



THE  
**WEDDING**

EXPERIENCE

*a guide for all lbt photography brides*



## W E L C O M E

Hello Bride-to-be and Welcome! If you do not know already, my name is Lauren and I am the face behind LBT Photography. (What does LBT stand for? My maiden name initials! ) This is such an exciting time for you! I'm sure your mind is racing with all that needs to be planned. It's all very exciting, but it can also be somewhat overwhelming. You're planning the day that you've been anticipating your whole life and yet you only get one shot at it! By the time you get the hang of it, the planning is over! My goal as a wedding photographer is to make this one aspect of the planning process simple. Photography is more than just images, it's a real part of your day. Not only do you deserve beautiful images, you also deserve an amazing photographic experience. The goal of this guide is to help you plan your wedding day in a way that will allow me to provide you with the BEST experience possible. Since we're official, the next step is to plan your engagement session and then start chatting about wedding day details as we get closer to your date! I am beyond excited to be working with you!!

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## YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Now that you have picked a date, a photographer, and probably a venue as well, you can celebrate! Those are some of the toughest decisions in wedding planning and you can cross them off your list! Hooray!! Now on to the fun stuff... like your engagement session! I include engagement sessions in The Wedding Experience because I truly believe that they are a VITAL part of the entire process. During your engagement session, you'll have the chance to get to know me, experience how I shoot and how I handle posing and lighting. This session will make a HUGE impact on how the wedding day flows. I'll arrive on your wedding day already knowing how you two interact, what your best poses are and how to photograph you in a genuine way! What I will learn about you during your engagement session is invaluable! You will feel like such a pro on your big day because of the great practice you had during your engagement session, and that's how it should be!

Your engagement session can be scheduled anytime before your wedding day. I normally suggest booking it at least 3-6 months in advance to avoid stress. Because my weekends are filled with weddings, I shoot engagements on weekday evenings, normally from 5-7pm depending on the light and the time of the year. In the winter months, 3-5pm is a normal time frame for an e-shoot! As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, you will need to start brainstorming about location ideas. I LOVE it when couples pick a location that is special or sentimental to them in some way! If you can't think of anywhere specific that you would like to shoot, I can help you decide on a location! As long as the light is great, I can make ANY location look awesome! I shoot at farms, campuses, downtown alleys, local parks, you name it! Be sure to keep reading to find out more about outfit ideas and inspiration!

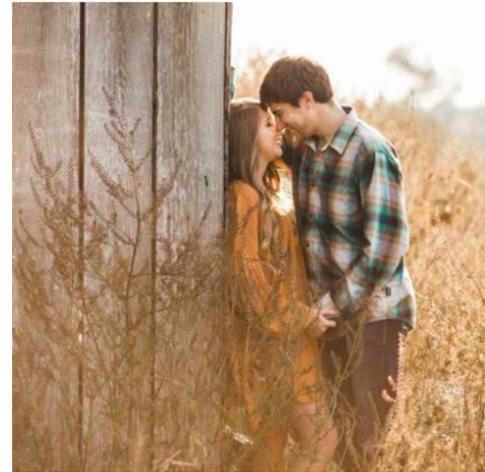
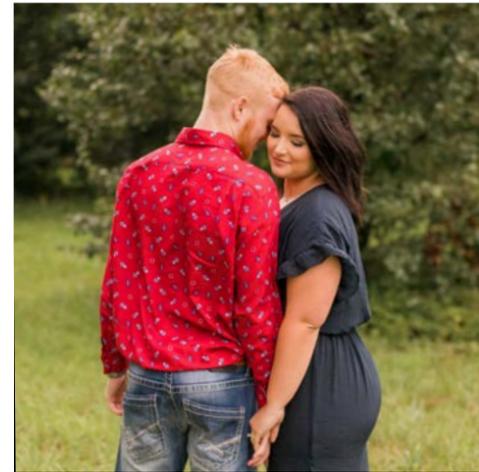
# ENGAGEMENT PREP

It's always a little intimidating to have your picture taken .... even if it's just a photo on an iphone that is taken by a friend. We still want to look nice, make sure nothing is in our teeth and that our hair is behaving! I realize that preparing for your engagement session can be a little overwhelming. Here are some tips for outfits and accessories that will make the e-shoot preparation a little more manageable!

