of time than having to move the bride around a lot.

To get genuine smiles and make the bride feel more at ease, I ask the groom to stand right behind me and talk to her. Usually he does something silly behind my head! This way she can look at him but from the camera it looks like she is looking at the lens. It should result in more genuine smiles and laughter.



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec at f/2.8 ISO 100

Start by getting a full length photograph to show off the bride's dress - it's essential that you have a few full length photos of the wedding dress from the day! Ask the bride to place one hand on her hip for a flattering pose.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.2 ISO 125

After you've got some nice full length portraits, you can move on to three quarters length or closer. Soft light is your friend. Here it was a scorching hot day, so I found some shade under the trees which gave a beautiful soft feel to the photos.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250

If the ground is wet from the rain, it is still worth trying to get outside for some natural light portraits. Simply ask the bride to hold up her dress with one hand and it can make for a lovely shot.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec at f/1.2 ISO 160



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

You can set the bride up in one pose and then walk around her to get different shots. In the images above, I didn't need to move the bride, I just asked her to look over her shoulder at me. This pose is especially important for showing off any detail on the back of the bride's wedding dress.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/6400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

This is a nice pose to use as it's something different to standing but you're not needing the bride to get sat down on steps. Use a low wall, boat (if like me in this photo you find yourself at a beach wedding) or anything else to get the bride to perch on and from there, photograph her at a 45 degree angle. This shot was taken with no shade on a very hot day. To achieve the photo without harsh shadows, I faced the bride with the sun behind her and then photographed her from the side, exposing for her skin tones.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

While you are photographing the bride, it's an ideal time to get another nice close up of the bouquet and other details. I simply ask the bride to hold out her bouquet at waist height and then shoot it with a shallow depth of field (f/1.4) so that the flowers are in focus but the bride's dress is soft.

Groom Portraits

I would now photograph some individual portraits of the groom, taking on board the techniques explained earlier in this book in the chapter, 'Before The Ceremony'. I wouldn't spend as long photographing him as the bride because I would have already got some nice images of him before the service. However it is important to get some at this stage too so that there is continuity in the locations if the bride and groom want to create an album afterwards.

The easiest way to pose the groom is to ask for him to stand with his hands in his pockets and face you. This is a more masculine pose than where we asked the bride to stand at an angle. Having his hands in his pockets also makes him look more relaxed. It's a good idea to ask the bride to stand behind you and talk to him for some nice genuine smiles.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/2 ISO 125



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/1.2 ISO 250

Candid Moments/Guests

For candid shots, similarly to outside the ceremony, I do a mixture of “unaware” candid shots of individual guests smiling and chatting and small relaxed group shots where I’d just ask a couple or group of friends to come together for a quick photo. I leave these until last because I can fill anywhere between 10 minutes to 50 minutes shooting these kind of images and still have good coverage of the day. This gives me

flexibility for whenever dinner might be called, which depends on how the catering is going. The last thing I want is to be photographing group shots and have a stressed catering manager telling me they need to call dinner when I still have seven group shots left to do!



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/4000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Look out for guests who are facing the right way for the light - even in bright sunshine without shade there will be a best angle for light. Walk around taking photos of the guests and see on the back of your camera which look nicest. Then think about from what angle you took the best photos - aim to stay shooting from this side of the room/garden as much as possible to get the best images.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Don't be concerned if you can't find any shade on a bright hot summer's day. Expose for the shadows and make sure you're shooting in RAW to capture as much detail as possible.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200

Sometimes you need to wait for a bit to wait to get the best moments. Don't rush on to the next photo all the time - if it's an important one like a candid shot of the bride, then linger in the group she is with for a moment longer until you have a really nice photograph of her smiling.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

While you're taking photos of the bride, I like to get a candid shot of her holding the flowers, the back of her hair and one of her hand holding a glass of bubbly.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/6400 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Always remember to capture any activities the bride and groom have planned for their guests. It's really fun for them to see everyone enjoying themselves.



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L USM Shutter Speed: 1/4000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Couples will love to look back at the photos and see their guests having fun, especially as you will capture moments that the couple may have missed.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

As well as candid unaware photographs of the guests, it's lovely to get some relaxed informal group photos of couples and friends just as people are milling around. I just ask "Could I get a photo of the two of you please?" as it's really important to not assume that two people talking are a couple - it could get pretty embarrassing or end up with people explaining how they know each other rather than having their photo taken otherwise!



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/5000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 125



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

Getting these types of informal group shots is a great way to make sure you capture a good number of the guests at the wedding. Getting individually nice candid photographs of everyone would take much longer and leave you without enough time. This way you are more likely to get everyone at the wedding involved in at least one photo. Of course the major family and friends will be catered for in the official group photos, but there may also be important people like Godparents or people who have traveled a long way that the bride and groom would be disappointed not to see included in the images.

During the candid photos, I would also make sure I took a shot of the bride's parents. I would have already taken a photo of the groom's parents before the ceremony, but if I didn't get the chance then I would also do that now.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100

While you're photographing candid moments, remember to get a few wide shots that set the scene.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/640 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200

Always keep an ear to the ground to know roughly where the bride and groom are, so that you don't miss any spontaneous events, like this wedding where the bride started dancing to the music with her pet dog.

