

The 3 Biggest Mistakes Couples Make When Hiring a Wedding Photographer *(and how to avoid them)*



leise jones photography
bringing your story into focus

You're engaged! Congratulations!

Welcome to the wide world of wedding planning. You are about to embark on an adventure of decision-making; choosing flowers, centerpieces, linens, shoes, music, and an awesome wedding photographer!

Of all the investments you'll make for your special day, the wedding photography is the most important. In addition to your wedding bands (and your marriage, of course) wedding photos are what remain of a wedding day. When the cake has been cut, and the guests have gone home, and the thank you notes have been sent, your wedding photos will still be there.

Your wedding photos will be there on your first anniversary, when you try to eat your frozen wedding cake.

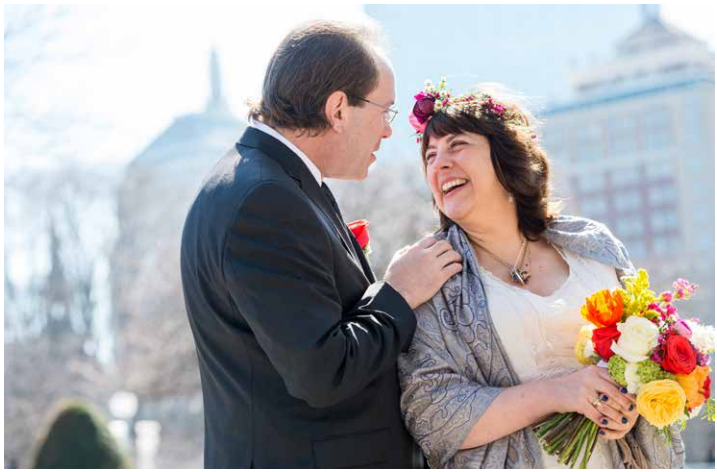
Your wedding photos will be there on your tenth anniversary, when you toast your first decade of marriage.

Your wedding photos will be there on your thirtieth anniversary when you want to show your grandkids what your wedding was like.

Of course you want to have beautiful wedding photos, right? You want wedding photos in which you look beautiful, happy, relaxed, calm, joyful, and in love. You want wedding photos that tell the story of your whole wedding day, even the parts that you can't remember! And you want wedding photos that you are proud – eager, even – to share with your friends and family.

I know the pressure you feel to make the right decision! I can imagine that you're thinking, "What if I don't end up with the wedding photos of my dreams?" Or maybe you're the kind of person who thinks, "I always hate how I look in photos so what if I hate my wedding photos, too?" Maybe you're thinking, "If I am going to invest thousands of dollars in wedding photography, I want to do this right!"

Well you *can* have wedding photos that you love and cherish forever. You *can* look at your wedding photos year after year and remember the hilarious parts of the reception and the tender moments of the ceremony. Your wedding photos *can* forever remind you how beautiful and joyful you felt on that day.



But getting wedding photos that you love is easier said than done. It takes more than an hour on Pinterest to find the photographer whose style, personality, and approach is the right fit for you. It takes more than just hoping your photographer will know what kinds of photos you most want to have. Many couples end up with photos that disappoint.

I know, because my own wedding photos were a disappointment. My wife and I planned our wedding on a shoestring budget back in 2010, when I was just starting my business and had only been to a handful of weddings. We skimped on many things that I now regret (no DJ, no plated dinner, no champagne toast) but the biggest regret is the wedding photos. We had such high hopes for our photos and had imagined just what we wanted them to look like. Even today, five years later, when I look at the photos the disappointment is just as strong as it was right after we got married. Though our photographer did her best, we have only a handful of photos of our families and no photos of our first dance or our toasts, no photos with our friends, no photos of anyone dancing, and no photos of the decorations that we had painstakingly put together. The few photos we have don't reflect our memories of the day. And worse yet, over time the memories of our wedding have started to fade and when we open our photo album to help us remember, we feel disappointed all over again. We thought that wedding photos weren't that important to us. Boy, were we wrong.

Fast forward six years and over one hundred weddings to where I am now, helping couples get the wedding photos of their dreams.

I don't want anyone to ever feel disappointed by their wedding photos. I want all of my clients to smile every time they open up their wedding album as they remember the joy of their day.

After talking with hundreds of couples over the years, I have narrowed it down to the three most common mistakes that couples make when looking for a professional wedding photographer. Let me share these mistakes with you – and explain how not to make them!

Mistake #1:

Not starting the process soon enough.

Most weddings happen on weekends, of which there are only 52 in a year. Most weddings take place between June-October, which narrows those weekends down to about 20. That means that even the busiest wedding photographers have a limited amount of availability. Waiting too long to reach out to the photographer of your dreams is a big mistake.

The photographer should be one of the first wedding experts who you hire after you have chosen your wedding date. We often meet with clients over a year in advance! Ideally, you're not waiting until the month before your wedding to find a photographer and possibly missing out. Of course if you're already just a few months out from your wedding, don't despair – just don't delay any more. Once you identify a photographer who you'd like to meet with and get to know, call them up! Find out if they're available on your wedding date and if so, set up a meeting.



Mistake #2:

Hiring a photographer without meeting them in person.

Many couples don't realize just how much time you spend with your wedding photographer on your wedding day - more than any of the other wedding experts who you'll hire. Consider this: I often start documenting your day while you're still getting ready and I leave about halfway through the reception, once the dance party is well underway. That is a long time!