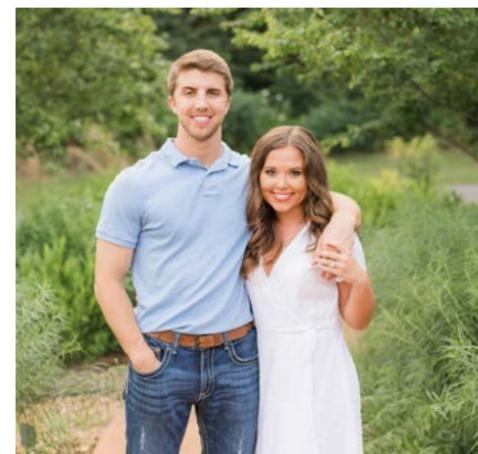
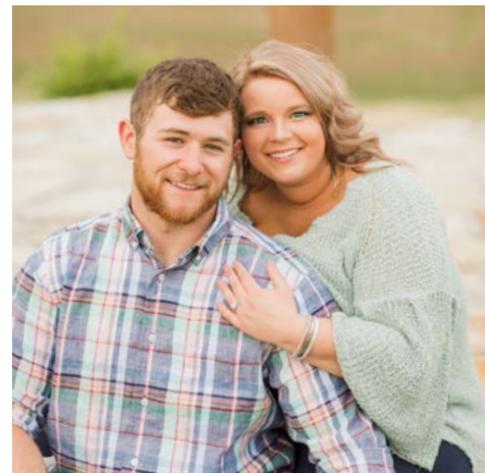
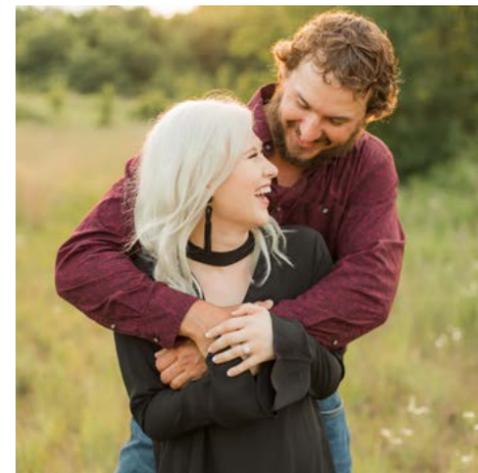
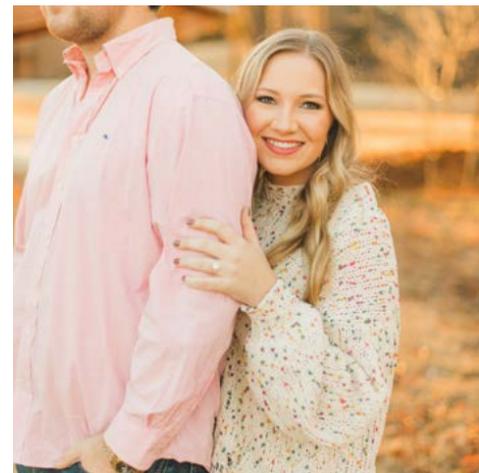


- Don't try to MATCH...try to pick outfits and accessories that coordinate instead. If you like the "bright and airy" vibe of pictures, plan to wear light colors!
- Don't be afraid to be BOLD! Accessorize and make your outfits your own! Scarves, bold necklaces, and fun shoes are always welcomed!
- MOST PATTERNS are actually ok.... however, graphics are not favorable for portraits. If you're wearing a pattern, make sure it's not overwhelming and distracting.
- Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets. (This is for the guys especially!)
- BE ON TIME! The sun is only out for so long ! The later you arrive, the less time we have to shoot!
- Most often, couples like to have one casual, everyday outfit and then one outfit that is dressier! This will give your shoot two totally different "looks". I recommend beginning with the dressy outfit first!
- Make sure you're comfortable in what you're wearing. And ladies, if the top is super low cut, that will limit the amount of angles I can shoot from.
- Clean the ring! You want your ring to be as bright and sparkly as can be! Time to show it off!
- Relax! You don't have to be a pro at this! I'm going to help you along the way and it's going to be a blast! Enjoy this time together, and make a date out of it! Plan dinner afterwards and celebrate!!





OUTFIT INSPIRATION





## ENGAGEMENT SESSION

### *Approximate Start Times*

#### WINTER

*Dec-Mar 3-5pm*

During December through Mid-March you can plan on your engagement session taking place around 3-5pm. However, the time changes in Mid-March and so that will make the start time one hour later.

#### SUMMER

*Jun-Aug 6:15-8:15pm*

Summer engagements, just like all engagements, take place two hours before sunset. This will hopefully mean that the shoot will be during the cooler part of the day.

#### SPRING

*Apr-May - Varies*

The sunset time drastically changes throughout the course of these two months and so our shooting times change as well. You can plan on around 5:30-7:30 in April and 6:00-8:00 in May.

#### FALL

*Sept-Nov - Varies*

The sunset time changes drastically during these three months. In Sept, you can plan on 5:30-7:30 until the third week and then you can plan on 5:00-7:00 until Mid- Oct. After the first week of Nov, 3:00-5:00pm.

## LOGISTICS:

- I photograph engagement sessions on weekday evenings because my weekends are dedicated to photographing weddings!
- I love shooting at gorgeous locations. I recommend two locations max for engagements. A general rule of thumb is the more locations and outfits, the less images, but the more variety you'll have!
- I can do sunrise sessions if necessary! I also recommend sunrise shoots for those who want to take portraits in a very crowded location .
- I love to travel to our shoots! However, depending on the location, there may be additional travel charges.

## PREPARING YOUR GROOM



## PREPARING YOUR GROOM

If you're a bride that is a little anxious about how your groom is going to react to this whole "picture" thing, you're not alone. I receive a lot of emails and texts from brides who are worried that their groom won't be into it and I have great news for you.... you both are more photogenic than you think! I am constantly surprising couples by discovering their hidden modeling skills and the most common response from my Grooms is "That wasn't as bad as I thought! It was actually really fun". Boom! Mission accomplished! When the groom says that taking pictures was FUN, I have done my job well! Your engagement session is supposed to be fun and relaxed, not forced or awkward. As you prepare for your shoot, there are a few things that you can do to help your groom

know what to expect. First of all, I highly recommend sitting down with your guy and showing him 2-3 of your favorite engagement sessions that I have photographed. Spend some time together scrolling through my site or social media pages, this will allow him to gauge what his expectations should be. I also recommend that you allow for plenty of time to get to your shoot! There is nothing worse than when a couple shows up late, and they have been arguing in the car! That is definitely going to put your groom in a bad mood! Last but not least, remember to have patience with him, and don't assume that he's not going to have a good time... I think you'll be surprised how much you will both enjoy your session!