The Bouquet Toss

A bouquet toss won't happen at every wedding, but if your bride is planning on throwing her flowers to her female guests, it can be hard to know where best to stand and which direction to face. I tend to stand just in front of the group awaiting the throw - from here I can get the back of the bride (and usually she will turn over her shoulder just beforehand) as she tosses the bouquet and then I quickly swing around to photograph the bouquet making it's landing and the reaction of the person who has caught it.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec at f/1.4 ISO 200

Indoor Candid Photography

If you need to photograph people indoors where it's fairly dark, then you'll need to

make good use of your flashgun. I try to make it look as natural as possible by bouncing the flash off the ceiling and balancing it with ambient light. I do this by having a relatively high ISO and slow shutter speed to let in the ambient light alongside the flash.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.4 ISO 640 and flash bounced from the ceiling



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 800 and flash bounced from the ceiling

It is much harder to get true candid moments when you are relying on your flash for lighting. Usually for natural light candid I might take three or four shots of someone talking and then choose the most flattering image. When you are using your flash, it is much harder to be discreet - you can imagine what it must feel like to have four flashes going off in your direction when you're trying to have a conversation! So to cut down on the number of flashes needed, I find it better to do more small relaxed groups of guests looking at the camera with just a few unaware candid moments.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 800 and flash bounced from the ceiling

Cocktail Hour Quick Tips

- To get your wide angle shots of the empty room set up, don't wait until the room is clear - simply ask if the catering staff wouldn't mind hiding for a second while you get your shots

- While you have been photographing the details for 15 minutes, all the guests should have now arrived. Aim to photograph group shots as soon as possible. Choose your location and then ask the ushers for help rounding people up, based on your list
- Draw family over quicker by getting the bride and groom into position first - this will signal that the group shots really are happening now and they should come over with a sense of urgency!
- Don't forget to increase your aperture to around f/5 for the group photos
- For the bride and groom portraits, head out of sight of the guests and don't let anyone tag along, unless it's a helpful bridesmaid who can adjust the dress and hold flowers when needed
- Think about four simple poses for the bride and groom and then create a variety of images from each pose by changing your lens to get wide shots and closeups and moving around the couple for alternative angles
- Photograph candid guest shots last as you can fill any length of time with these and won't be pressurised when everyone is called in to dinner

The Wedding Breakfast - Aka Your First Break!

You might want to grab a few shots of guests at tables while everyone settles into their seats and then await the announcement of the bride and groom. You will want to find a good spot to photograph the couple as they enter the room, probably fairly wide angle as they are likely to walk fast through the guests to their table and it's nice to get the reaction of the guests as they walk through too.

Once the bride and groom are seated, unless you are good friends with the bride and groom and invited to be part of the wedding itself, you will need to find somewhere discreet away from the guests to have a break while everyone else has their dinner. It is normal for couples to pay for a meal for you, but it's not usually the same three course dinner that everyone else is having. Typically it would be sandwiches or something from behind the bar, or the same main course as the guests. If you sweet talk the caterers then you might be lucky and score one of the left over puddings!

Do make sure that if you are staying to capture the evening's celebrations that you discuss having a meal provided. I suggest you request a hot meal as you will have been working hard, lugging heavy gear and stretching your creative muscles for at least the last seven hours. You will definitely want a drink and a nice hot meal to see you through to the dancing part of the celebrations!

Caterers are under huge pressure to serve the guests and clear tables, so unfortunately it's fairly common that they may forget you. It's a delicate balance when to remind them as too early and they will get frustrated with you but too late and all the food will be gone. I recommend placing yourself for your break somewhere away from the guests but in easy view of the catering staff so that they regularly see you and are reminded you need your dinner too. You really don't want to be sat cold and hungry for two hours, only to have dinner served just as the speeches start.

I'd recommend bringing some cans of drink with you for while you are waiting for your dinner. There are many lovely caterers who will make sure you get something

early on, but it's best to be prepared!

Speeches

It's worth finding out in advance when the speeches are scheduled, as every wedding is different. They could be before the meal, throughout the meal or at the end (the most common option). If they are not happening at the start of the meal, then you'll want to be listening out for when they start. It is fairly easy if they are scheduled for the end of the meal as you can watch for when the dessert plates start being cleared, and then you know speeches will soon follow.

I position myself kneeled on the floor a little bit back from the top table to capture the speeches. I get a mixture of wide angles and closeups, and I also try to turn to the side to capture reactions of the guests as well as the person giving the speech. If I can discreetly move around the room, then I will do so to get some different angles.

Must Have Shots

- Individual shots of the people giving each speech
- Reactions from the bride and groom
- Reactions of guests
- Cutting the cake



Shot with Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/2.8 ISO 160



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec at f/1.4 ISO 800



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 250



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec at f/1.2 ISO 320



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500

Cutting the Cake

This usually happens fairly soon after the speeches, and you'll want to get yourself a good spot as usually everyone with their camera phones will also gather round.

Think about where would be best for the couple to stand from a photographic point of view, making sure there are no fire exit signs or distractions behind them. Usually the couple will be very happy to be directed by you as to where they should stand to cut the cake.



