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sure shots

Get photos and a video your friends will actually want to look at.

BY MILES STIVERSON

Francesca and Mark's photographer and videographer captured every memorable moment.

After you exchange your vows, cut your cake, and toss your bouquet, all that remains from your wedding are your memories and your new spouse—and, of course, your photos and video. We'll tell you how to hire a photographer and videographer you can trust—who can capture the day just as you remembered it. >>



Have fun with your photo session—the best shots are often the unexpected ones.

FIND YOUR TEAM

A good place to start your search for your photographer and videographer is on the web—browse online portfolios and read message boards for recommendations and reviews. Once you've found someone you want to meet with, go to the interview ready with questions—lots of them. Ask about the basics (the price, what's included in the package, whether they shoot film or digital), but also ask a few open-ended questions, like what this photographer can offer that another can't. He'll have the opportunity to discuss his philosophy rather than just the contract points, and you can make sure he wants to shoot your wedding because he's truly passionate about his work—not just about his paycheck.

The question you have to ask: Can you recommend a videographer (or photographer) with whom you've happily worked? Hiring a compatible

photo and video team is a must—they don't have to be best buddies, but they do have to make it through the day without conflict. If your photographer and videographer have never shot together, consider the personalities of each. If both are open-minded and easy to get along with, they'll probably be willing to compromise and won't jostle for shots. During key moments (like your first dance), they should shoot standing side by side so they don't always end up in each other's frame.

CANDID CAMERAS

While you'll definitely want a few formal portraits, candid shots are great because people tend to photograph better when they're unaware of the camera—some of the best shots can come from ordinary moments, like waiting in the limo before the ceremony with your bridesmaids, or your reaction during the best man's toast. >>



A mix of formal and candid shots in both black-and-white and color will leave you with a perfectly balanced album.

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For a balanced album, though, don't skip a formal photo session altogether—the portraits of you and your families are the timeless shots your grandparents (and your future grandkids) will cherish. Instead, think of fun ways to get behind-the-scenes footage during your formal photo session. While your photographer is arranging you and your loved ones in a pose, have your videographer recording. If the session is right after the ceremony, nerves will be lifted and the mood will be light and fun—the perfect setting to capture your first moments as husband and wife.

The question you have to ask: What is your ideal ratio of color and black-and-white shots? Our favorite photographers favor—and can handle—a good mix of these shots. Black-and-white is especially good for close-ups (they're more flattering and hide blemishes) and any shot that's full of emotion, because your eye will be drawn to the subject. Color is perfect for décor details and landscapes (like a sweeping shot of your venue).

EXCEPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

You don't have to worry about your videographer bringing so much equipment that your reception site looks like a movie set.

New technology has made videography less intrusive than ever—videographers are using small three- to four-pound digital cameras that can record well in low light and are including wireless mics to pick up the audio. A light may be needed at times during the reception, but your videographer can probably make do with a 10 to 20 watt bulb (anything too strong could have the dreaded spotlight effect), so you'll hardly notice. If the best man is particularly afraid of public speaking, ask your videographer not to use a light during his toast. The most important part of the toast is the words, after all, and a glaring beam could be distracting.

The question you have to ask: What kind of camera will you (the photographer and videographer) use? Write down the brand name and model number, and do a quick Internet search when you get home, so you'll know whether they're working with quality equipment or not. If the photographer is shooting in film, they should be using a 35mm professional SLR camera or better, and the industry standard in videography is a 3-chip DV camera. >>

GOING DIGITAL

Shooting with digital cameras has become the norm in the wedding videography industry. While some videographers may shoot a few scenes with 8mm film to vary the look of the finished product, the advantages in quality and the ability to edit more easily has made DV cams the preferred way to work. Digital photography has its advantages too—you can convert any shot to black-and-white; it's easier to share your album online; and shots with poor lighting can be more easily color corrected. To make sure a digital wedding photographer is up to par, check out the black-and-white shots—they should have the same beautiful, neutral tone you'd expect from black-and-white film.

The question you have to ask: If your photographer uses a digital camera, does he shoot using RAW files? Shooting RAW basically means the camera is taking the picture without using its computer to make decisions about the sharpness, tone, contrast, and saturation. Though it may take the photographer longer to post process (which involves making touch-ups in the studio on the computer before they're printed), he can make sure nearly every image is color corrected—especially important for interior shots.


TODAY'S TRENDS

The hottest trends in photography are all about the presentation. Magazine-style photo albums (a few pictures arranged on each page, like your favorite

glossy) are becoming a popular way to display wedding pictures. Another chic way to show off your shots: mini photo albums that are just like your regular album, but small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

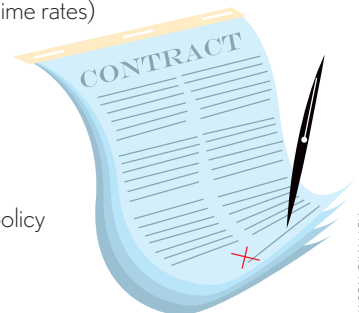
In terms of technique, some photographers are creating pictures with striking color contrast by cross-processing the film (developing regular film negatives with slide film processing). If you wish to use this type of photography, it's best to limit it to one or two photos, as sometimes the results can be a bit atypical for your wedding album (more fun than formal). Videographers are adding another layer of depth to the wedding video with creative editing, like using montages of baby photos and including home videos.

The question you have to ask: Do you, the videographer, have the equipment to shoot a wedding in high definition (the same HD that's driving many to invest in new flat-screen TVs)? Even if you don't own an HD television right now, if your videographer offers the option of shooting in high-def 16:9 widescreen format (which gets more picture into each shot than a standard 4:3 camera), it could be a good choice. After all, you'll probably upgrade your television within the next 15 years, and shooting widescreen will capture more details from a day you'll never want to forget.

 For a list of must-have shots, check out TheKnot.com/photography

YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER: THE CONTRACT

- Name and contact information for you and your photographer
- Name of a substitute in case of emergency
- Your wedding date, address of location (include all locations where you'd like your photographer to shoot, such as your home where the bridal party is getting ready and your wedding site), and the photographer's expected time of arrival
- Number of hours your photographer is expected to work
- Number of cameras that will be used, and which formats
- Number of rolls to be shot (tip: get numbers for color and black and white)
- The number of proofs you'll receive
- Schedule for delivering proofs and final package, as well as length of time the negatives will be kept
- Other details (such as the number of completed albums you'll receive)
- Total cost
- Extra fees (including overtime rates)
- Deposit amount due
- Balance and date due
- Cancellation and refund policy
- Photographer's signature



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