YOUR  
WEDDING  
DAY



# SAMPLE TIMELINE

*of a seven hour package*

## *Bridal Details* 2:00-2:30



Every bride loves having those beautiful shots of her bridal details. It's an important part of the story and I love having some time to shoot the dress, shoes, jewelry, invitations, etc. These shots allow me to get warmed up for the rest of the big day. I normally like to allow at least 30 minutes for this part of the day. It is really important to have all your "detail" items ready for me when I arrive! While I'm shooting details, I'm also capturing some shots of the bride and her girls getting ready!

After the details have been photographed, it's time for the bride to get in her dress! This is a big moment! I usually ask the mother of the bride and all of the bridesmaids to be dressed by the time the bride is ready to get into her dress. This ensures that everyone will look nice in those images. After the bride is in her gown, she can put on her jewelry, veil, shoes, etc. and I will shoot some additional bridal portraits!



## *2:30-3:00* *Bridal Prep*

## *First Look* 3:00



This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day! I will find the perfect location for my couple's First Look prior to the getting ready portion of the day! Don't stress about that one bit! I will make sure the location is private and as secluded as possible.

## *Portraits* 3:15-4:00



After the bride and groom take their time with the First Look, I will begin taking a few romantic portraits of the two of them while the initial excitement is still present! I will find the locations for these shots as well! Remember, the LIGHT determines where we shoot and so I can't decide on portrait locations until the day-of. As we shoot these portraits, the bridal party can start making their way to us for Bridal Party portraits!

## *Bridal Party + Family* *Portraits* 4:00-5:00



Now it's time for Bridal Party and Family Portraits! We will discuss a shot list before the wedding day to discuss which individual and group shots you'd like with your wedding party and both of your families!

After Bridal Party and Family portraits, the bride will go into hiding so that early guests don't sneak a peek, and the ushers will begin their duties.



## *5:00-6:00* *Bride in Hiding*

Here's the page that can be somewhat intimidating! The TIMELINE! I know this isn't the most exciting aspect of the wedding day, but this is the one thing that can make or break your photography! These next two pages will outline an ideal wedding day working off of a 6pm ceremony timeframe. This ideal timeline is also based off of a wedding day that includes a first look. 90% of my couples choose to do a first look, and you can read more about that option a few pages over! Remember that all wedding days are different, and your timeline may differ due to travel times and unique situations.

## THE TIMELINE CONTINUED...

### *Reception Details* 5:00-6:00



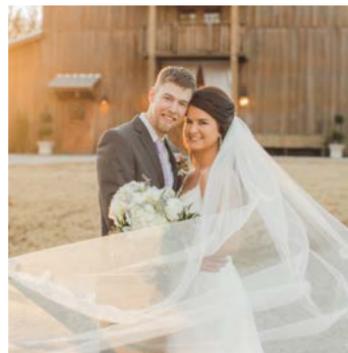
If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I will use this time to shoot the reception decor UNTOUCHED. If the ceremony and reception are in different locations, I recommend having a cocktail hour outside of the main reception area if possible so that I can grab some great shots of your reception before the night begins and guests start laying down purses and coats on their seats!



### *Ceremony* 6:00-6:30

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

### *A Few "Just Married" Portraits* 6:30-6:45



Near 7pm is the BEST time of day for portraits in the late spring, summer and early fall! This is when the sun is glowy and golden. I love having a few extra minutes with the bride and groom to take a few "Just Married" portraits right after family formals!

### *Reception Begins!* 7:00



This is when the bridal party lines up for introductions and the party begins!! By this part of the day, my timeline isn't as strict. I work off of the natural light and so after the sun is set, my portrait time is over and I begin focusing on the reception events!

7 hours of coverage really allows me to be present for the main events of the reception and dancing! If you're interested in having your exit photographed, there are several options for this! You can either add additional coverage or plan a faux exit! We have had GREAT success with this and the party never stops! Email or text me about this if you're interested in learning more!



### *The Exit* 9:00

# WEDDINGS & SEASONS



## *Portrait & Timing Tips for:* WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER & FALL

### WINTER

Winter weddings are gorgeous! However, they do take some additional planning simply because of the sunset time. The hard part about a winter timeline is the fact that the sun sets around 4pm. This means that all of your portraits have to be done before then! This isn't a problem if you're having a late afternoon wedding. However, if you're planning on having a late evening wedding, you may have a bit of down time from 4pm until the start of the ceremony. You may also need more coverage time as well.

### SPRING

Spring weddings are wonderful because they are the perfect temperature! Spring weddings normally mean the potential for some blooms! If we happen to find any type of blooming tree or plant, it will be worth it to give us a few minutes for portraits with it! You'll LOVE the result!

### SUMMER

Summer weddings are amazing! I love that there is so much daylight! In some months, the light will last until 8:30pm! So, if you're having a summer wedding, you'll need to plan on having a few minutes to slip out of the reception for your sunset portraits! You will NOT regret this! This is the absolute best light of the day and you're going to want to have portraits during this time period. Usually these portraits happen during dinner or open dancing so that no one even notices that you're gone for a few minutes!

### FALL

Fall weddings are my favorite! I love the temperature and the colors! Most of my fall brides worry about color, and I just want to encourage you that all I need is one tree with some color in order to make it look like fall! A little bit of color can go a long way!! Your portrait time will vary depending on your wedding date! We'll be sure to discuss this when we approve your final timeline!



PRECEREMONY



Let the day begin!

This portion of The Wedding Experience really sets the stage for the entire wedding day. The next few pages will share tips and tricks that will ensure a seamless morning of bridal preparation and beautiful portraits!