Shot with Canon EF85mm f/1.2L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 640

Get a few shots of the cake on its own before the bride and groom come over. This will be good for checking on your settings as the cake cutting itself is over very quickly - you'll want to be confident that you have the right camera settings before they make their way over. You may need to bounce your flash on the ceiling if the room has got dark by this stage.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec at f/2.8 ISO 400

Given the option, you want to encourage the couple to cut the cake at the bottom layer. This will make for the nicest image. Take a few photos and linger once the “official” bit is done as often there is laughing afterwards, which makes a great shot.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec at f/1.4 ISO 800 with flash bounced from the ceiling

You can even do cutting the cake shots with cupcakes!

Speeches and Cutting The Cake Quick Tips

- For the speeches, aim to get a variety of closeups and wide angles
- Position yourself in the middle of the room, crouching down so you don't block anyone's view, with a good line of sight to the top table
- Photograph reactions from guests and the bridal party as well as the person giving the speech
- Take photos of the cake before the cutting - you can double check your settings are correct
- Guide the bride and groom into the position you think would make the best photo - look to avoid distractions in the background
- Ask them to cut the bottom layer of the cake for the most natural looking photo

Dancing and Evening Entertainment

After the speeches, there will probably be approximately an hour where the staff will need to turn around the room and create the evening space. I use this time for more candid and informal group shots using a flash bounced off the ceiling as it's usually dark by now. I also take shots of the band sound checking as it's easy to get some clear shots of them without people dancing, and I'll step outside for an evening shot of the venue.

Must Have Shots:

- Band doing sound check
- Guest candids
- Shot of the venue at sundown, with evening lights and deep blue sky as sun sets
- Bride and groom doing the first dance
- Guests dancing, paying particular attention if there is a father and daughter/mother and son dance



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/30 sec at f/1.4 ISO 3200 (no flash)

During this downtime remember to step outside to get a nice wide angle evening shot of the venue with the warm lights and deep blue of the sky, before it gets pitch black. This usually would be about a half hour after sunset.



Shot with Canon EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/50 sec at f/2.8 ISO 4000 (no flash)

Sky Lanterns

If there are sky lanterns organised for the guests, then it's unlikely you'll have anywhere to bounce a flash from to get a sharp image. You can instead use the ambient light from the candle inside the lantern along with a high ISO and low shutter speed to capture the atmosphere.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 1600 (no flash)



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec at f/1.4 ISO 1600 (no flash)

The First Dance

When people start to gather for the first dance, you'll want to find yourself a good position early on as everyone will be trying to get a good view! I try to find somewhere which has some colourful lighting behind the couple, avoiding any fire exit signs and I'll be using my flash, bouncing it off the ceiling to capture a sharp shot of the couple mixed with a very slow shutter speed to maximise any pretty ambient light.

Before the dance starts, I would practice these shots on nearby guests - usually there are children dancing before the dance floor is officially open. These shots can be particularly tricky for lighting, so I'd adjust my ISO, shutter speed and power of my flash to suit the conditions by checking how the shots look on the back of my camera long before the first dance starts. Once it gets going you will not have much time to double check that your settings are correct.



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/13 sec at f/1.4 ISO 100 with flash bounced from ceiling

My typical settings for dancing shots:

- ISO 400
- Flash bounced off the ceiling - adjust power depending on results of back of the camera
- Shutter speed - I would start off trialling it around 100/s
- Aperture f/2 - to combine the sharpness needed as people move quickly but also

allow nice ambient light



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 2000 with flash bounced from the ceiling

Once the first dance is over, it'll be time to photograph the guests dancing. This can be quite challenging, especially as by this time quite a lot of them may be fairly inebriated! Getting into the dance floor rather than just photographing from the edges can produce some great shots, but just be aware of your equipment coming into contact with drinks and flailing arms and legs!



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 2000 with flash bounced from the ceiling



Shot with Canon EF35mm f/1.4L II USM Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec at f/1.4 ISO 2000 with flash bounced from the ceiling



Shot with Canon EF50mm f/1.4 USM Shutter Speed: 1/60 sec at f/1.4 ISO 500 with flash bounced from the ceiling

I usually photograph guests dancing for about half an hour and then find the bride and groom to say goodbye.

Evening Entertainment and Dancing Quick Tips

- While the room is being turned around for the evening entertainment, step outside for a picture of the venue at dusk with a beautiful deep blue sky
- Get shots of the band or DJ doing their soundcheck - it will be easier now while the dance floor is empty
- Make use of children dancing before the first dance officially starts - practice your bounce flash settings on them to check they will be right for the bride and groom
- Aim to have colourful lights from the DJ set up behind your couple for added interest
- Use bounce flash to get the sharpness you need, but slow down your shutter speed to allow it to mix with pretty ambient light
- Photograph a further half hour of the guests dancing to complete your wedding coverage

Hurray, wedding complete! Now time to get home, download the images and put your feet up!