Whether it's 5 or 6 or 8 or 10 hours, your photographer is by your side for the majority of your wedding day. You need to like her! You need to trust her. You need to feel comfortable introducing her to your grandmother. Ask to meet with her - in person or through a video chat- and make sure you enjoy, trust, and feel comfortable with her enough to have her by your side on an emotionally charged day.

When you meet your prospective photographer, here are some questions you can ask to learn more about her personality and decide if you feel comfortable with her.

- What is your favorite part of a wedding?
- What is the most hilarious thing you have seen happen at a wedding?
- How would you handle my overbearing mother/father/grandmother/relative?
- What are your favorite kinds of photos to make?
- Why did you become a wedding photographer in the first place?

The goal is to learn more about the photographer's personality so that you can make the decision to trust her with the intimate moments of your wedding day. In my opinion, the most valuable photographers know how to make your wedding less stressful and how to make you look good and feel good. They are responsive, kind, and helpful and they treat you like gold!



Mistake #3:

Not knowing what photos you *really* want.

Your wedding will only happen one time. In order to get photos that you love and cherish, you have to first know what photos those might be. This is perhaps the most important step in finding the right wedding photographer – and therefore the easiest place to make a mistake – so I am going to break it down into a few mini-steps.

1. Before you search for photographers in your area, do a generic image search online for “wedding photography” to get a sense for photographic styles. Adjectives that characterize wedding photos I make are documentary, fun, candid, laid-back, joyful, or natural. What kind of photo appeals to you? This will help you focus your search on photographers whose style you enjoy.
2. Ask yourself, “When I look at these photos in 10-20 years what do I want to see?” For example, in 10-20 years it may be most important to have pictures of your parents and grandparents; pictures of you laughing and smiling; pictures of you with your friends having fun; pictures of the flowers and the venue; photos with dramatic posing and light. Only you know what kinds of photos you will want to see when you look back on your day.
3. When imagining your ideal photos, consider the things that will make your wedding unique: the location, time of day, and time of year. If you’re planning a fall wedding in the city, don’t imagine that you’ll have wedding photos on the beach with your veil blowing in the wind. Doing this sets you and your photographer up for disappointment. It’s up to you to manage your expectations so that the photographer can realistically create the kinds of photos you most want to have.
4. Similarly, don’t assume a photographer can recreate photos that you see online. Great wedding photos require many elements to align including great light, beautiful backdrops, authentic interactions between the couple, touching moments, and a talented photographer. Rather than expect that your photographer will be able to make all of those things come together in every photo, expect that he or she will have the skills, talent, and inspiration to find and use those elements when they are available. You may really want a photo of you and your new spouse kissing under a full moon, but your wedding day may be cloudy and rainy. You’re looking for a talented and thoughtful photographer whose wedding photos will show you in love and beautiful on your wedding day.

Let me tell you about one of the couples with whom I worked recently, Desiree and Jacob.

They planned a lovely fall wedding in Cambridge and first contacted me about photography more than nine months before their wedding date. They told me they were drawn to my style and wanted photos that told the story of their day. When we met in person, I brought photo albums from past weddings as well as from a wedding that I had shot at the same venue where their wedding was taking place. They were able to see photos that showed my style AND that showed my approach to their location. We had an immediate connection and they hired me!

In the months leading up to their wedding, we were in touch many times about their schedule, the kinds of photos they wanted, and the details of their day. I referred them to a DJ and a wedding planner who I knew would help make the day great. And I documented without being a director. Here is what she had to say about their wedding photos when they received them a month after their wedding:

“We had a wonderful experience with Leise! We wanted our photos to tell the story of our day, and that is exactly what we got. A few months before our wedding we had a great time with Leise at our “get to know you” photo session. Leise was an excellent coach, and by the end of the session we felt very comfortable in front of the camera. On the day of our wedding Leise was amazing! She was super quick with all of our formal pictures before the wedding and during cocktail hour - we were even able to enjoy the second half of our cocktail hour! During the ceremony, I had no idea she was even there!! Also, Leise has a great sense of humor, which makes everything more fun. Our photos are so beautiful and I can’t stop looking at them. Each photo takes us back to that day, and I know we will cherish the photos forever. We really can’t recommend Leise enough!”

Desiree and Jacob did everything right and ended up with wedding photos they love. They contacted me early, we met in person, they were communicative with me and honest with themselves about the kinds of photos they really wanted. On their wedding day, they trusted me to make photos that they would love and I knew them well enough to make that happen. It didn’t happen overnight but because they started early, took time to get to know me, and knew what they wanted they now have wedding photos that they love and cherish.

So, are you ready to get the wedding photos of your dreams?

You know you need to start now. You know you need to schedule an in-person meeting with every photographer who interests you. And you know how to identify the kinds of photos that will make you most happy. Now, it's time to stop daydreaming about those wedding photos and make them happen!

If you're ready to get on the road to amazing wedding photos, then I'd like to invite you to apply for a complimentary engagement portrait session (\$250 value.) Any couple that hires me to be their photographer receives an engagement session as part of their package but I am offering this valuable session to you with no commitment!

With my busy schedule, I only have a few open spots each month. But I'd love to have the time with you to get to know you both and help you discover the kinds of photos you love. By doing a brief portrait session together you'll learn more about the types of photos that appeal to you, the style of photography that resonates best, and the personality type that will be the best fit for you. And you'll be starting this process nice and early.

So what are you waiting for? **[Click this link](#)** to be directed to my online scheduling tool and pick a time when you'd like to get together. I'll bring some sample wedding albums, a camera, and my sense of humor. You bring your ideas, your open mind, and your fiancée. Can't wait to meet you both and help you get amazing wedding photos that you'll love.

Focus on each other, and I'll do the rest.