## GETTING READY

It's the morning of your wedding! Hopefully all of the little details are taken care of and you're relaxing with your best friends while your hair is being done. If certain items haven't been checked off of the to-do list, it's time to hand them over to someone else. Delegation is a key part of a stress-free wedding day. I know it's hard to hand over the decorating duties and all of the last minute things that need to be done, but it really is important to relax the morning of your wedding. The rest of the day is going to be fast paced and filled with a lot of emotions! Take advantage of this down time! There are a few things to consider about the "getting ready" portion of the day. Do you want to share a "first look" with your dad or any other person who plays a huge role in your life?

Will you and your groom be exchanging gifts during this time? If so, who would you like to deliver them? Are there certain women in your life who would appreciate seeing you get into your gown? Some brides want very few people around for this moment. Other brides love having aunts and grandmas present! It's totally up to you! A few other things to consider.... as you get ready to put your dress on, refrain from putting any jewelry on. I love shooting all of those final steps once you're in your gown! Speaking of the gown, if your gown is on a plastic hanger, try to make a note to bring a wooden hanger along for picture sake. Keep reading along for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare!





EVERY  
LITTLE  
DETAIL

RINGS, SHOES, JEWELS ...

The whole day begins with the DETAILS! This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day, because it allows me to prepare and get my creative side warmed up for the rest of the day! I photograph a bride's details in a way that matches and showcases the style of the entire wedding day. So, in some ways, the details set the stage for the look of the whole wedding and I love having ample time to stylize, and shoot everything from the dress, to the jewelry, to grandma's handkerchief! To the right, you'll find a list of the most common details that I shoot. I ask brides to gather any details they have before I arrive so that I can walk in, say hello, give you a big hug and then begin with all the goodies! (Please assure your mom that I will take GREAT care of the dress, I promise!)

WHAT TO BRING



- dress
- veil / hair pieces
- rings (all three)
- shoes
- bouquet
- jewelry
- perfume
- invitation suite
- borrowed & blue

## DAY-OF REMINDERS



### GATHER the goods.

If possible, collect all of your details before I arrive so that I can begin quickly and have more time for some “getting ready” shots of you and your girls!

### EXTRA elements.

Sometimes, depending on the theme and “look” of the wedding day, there may be some extra elements that you could include when you gather your details. For example, if you’re having a country themed wedding, you could include a piece of burlap or lace. If you’re having a rustic themed wedding that includes some wooden elements, maybe save a small piece of wood for me to use when I’m shooting your rings and jewelry. This REALLY makes for beautiful, consistent album spreads!

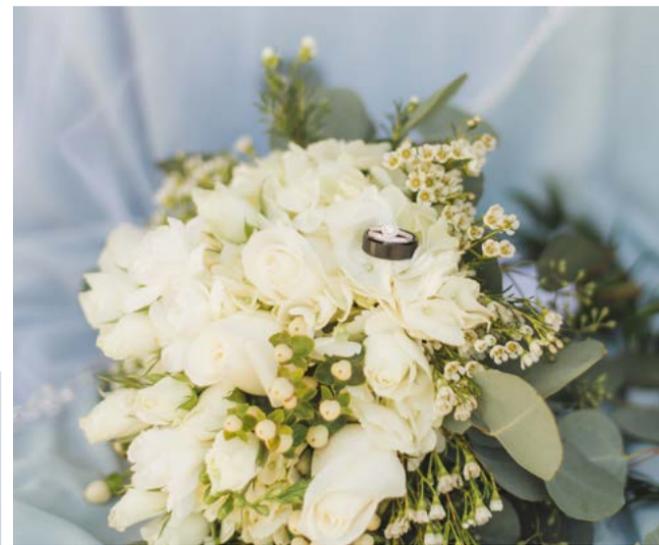
### KEEP all three rings.

The most common detail missing when I arrive are the rings! Moms, officiants and planners will tell you to hand over your wedding band to the best man before the day begins. However, it’s actually better to hand it over during the bridal party portraits so that I can shoot some great ring shots in the AM! If you forget, no worries, I can always shoot the ring shot at the reception if there is extra time!

### BRING the bouquet.

Don’t forget the Bouquet! Have the bouquets and bouts delivered to the bride before the first look so that she can have her bouquet in her portraits. No worries, if it’s hot, we’ll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony!

When you're planning a wedding day timeline, the best advice I could give is to ADD CUSHION TIME! Sometimes the most simple things can take an extra 20 minutes and then all of a sudden, the whole morning is thrown off. I have seen "getting the bride in her dress" take almost 40 minutes because of a button malfunction. It's a smart idea to add in an extra ten minutes here and there so that we have some wiggle room to work with! This way, if one part of the day gets thrown off by 20 minutes, I can help you compensate that time in other areas. There are so many different things to think about when you're planning a wedding day, and so here are some tips for the preceremony timeline! I realize that every single wedding day is different and so not all of these tips will apply to every wedding day schedule. Something else to consider is that not EVERYTHING will go as planned, and I promise you, that is completely normal!!



# TIMING TIPS

## BOUQUETS AND BOUTS

You will need your Bouquet & Bouts for your First Look! Have them delivered to the room where the bride is getting ready.

## TRAVEL TIME

Be sure to think about the travel time and TRAFFIC to and from your getting ready location and your venue!

## HAIR & MAKEUP

I encourage brides to have at least their makeup done before I start because who wants a ton of shots without their makeup on?! Nobody.

## GROOMSMEN PREP

If you add on a second shoot, they will photograph the guys getting ready if they are getting ready in the same location as the bride or within 10-15 mins.