Common Wedding Photography Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

- Thinking this is not a good place to do x shot so I'll do it later (for example the flowers). Shoot them now and do another set of photos later as well. You may forget later on in the fast pace of the day and will be glad of having your first images even if they're not ideal!
- Listening to guests commenting about how you are shooting things or approaching the day. There are always "Uncle Bobs" who have a keen interest in photography who will have an opinion. Have confidence in yourself and don't let their questions or comments undermine you. You have been chosen and trusted to photograph the wedding, not them.
- Not keeping control of the timings. You may say you are "reportage", preferring to stay in the background and photograph events as they happen. Unfortunately unless there is a wedding planner or someone else in charge (which there rarely is!) then often the wedding schedule can over run, and this will cause issues with the photos you know the couple will be expecting to see after the wedding. To save stress later on, it is best to take control of the situation - guiding the couple that they may wish to move on to the next part of the wedding so that they get all the shots they'd like. It is a delicate balance which requires tact and diplomacy, especially when they are talking with guests, but done in a gentle manner it will be appreciated.
- Not having a system for storing used memory cards on the day. In the fast pace of the wedding, you'll probably be motoring through your memory cards. Make sure that you have a system for where in your bag you will keep fresh new ones (making sure they are all formatted in advance) and where you will keep your precious full cards. Every time a card is full, take a moment to make sure that the full card is carefully packed away. It is less important to miss a moment in the

wedding than to misplace an entire hour's worth of photos.

- Not marking your memory cards with your contact details. Memory cards, whether CF or SD, will all have space to write your name and contact number on the back of them. Should the worst happen and you accidentally drop or misplace a card, you want whoever finds it to be easily able to return it to you.

Chapter Three: After The Wedding

“Quality means doing it right when no one is looking.”

– Henry Ford

Timescale

If you have a full time job apart from photography, this may prove difficult, but most bride and grooms will hope to receive their images on return from their honeymoon. Typically this would be two weeks from the date of the wedding.

You should aim to give them a rough idea of when you are hoping to complete the editing, particularly if you think it will take you longer than two weeks. I'd recommend adding at least a few days to however long you think it will take you so that they can be pleasantly surprised when you do it quicker, rather than feeling frustrated waiting for their photos.

Downloading and Backing Up

If you're a keen photographer, you've probably already got a routine for downloading and backing up your images. Writing about efficient editing workflow and all the options available with Lightroom would take another whole book to talk about, so for now I've kept it simple with a brief outline of what I do with my images in case you want some inspiration.

Keep Organised with a Digital Filing System

I organise my images by having a series of folders on my computer.

Images > 2014 > Weddings > Bride + Groom Names > Originals

Into the Originals folder I would download all the RAW files. This takes a long time but I do it straightaway the night I get in from a wedding so that I know the images are safe.

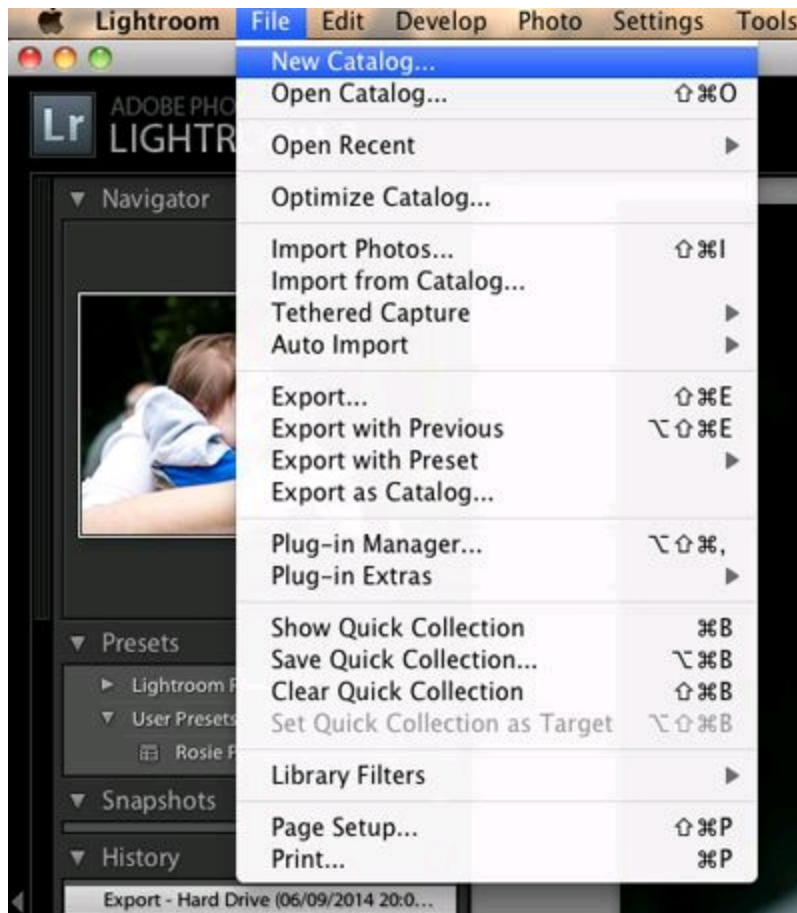
Once the images are downloaded onto the computer, I back them up onto two external hard drives. I use [1TB Western Digital External Hard Drives from Amazon](#).

The following Monday I would begin editing the original files.

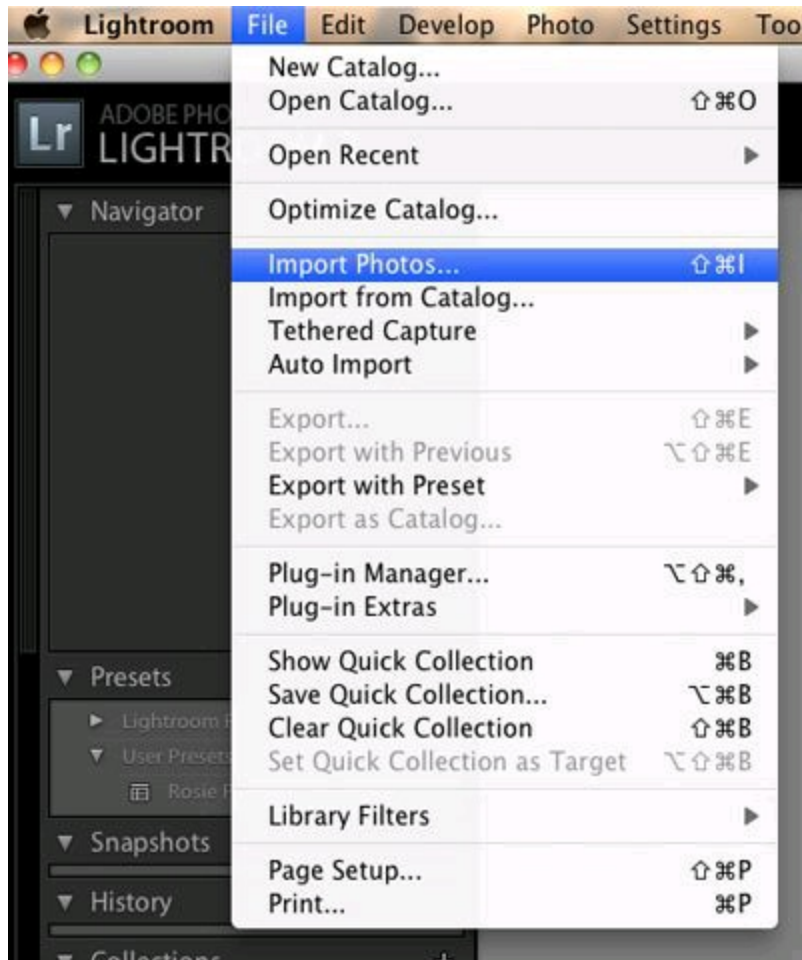
Editing Images

I use Lightroom to edit my images because it is a fast and efficient way to batch edit images with my signature style, and offers quick tools for adjusting exposure and cropping.

I start by open a new Lightroom catalogue which I would name after the bride and groom and their wedding date. e.g Clare and Jon 18 April 2014.



Into this new catalogue I would import all the RAW images from my Originals folder.



You should end up with a screen that looks something like this:



The next step is to start the culling process, deciding which are the best images worth editing further.

I would aim to have a maximum of two or three similar shots, so I would choose my favourite three shoe photos for example. You might have loads of great shots of the shoes, but the bride and groom will get overwhelmed with too much choice. It is better to just pick the best three images and provide them with a neat selection that will make them think “Wow!”.

To choose my favourites I press P (for pick) and it will flag that image. This will make it easy to sort my picks from my rejections later.



You can confirm your image is chosen by the flag icon at the top left.

Once you have gone through the entire wedding choosing the best images, you can choose to view all the chosen images by clicking twice on the flag icon at the bottom right of the screen next to “filter”.



Now you will have all your lovely best images in front of you, and it's time to edit these files.

To edit, you need to select Develop Mode from the top right menu.

Now you should see one large image in front of you (the last one you chose) and all the rest of your flagged selection will appear at the bottom in a line.



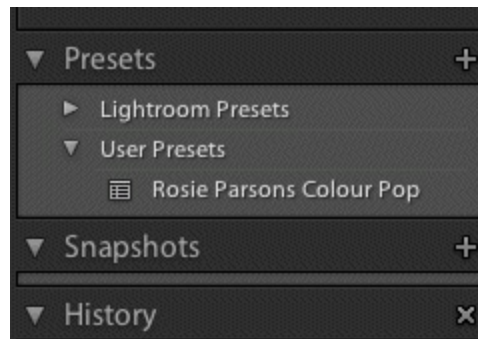
Now you would click on the first image in the bottom line of images (your chosen selection) to start editing from the beginning of the wedding.