## GETTING IN THE DRESS

It's great to get into your dress close to a window (for natural light, if possible) and it would be fabulous to have your bridesmaids dressed when you're getting in your gown!

## CREATE A CUSHION

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



## VEIL OPTIONS

Many brides tell me they want a “Veil Blowing in the Wind” or “Under the Veil” shot, but this is hard to do with short veils. I recommend cathedral veils to achieve these dreamy looks! However, if you do choose to have a shorter veil, I can still get pretty shots!

## THE BRIDAL BOUQUET

There are so many expenses when it comes to wedding planning. Many brides have to prioritize what they want to invest in. I just want to give a little tip that can save money and make a huge impact on the way your images turn out. If you're having trouble making a decision about your florals, here is what I suggest. I recommend making your bridal bouquet a big priority! When I'm photographing a wedding, if the bride has a gorgeous bouquet, I can make the entire day look like there were beautiful florals everywhere! I can use the bridal bouquet to spruce up bridal details AND even bride and groom portraits as well! The bridal bouquet is a focal point for me when it comes to your photography, and so I highly recommend getting your DREAM bouquet and investing less on the bridesmaids bouquets since they will not be photographed nearly as much!





## YOUR FIRST LOOK

Your first look is an amazing part of your wedding day! If you aren't sure about this tradition, the next few pages will explain why it would be a romantic addition to your wedding day celebration that not only adds to the experience but also reduces stress. Please know that I would never want any of my couples to feel pressured to go with this option. However, I do want to make sure that I share all of the benefits of a first look, because there is a reason that over 90% of my couples do this and LOVE it!



## THE FIRST LOOK *explained*

I have confessed my deep love for “First Looks” numerous times to my couples because, well, they’re AWESOME! However, not everyone is aware of how awesome they are, because they get caught up in how “non-traditional” it is, and they immediately write it off. I can talk about those brides because I was almost one of them when I got married! I wanted a REACTION....I wanted my husband to be so surprised and overcome with joy when I walked down the aisle that he bawled at the first sight of me! Isn’t that EVERY girl’s dream? Who doesn’t want that reaction?

After experiencing my own wedding and shooting over 50 others.... I’ve come to this conclusion. Some brides love “traditions”.... but what a bride REALLY wants when it comes to her groom seeing her for the first time, is a REACTION. Those who are not interested in a First Look usually think that by seeing each other beforehand, they will lose part of that reaction. They also assume that it will not be as emotional or as intimate as it would be if they were coming down the aisle. What I have found (this is starting to sound like a research paper!) is so ironic! Everyone knows that wedding days are a bit stressful for the bride and groom.

The whole day is focused on them, they need to look their best, they need to be on time, the groom has no idea what side the boutonniere is supposed to go on and little by little... the tension grows.

It’s before the ceremony and the gravity of what is about to happen starts to sink in and the calm, collected groom who was playing golf just a few short hours ago is now starting to feel a little anxious. So what happens next? The groom waits in a little room somewhere for his cue from the coordinator. It seems like it’s taking FOREVER. Finally, the coordinator leans her head in and hurries the groom to get ready. With clammy hands, the groom enters the ceremony and what does he find? .... he finds anywhere from 80-300 people and they’re all looking where? Right at his face... because everyone has expectations and anticipation about his first reaction. This is the farthest thing from a private, intimate moment.

For most grooms, the nerves kick in before they see their bride because when they see her, everything becomes VERY real! So when the nerves start creeping up, instead of keeping the groom in a secluded space until his time to enter the ceremony, what if you took him to a private place... no people, no on-lookers, no distractions.... and you let his beautiful bride, the love of his life, quietly call his name and have him turn around to see her for the first time. He would turn around and finally get his first look at his stunning bride and not only would he get to see her... he could embrace her... cry with her.... kiss her... and ENJOY that moment with her for as LONG as they wanted. As she shows him her dress, twirls a few times and then asks him what he thinks... his nerves start to diminish. After all, she’s the one who can make him most comfortable anyway.

Because they aren’t on a time crunch... they casually move into their romantic portraits. No one is around, the coordinator isn’t announcing “15 minutes left”, and there is no pressure. It’s just the two of them and their photographer..... capturing the excitement and the joy of their wedding day. This is their time to be TOGETHER...and to be ALONE. When does that happen on a wedding day? Without a First Look.... it doesn’t. After their romantic portraits are done, they meet up with their best friends. Their bridal party joins them for photos, and then their family, and they finish all their portraits before the ceremony. There aren’t any guests waiting impatiently at the cocktail hour and there isn’t a DJ coming to find the photographer to get a time check. It’s wonderful!

After portraits are done, the girls and guys separate and prepare for the ceremony. The guests begin to arrive and the ushers are in place. Pretty soon it’s time for the processional music to begin and one by one, the bridesmaids make their way down to the front of the ceremony. As the groom clasps his hands... they aren’t clasped out of nervousness but excitement. The music builds, the mother of the bride stands and all of the guests follow her lead. The groom looks up, and here comes the BRIDE!!! His best friend, his companion, his sweetheart.....she’s stunning.... ABSOLUTELY stunning. The closer she gets, the bigger he smiles.

Now let me put a disclaimer on here before we continue... my clients are not required to do a First Look by any means! I used to feel bad for sharing this option with couples who were against it, because I didn’t want to push anything on them. However, I’ve seen the benefits of a first look over and over again, and so I only share this because I want the BEST for my couples!! It’s totally ok if couples choose not to share a first look! It’s just my preference to do one for many reasons.... Keep reading to find out more of the benefits of sharing your first look privately! For brides not interested in a First Look, lets start chatting soon about how we’ll create a special timeline to fit everything in!