With my images, I have a signature style that I like to apply to all the photos I take, and

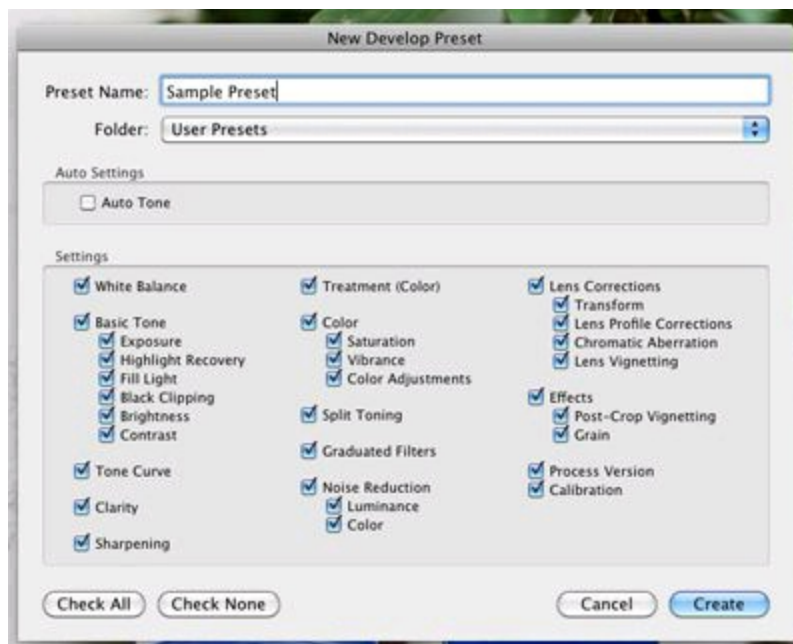
then from there I will tweak the exposure and cropping, if the alignment is slightly off.

To batch process the same effect across another image, you can use a “preset”.

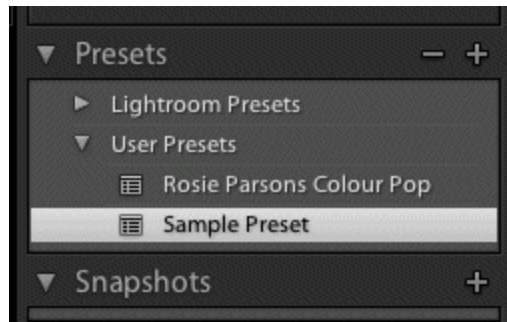
To create a preset (which will save you a lot of time rather than adjusting settings manually for each photo) you need to do your preferred settings on one photo and then click on the plus icon next to the Presets menu on the left.



You should end up with a screen that looks like this:



And then it will appear in your Presets Menu on the left automatically:



Now that you have this preset saved, you can use it to quickly replicate the same settings on any photo, with just one click of a button.

If you're unsure about creating a preset, I have my own preset available to purchase via my

[Etsy Store:](#)

https://www.etsy.com/listing/203972953/rosie-parsons-colour-pop-lightroom?ref=shop_home_active_1 https://www.etsy.com/listing/203972953/rosie-parsons-colour-pop-lightroom?ref=shop_home_active_1

It is the exact same one I use to edit my own images and you can instantly download it now and start using it straightaway - see my example below.



Before

After

To apply the preset to one image, just choose the original from the selection at the bottom of the screen and then click on your preset name in the left hand menu. All your settings will now be applied to the new photo.

To save more time, you can batch process ALL of the images from the wedding at once. To do this just click on a photo that has the preset applied and then choose select all (cmd A for Macs, ctrl A for Windows) which will highlight all your images, and then press Sync on the right hand side of the screen.



Now all your images will have that lovely style that you created on your first photo!

The next step is to individually adjust the exposure, cropping and white balance in each shot. This is the time consuming bit!



Above, I have circled firstly the crop tool, secondly the white balance adjuster and finally where you can adjust the exposure.

When you are happy with each image, move to the next one by pressing the forward and back buttons on your keyboard or selecting the next image from the line at the bottom.

If you want to reproduce the same white balance, crop and exposure in the next image,

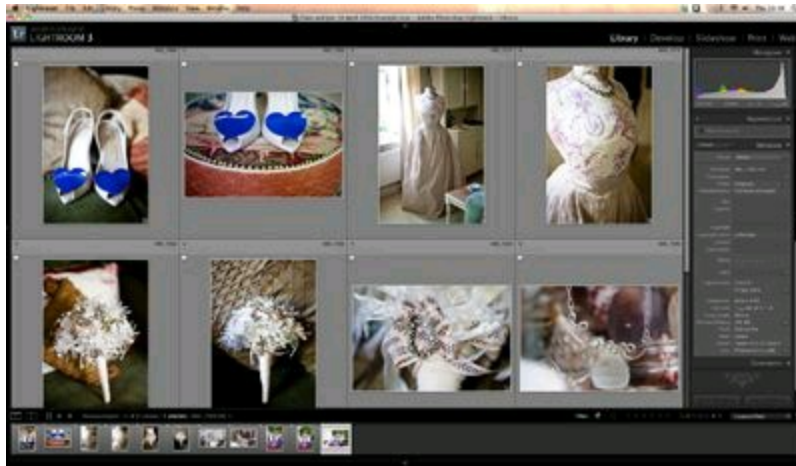
all you need to do is make sure just that image is selected on the bottom line and then press “Previous”.