## FIRST LOOK | *Why it's Worth It*



### **40% MORE PORTRAITS**

You're investing a lot into your wedding photography. With a first look, you'll receive 40% MORE portraits of the two of you... and those are the images you will decorate your first home with! With a first look, you make the most out of this large investment and get the most for your money.

### **ENJOY THE SURPRISE FREELY**

You actually get to have intimate time on your wedding day with your man. Most brides don't realize that when you come down the aisle and totally SHOCK him with your gorgeous-ness... he can't even tell you how amazing you look. He can't touch you, embrace you or even SPEAK to you. You have to wait until 30 minutes later when the ceremony is over for him to react and tell you how amazing you look. And after 30 minutes of the ceremony, the reaction isn't the same as the initial first glance.

### **EXTEND YOUR DAY**

First Looks allow you to extend your wedding day. Normally the wedding day would start when you come down the aisle, then the ceremony would end, you would rush through portraits so that you're not late for the introductions and then it's reception time. With a first look, your wedding day is extended by more than an hour! Instead of being rushed for your bridal party portraits... you actually get to enjoy them and have fun hanging out with your BEST friends on your wedding day.

### **YOUR ONLY ALONE TIME**

First Looks allow you to be TOGETHER and alone on your wedding day. You can cry, laugh, cry some more... and then that puts you in the PERFECT mood for romantic portraits. If you don't do a first look, we have to zoom through full bridal party picture and family pictures, and then YOUR portraits are a little rushed and it can be hard to really get back into that "lovey dovey" mode.... especially with family around! When you have just shared your first look, you're READY to love on each other, and I always capture some super sweet images during those moments!

### **DIMINISHES NERVES**

You get rid of your nerves! I'd say, literally 1/2 of my couples who have decided to do a first look, the grooms were not fans of it at first. However, because they have never experienced their wedding day before, they didn't know how nerve racking it can be.



FOR THE BRIDE

## FIRST LOOK

EXPECTATIONS

Bride's, if you have never seen your man cry or get emotional, you can't expect him to be overly emotional on your wedding day. Some guys just embrace their brides and never cry.... and that's OK. Some guys show very little emotion when their bride is coming down the aisle and that's ok too. Just enjoy this amazing day, and try not to put any expectations on him. If you take this advice to heart, I could potentially be saving you a lot of disappointment on your day. One thing I have noticed after shooting close to 50 weddings is that the stress and nerves that come with a wedding day can sometimes make it hard for some grooms to truly express their emotions. It's just a lot to take in all at once. This is a great reason to share a first look and also a great reason to give some grace to your guy! Sure, you deserve to feel beautiful, but my encouragement to you is to enjoy this time together, no matter what his reaction is like!



## *The Daddy / Daughter*

### FIRST LOOK

This is for all of the brides who have a sweet spot in their heart for their dad. I have to admit that Daddy/Daughter first looks make me a little teary. For a lot of dads, this is when everything feels real and it hits him... "My baby girl is getting MARRIED!" These are precious moments to photograph and I highly encourage any daddy's girl to make time in their timeline for this moment. It doesn't take long at all! The hardest part is making sure dad shows up on time! If dad doesn't show up on time, the whole timeline can get thrown off, or we'll have to skip the daddy/daughter first look. Another sweet idea I've seen is having the father of the bride escort the bride to her first look!



## THE CEREMONY

Here it is! The moment everyone has been waiting for! The music is playing and the guests have been seated. Ushers make their way to the back of the church, and the coordinator is lining up the bridesmaids while giving the DJ / musicians a 5 minute warning. The bride is about to walk down the aisle to the love of her life..... and if she's like most girls, she's dreamed about this moment for a long time! Vows will be shared and promises will be made... this is what it's all about!! In a world full of wedding blogs, Pinterest and bridal magazines, it's easy to be overwhelmed and consumed by the "prettiness" of the event. While details do matter and planning is necessary, it's important to never lose sight of the real purpose of this amazing day!



## LIGHTING

Ceremony lighting is really important. If you get married outdoors at 12pm, the lighting will be extremely harsh and not only will there be harsh lines of light on your faces, you will also be squinting. I suggest planning an outdoor ceremony 2 hours before sunset if you are having a FIRST LOOK. If you are not interested in sharing a first look, then I would suggest having your ceremony 3 hours before sunset to ensure that you will have plenty of time for all of your portraits afterwards. The lower the sun, the more romantic the lighting. If you are having an indoor ceremony, it is always best to have EVEN lighting at the altar. If there are two spotlights on the bride and groom, I will not be able to expose the rest of the bridal party. It is better to have soft, even light across the whole altar.

## ORDER OF SERVICE

I have seen so many couples do so many AMAZING things during their ceremony. I've photographed couples share in communion, while some light a unity candle. I've seen sand ceremonies, rope ceremonies, and even branding a piece of wood. The options are limitless!! As you plan your ceremony, make sure you design it to be exactly what the two of you envision it to be. This is your day!! If you have the freedom to be creative, then by all means, be creative!!

## PROGRAMS & DETAILS

The BEST advice I have for the program-making process is to remember that not EVERY guest needs a program! Most families only take one program, not one for each person! I've seen a lot of couples end up with a lot of extra programs! Yikes! Also, before ordering your programs, have SEVERAL people check it for spelling and grammatical errors. Programs and the ceremony decor are things that the bride can plan in advance but then delegate the actual job of setting it up to a friend or coordinator. The last thing a bride needs to be doing the morning of her wedding is running around setting up floral arrangements! This leads me into my next column!

## COORDINATION

Hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator is SO important!! Brides realize very quickly that if they do not have someone in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility will automatically fall on the mother of the bride, the photographer or the BRIDE! When a photographer is in charge of the timeline and the coordination of the day, the images will suffer. All of my most stressful wedding situations were caused by a lack of organization and coordination. It's so important to make this a priority. If you need any recommendations on wedding coordination services, please let me know!

## DESTINATION *Weddings*

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





## *Sample List for*

# FAMILY FORMALS

I love meeting my couple's families on the wedding day! Family formals are normally my first interaction with them and so I love to have a game plan for this part of the day! Weeks before the wedding, you'll receive a questionnaire from me that will ask you to list out the family formals you want me to capture. Here is a sample family formal list to help you start preparing what shots you need. We try to keep family portraits to 30 minutes! Which is typically plenty of time. If you are not doing a first look, we may have to set aside more time in order to keep the bride and groom separate. Additionally, any large family portraits we do not capture before the ceremony can be done during the reception!

B&G with Bride's Immediate Family  
(Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Nieces, Nephews)

B&G with Bride's Parents

B&G with Bride's Siblings

Bride with her Parents

Bride with Mom, Bride with Dad

B&G with Bride's Grandparents

B&G with both sets of Parents

B&G with Groom's Immediate Family  
(Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Nieces, Nephews)

B&G with Groom's Parents

B&G with Groom's Siblings

Groom with his Parents

Groom with Mom, Groom with Dad

B&G with Groom's Grandparents

B&G with all family members if time allows

## ROMANTIC PORTRAITS

If I'm being honest, all of the wedding day images are important, but the real favorites are almost always from my time with the Bride and Groom! These romantic portraits of just the two of you will be the images that you frame beside your bed or over your mantle, and they will also be the images that will fill your album for generations to enjoy. These images are always my favorite not only because of their beauty, but because this is such a sweet portion of the day. For this brief moment in time, you will be alone with your groom on your wedding day. You will have a chance to love on each other and really connect before the craziness begins! Romantic portraits are normally done before the ceremony (after the "First Look") and then I LOVE shooting a few "just married" portraits after the ceremony as well! This is when the light is low and golden! It's such a romantic time for bride and groom portraits! If you're not interested in a first look, we will make sure to include a lot of time after the ceremony for these portraits!





TRUSTING  
PORTRAIT  
LOCATIONS

One of my favorite parts of my job is taking something so ordinary and making it look absolutely amazing! This happens most often when it comes to picking portrait locations! If there is one thing that I love and appreciate about my couples, it's that they trust me! Sometimes I use a patch of treeline nearby, sometimes I find a pretty wall of your venue, it really just depends! So my encouragement is to just trust me! You don't have to worry about a thing! Trust my locations, and I promise you, you'll LOVE the results!



## THE CASE OF A RAINY WEDDING DAY

One of the most frequently asked questions that I receive during wedding season is “Soooo, what do you do if it RAINS?!”. I want to reassure you that even if it rains, you will still have beautiful portraits and BRIGHT colors in your images! Overcast skies mean vibrant colors! I know that rain isn’t ideal, and no bride would wish for rain on their big day, but if it happens, it happens..... and it’s going to be JUST fine!! Take the photo above for example! It was POURING down rain, on the side of the mountain!

Here are a few things to remember:

1. All I need to create natural light portraits on a rainy wedding day is a porch! Or I can open the door of a barn and stand out in the rain while you all stand in the barn doors facing the natural light!
2. Let me worry about the pictures. You have enough to think about. If there is a chance of rain, I’ll be sure to do some extra scouting to find a covered location or two, for us to use for your first look, romantic portraits, and bridal party portraits.
3. Take it one step at a time. Don’t think about your entire day and what will happen if it rains. That will only overwhelm you! Definitely have a rain plan for your venue, but then let your vendors do the work of handling the rest of the day if rain is in the forecast.



These photos were taken during a downpour. I stood out in the rain with an umbrella and captured the bride and her bridesmaids through the barn doors!





## your bridal party.

Lets chat about your bridal party! This is when the fun REALLY begins! I know from experience that all brides want their closest friends to have an AMAZING time during their big day, and I will make sure that happens! Bridal party portraits should be a ton of FUN! After you share your first look, depending on the locations and the timing of the day, your bridal party will join us for portraits! If all goes well, we will be able to accomplish ALL of your bridal party portraits BEFORE the ceremony. This means that your guys and gals will be free to mingle at cocktail hour if they wish! If there are flower girls and ring bearers involved, they can either join us for the pre-ceremony portraits or we can take one final group photo after the ceremony. Be sure your groomsmen arrive with boutonnières on, and your bridesmaids arrive with bouquets!

## RECEPTION DETAILS



The party is here!! Receptions can be a blast! However, it's important to make sure that you have your event well thought out. This is the job of your coordinator and your DJ/Band. Your caterer will also play a big role in the design and set up of your event. Every aspect of your reception affects the overall outline of the evening. For example, if you're not having a plated meal, your reception will need to be set up in a way that allows movement. Guests will need to be able to find the food stations easily, and there will be a mixture of dinner tables and high-top cocktail tables. This will encourage guests to mix and mingle. If you are having a plated dinner, you will more than likely need escort cards, full place settings, and space for all of your guests to be seated comfortably. Whatever the style of your event, make sure that you plan out all of the aspects of the evening. Your coordinator and DJ can help you set up the evening so that guests won't leave early or experience long periods of waiting for the next thing to happen.