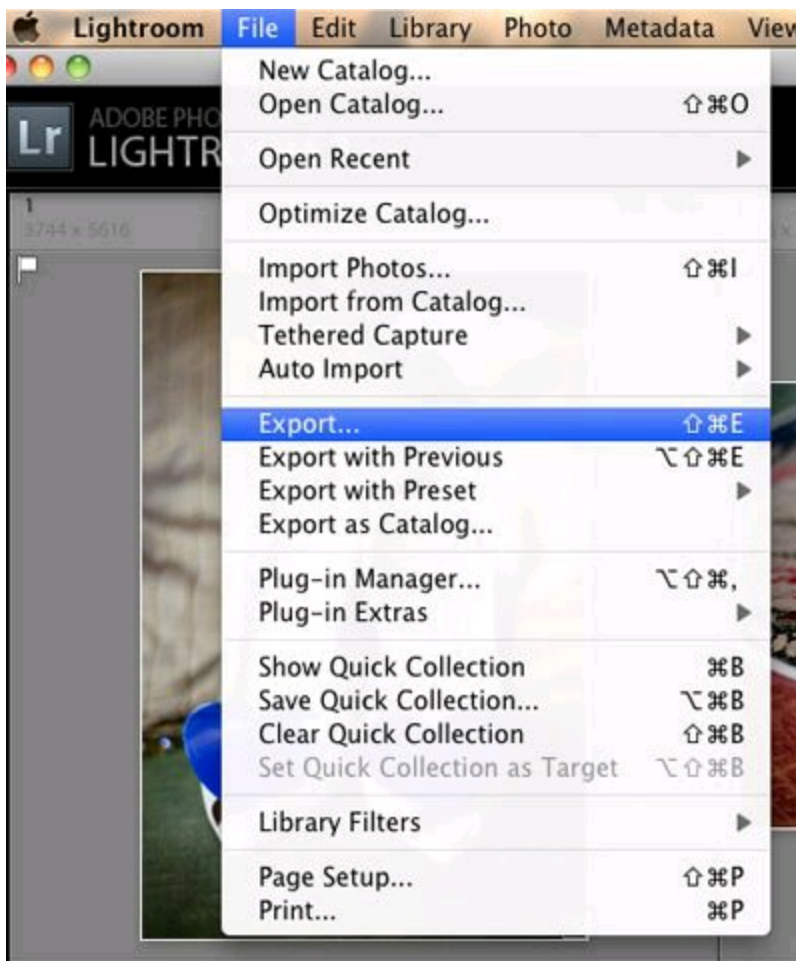
So the plan is now to work through the entire day’s images. This may take you a few hours depending on how many images you’ve chosen.

I would usually have about 2000 images from a full wedding day. A lot of these will be very similar looking duplicates from using rapid fire mode when shooting and I would aim to edit them down to about 600/700 in my initial cull/edit session.

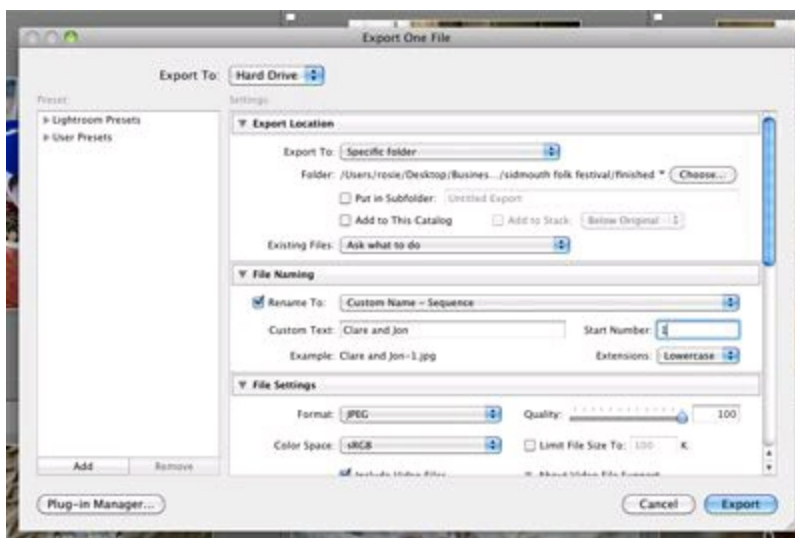
Once you have finished editing these images, I then open them up back in Library Mode (next to Develop Mode) to review the entire selection as your bride and groom will see them. This helps me to get the overall picture and see if there are some areas where I have included too many similar photos. If I then want to delete a photo from the finished selection, all I need to do is press the P button again which will unpick the image and it will disappear from the flagged selection.



When you are happy with your final selection, all you need to do now is export them to a folder on your computer. You will need to make sure all of your images are selected by pressing cmd a for macs or ctrl a for windows and then select the export option which is found under the file menu at the top.



You will be presented with a box that looks like this:



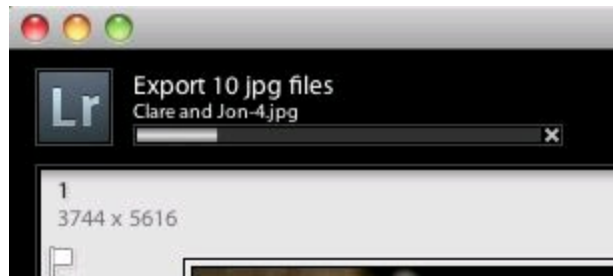
You will want to choose the folder to save your images to. I create a new folder called “Finished” next to my Originals folder where I can export all my finished files.