Much like the ceremony, you have the freedom to make your reception your own! It's your party, it should be exactly how you want it to be! Here is a list of some key events that happen often at receptions:

- *Bridal Party Introductions*
- *First Dance*
- *Daddy-Daughter Dance*
- *Mother-Son Dance*
- *Anniversary Dance*
- *Money Dance*
- *Welcome by Father of the Bride*
- *Blessing*
- *Cake Cutting*
- *Toasts*
- *Bouquet and Garter Toss*
- *Large group portraits with friends*
- *The exit of the Bride and Groom*

## RECEPTION TIPS

The fun has begun! It's time to relax, dance, and celebrate!! Your reception should be a BLAST! The last thing you need to be worrying about is your timeline. Your coordinator and DJ should take care of making sure that everything stays on schedule so that you can enjoy your night. Here are some helpful tips that will help your reception flow smoothly.

- **GUEST CONSIDERATION** : Take your guests into consideration when planning your timeline. If you have a lot of elderly guests that will not be staying until the very end, make sure you schedule the cake cutting at a relatively early time so that they can be a part of it. Grandma's love seeing this sweet tradition!
- **KEEP IT MOVING** : Chat with your coordinator about how you can plan your reception in a way that will keep guests engaged and moving all night!
- **MAKE IT YOUR OWN** : If you want to have a special dance with your grandparents, do it! Make your reception a reflection of who you are and don't feel tied to traditions. Also, make sure you give your DJ or Band a "Do Not Play" list if there are some songs you really don't want to hear during your reception!
- **DON'T GET CAUGHT UP** in the formalities and the details. Sure, details are pretty and fun to photograph, but they can steal the joy of the day if you get too caught up in them. (Just speaking from experience here) Plan your centerpieces, welcome table, etc. well before the wedding date, and teach your coordinator or family friend how to set them up so that you aren't even thinking about those things the day of!
- **RECEPTION COVERAGE** : If you haven't purchased enough coverage time for your photography to last until the exit, that's ok! We I recommend planning your timeline so that you can have at least one hour of dancing photographed. The guests who dance during the first hour will still be dancing in the third hour! One hour of dancing will be enough time to really capture the joy of your reception!





RECEPTION:  
**CONTROLLED**  
*EXITS*

Exits! If your coverage ends before your exit, we can still do a faux exit with your guests! The DJ or coordinator can announce it is only for photos and that you are not actually leaving. This allows your guests to be a part of the photos. If you have a large crowd, you can always opt for just your bridal party and close family members to be in the faux exit photos with you! Your guests won't miss you for a few minutes!





YOUR ONLINE GALLERY  
+ KEEPSAKE USB

Years ago you had to order prints of the images that you wanted to have forever. That isn't how I work around here! I want you to have ALL of your memories in your possession forever and ever! I also want you to share your images freely and without any hesitation. This is why I deliver your images via an online gallery! This means that you don't have to wait on a package in the mail, and you'll have access to them wherever you are! I've listed some important information that will help you understand your online gallery and all that it can do on the next page!

In addition, you will also receive a custom wooden box with a custom USB drive of all your engagement photos and your wedding photos! These are usually mailed within a few weeks after you receive your online gallery!

**DOWNLOADING PHOTOS TO A COMPUTER:**

You will be able to download your edited images directly from your online gallery, and they will be high resolution! This process is very simple! All you have to do is click the "downwards arrow icon" and you will be prompted to enter your email. Once you enter your email, you will be asked if you want to download just that one photo or if you would like to download all photos! Your photos will download directly to your "Downloads" folder. If you opt to download the entire gallery, you will be notified via email when your entire download is ready. It takes a few minutes to prepare for hundreds of images to be downloaded!

**ACCESSING YOUR PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE:**

The online gallery system that I use lets you download individual images to your phone for clear, crisp instagrams!

**ORDERING PRINTS:**

You can actually order professional and affordable prints from within your online gallery and have them shipped directly to your house! They will be printed in a professional lab to ensure color and contrast accuracy! You are more than welcome to print images on your own. However, I would warn you to avoid Walmart, Target, and Walgreens, etc. I cannot promise that your colors will print true-to-life if you choose to print at those stores. If you don't print through your gallery, I recommend using Mpix.com or NationsPhotoLab.com

**GALLERY EXPIRATION:**

I have great news! Your galleries will not expire for at least 3 months! Isn't that amazing?! However, even though you will have access to your images, I would still recommend downloading them and saving them in multiple places for safe keeping!

**SHARING, WATERMARKING & EDITING:**

You have the freedom to share your images in any way that you choose! These are your images, and I want you to love them so much that you can't help but share them! I don't believe that it is necessary to watermark my images. All I ask for is some type of credit whenever you use an image on social media! I only have ONE rule when it comes to what you can and cannot do with my work. I always encourage my clients not to re-edit their images. Let me do that hard work! However, if you have an image or two that you want to print at a very large size and you find an imperfection, I will gladly perfect it!



## THANK YOU!

Last, but certainly not least, THANK YOU for trusting me with your special day. I am so honored to be the one capturing your memories, and I cannot WAIT to celebrate alongside of you! Enjoy this season of planning but also remember that your MARRIAGE is more important than the wedding. The wedding will come and go in a matter of hours, but your marriage needs to stand the test of time. Continue to make time for one another, even with all that needs to get done. As you continue to plan, please feel free to contact me with ANY questions you may have along the way! Depending on your date, our next step would be to finalize an engagement session! Also, a few weeks before the wedding, you'll receive an online questionnaire that will provide me with everything I need to know for your big day!! I hope this guide has been helpful as you continue to plan and prepare for your wedding day!

Love, Lauren