I would also select to rename the files to the client name and make sure the start number is 1.

Ensure the format is set as jpeg, quality 100 and that all your other boxes are unticked, otherwise you could end up with tiny sized files!

When you are happy with your settings, press Export. This will start the process of creating all your gorgeous new images in jpeg format with all your settings that you’ve spent the last afternoon working so hard on!

You will see a progress bar at the top, once this disappears then your images are ready in your selected folder.



Congratulations! You now have a finished wedding gallery!

Assuming you are not planning on putting the images online anywhere and don't need to resize them, you can now burn these jpegs to disc to give to your bride and groom.

If you do want to offer a lower resolution version to your bride and groom, all you need to do is go back to the Lightroom library and select a size in the export box and then export them to a new folder.

Make sure that before you shut down the computer and put your feet up that you also do a back up of these final edited images onto an external hard drive (ideally two).

Conclusion

Thank you so much for reading this book - I hope what I've written has been a help to you and given you confidence to photograph your first wedding or to build on what you already know!

I would love to hear what you thought of the book, and if you have any questions or feedback you can join our free community on Facebook. It's a group for photographers at any level where we can discuss our work, ask questions and support each other. The group setting is closed so nothing will be readable on your wall or publicly apart from the fact you are a member and I will do my best to help where I can!

You can also download all my quick tips and my shot list as free printable documents from this group, which may be helpful to quickly look at in the midst of photographing a wedding.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/weddingphotographybook/>

If you enjoyed the book please consider also leaving a review on Amazon! I'd really appreciate it.

Additional Resources

Wedding Photography Contract <https://www.etsy.com/listing/204350809/uk-professional-wedding-photography>

Client Information Forms <https://www.etsy.com/listing/205507356/rosie-parsons-wedding-photography-client?>

Lightroom Colour Pop Editing Preset
<https://www.etsy.com/listing/203972953/rosie-parsons-colour-pop-lightroom>

Editing Services

If you're not confident with editing or don't have the time, then I can help! If you give me your original RAW files I can supply you with edited gallery ready high resolution and web sized jpegs for your couple, with a quick turnaround. This includes both colour and black and white versions in my signature Rosie Parsons Photography style. Email me at rosie@rosieparsons.com for my rates and examples.

Facebook Group

Got any questions? Want to download a document for my quick tips and shot list so you can print them out and take them to your next wedding? Join our free Facebook group to interact with myself and other photographers - posts will not appear on non-members timelines and feel free to invite other photographer friends you think might benefit! Join us here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/weddingphotographybook/>

Must Have Shot List in Full

You can download this for printing via the Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/weddingphotographybook/>

Bridal Preps

- The dress - full length and detailing
- Bridal Shoes
- Jewellery inc engagement ring
- Gift/card from the groom
- Flowers (out of their packaging)
- Details around the room - champagne bottle, filled glasses, make-up with brushes
- Candid shots of hairstyling/ make-up being applied, laughing and general candid moments - making sure you get a shot of every person there
- First look of parents at their daughter in the dress

Pre Ceremony

- Wide angle of the venue from outside (multiple angles)
- Portrait of the groom and groomsmen
- Shots of the empty ceremony room/church
- Detail shots inside the ceremony such as flowers, order of service
- Close up of the rings
- Candid and relaxed posed shots of guests arriving
- Candid of groom's parents/siblings
- Bridesmaids group shot
- Bridal car arriving
- Bride getting out of car
- Bride with father (or person giving her away)
- Bride with bridesmaids
- Bride walking towards the church/ceremony

Ceremony

- Bride walking up the aisle
- First look between bride and groom
- Bridesmaids walking up the aisle
- Candid shots of guests during the service
- Candid shots of close family members
- Wide angle of whole scene
- Vows
- Exchange of rings
- Readings
- Signing of register including family congratulating the couple
- Exit down the aisle
- A kiss as they walk out of the building

Outside Ceremony

- Lots of candid and relaxed guest shots
- Bride and groom being congratulated
- Set up confetti shot
- Bride and groom with car
- Bride and groom being driven away/leaving the ceremony, friends waving

Cocktail Hour

- Arrival drinks
- Wide angle shots of the main reception room from all four angles - you may need to politely ask catering staff to hide for a moment while you take a shot if they are doing any final touches
- Detail shots from the tables including flowers, place names for the bride and groom, bottles of wine, presents, any favours etc
- The Cake
- Canapes if possible
- Wide shots of the venue
- Group shots based on your prepared group shot list
- Bride and groom creative portraits

- Candid and relaxed group guest shots
- Receiving line if applicable
- Bride and groom being called into dinner

Speeches

- Individual shots of the people giving each speech
- Reactions from the bride and groom
- Reactions of guests
- Cutting the cake

Dancing

- Band doing sound check
- Guest candids
- Shot of the venue at sundown (with evening lights and deep blue sky as sun sets)
- Bride and groom doing the first dance
- Guests dancing, paying particular attention if there is a father and daughter/mother and son dance