

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Aim

Explain the issues and applications concerned with wedding photography.

Wedding photography can be perhaps the most critical and stressful type of photography; simply because unlike other photographs, because:

- A) The event is so very important to the bride and groom
- B) The wedding only happens once
- C) More than most other types of events, photographs are an integral part of what happens during the wedding.

At other events (eg. sporting events), different people are part of the event; but at a wedding, the total focus is on the bride and groom - *they are the event!*

The photography needs to maintain this strong focus on the bride and groom and convey the image that they are first and best in every way on that occasion. The whole concept of a wedding is always romantic, frequently fashionable, and preferably overflowing with optimism and life.

The photographs should be able to be described with the same adjectives used to describe the bride, the groom, and the event itself.



WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

It is most important that you are well prepared when photographing a wedding; whether as an amateur (one of the guests), or officially as a professional wedding photographer.

The ceremony and reception afterwards need to be recorded, and recorded well by the photographer; but this needs to be done without disrupting any of the proceedings.

To minimise disruption requires both good planning and preparation before the occasion, and also, an appropriate attitude on the part of the photographer.

The official photographer should always be given preference over anyone else taking photos, and guests should be organised to not impede the work of a professional.

The photographer should meet with the bride and groom before the wedding and discuss the style of photo required and the most important occasions to be photographed.

Traditional wedding photography rarely uses dramatic angles or anything but mid range lenses; but modern wedding photography can often utilise wide angle or telephoto lenses and unconventional perspectives to create unique, off beat or even dramatic images.

Whatever approach is taken, always remember where the photos are likely to end up. Some wedding prints are commonly framed and displayed in the homes of the married couple and their parents. Most however are placed in an album; usually in a sequence that provides a visual story - showing step by step what happened at the wedding. As the photos are being taken, it is important to keep these things in mind, to ensure that an adequate scope and quality of images is achieved to serve these two purposes. (e.g. If a modern approach is taken, and photos are shot on an angle to create a dramatic affect, remember that if the angle is too great, the photos will be difficult to fit into an album).

Creating Romance



There are various tricks which may be used to make the image appear more beautiful or romantic. These include:

- Use high speed film and slow shutter speeds in available light (no flash) to create a softer slightly out of focus image.
- Try to avoid using full flash if possible (Though this might not always be possible). Full flash tends to light up everything, showing all imperfections in the subjects. Without full flash, it is possible to hide imperfections, and/or create mystery in slight shadows.
- Use flash as a fill in on one third to one quarter power, so as to maintain some shadows and increase the dramatic affect.
 - Use a mix of light sources if shooting in a studio (or elsewhere under lights), such as tungsten, fluoro, halogen and ambient. Pure fluoro can be acceptable with black and white film but should be avoided with colour due to colour temperature variations.
 - Using a tripod can reduce the need for a flash or lighting; but quick release fittings are important to allow the tripod to be moved and set up again quickly.

Managing People

If the photographer is to get the best wedding photos, they must know how to manage the people in the pictures; the bride and groom, their parents, the minister/clergy/celebrant.

If the photographers personality and approach is insensitive, moody or abrupt; the subjects will not be responsive.

When you consider these things, you need to realise that just because you are a technically competent photographer, doesn't mean that you are a good wedding photographer!

You must be able to:

- Help the wedding party relaxes and become more spontaneous in front of the camera
- Give clear, easily understood never ambiguous instructions.
- Convey a positive, happy and enthusiastic feeling (smiling and laughing helps, as does a good sense of humour)
- Be sensitive
- Be receptive and obliging

Planning

When taking group photos (e.g. the bridal party or parents with bride and groom), the married couple should be prominent and that can mean placing other people behind them. If the others are short though, they can be out of view, so it may be necessary to have something for them to stand on, such as a wall, seats or short step ladder. You should think about such needs before they arise.

Consider all if the shots which may be required, how they will be taken, and what you will need to take them. It may be useful to compile a list (example below), and discuss it with the bride and groom before the wedding, checking what shots are critical to them, and what their priorities might be.

Checklist of Wedding Shots (examples)

At The Ceremony:

- The bride and father arriving
- Mother of the bride arriving
- Each member of the wedding party coming down the aisle
- Exchanging of rings
- Reciting the wedding vows
- Minister blessing the couple
- Couple kissing in the church
- Signing the register
- Walking out of the church
- Couple outside the church
- Bridal party outside church
- Throwing confetti
- Parents with bride and groom at front of church
- Any other rituals relevant to ethnic or religious background of the couple
- Guests outside church
- Bride and groom leaving church

At The Reception:

- The receiving line
- Bride & groom arriving
- Master of ceremonies
- Best mans toast
- Any other speakers/toasters
- Grooms speech
- Bridal waltz
- Bride dancing with father
- Cutting wedding cake
- Bride and groom at wedding table
- Bridal party at wedding table
- Other tables with guests
- Bride throwing bouquet
- Any other rituals relevant to ethnic or religious background of the couple
- Bride & groom departing reception

Other Shots:

- Bride alone (portrait)
- Groom alone (portrait)
- Bride & Groom (portrait)
- Bride & Groom with parents
- Bride with her parents
- Groom with his parents
- Couple with maid of honour & best man
- Bride and bridesmaids
- Groom & groomsmen

Don't forget the cake!



Other Considerations

- Dress appropriately (if attending a formal occasion, you should be dressed in a formal manner so you do not stand out).
- Take all important photos (e.g. bridal party portraits etc), before people begin drinking alcohol.
- If you are NOT the official photographer, don't duplicate what the official photographer is doing...try to be different and capture another perspective.
- Make sure all equipment has been used before you attend a wedding, so you are both familiar with the equipment, and so you have verified nothing is faulty.
- Carry spare (back up) equipment and film
- If you do use a flash, use it sparingly and watch out for reflective surfaces that may bounce the flash back to the camera.
- When you shoot, fill the frame by moving closer. Avoid verticals for group shots and horizontals for individual portraits.

DIGITAL WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

There are some advantages using digital SLR cameras when taking professional photos at weddings.

- The ability to quickly change white balance as the lighting changes; moving from inside to outdoors, fluorescent light to tungsten no longer requires cumbersome and expensive film changes or lens filters.
- Viewing the photograph in the camera's LCD lets you assess the result immediately

Digital Wedding Equipment

Wedding photographers will need a camera capable of working at high speed and may be willing to sacrifice file size to achieve their aims. Portraitists and classical wedding photographers can afford to ignore the fastest cameras and go for file size, and perhaps lower cost equipment. The more sophisticated the camera, generally, the more expensive it is going to be.

If you're planning on taking digital photography serious it is also important to have some digital image manipulation software. When choosing software there are plenty of choices, Adobe Photoshop is considered the industry standard and has all the features you will need to create professional looking effects. If Photoshop is a bit out of your price range, consider other programs such as Microsoft's Digital Image Suite.

When using your digital camera begin by setting the camera's clock or in the case of multiple cameras, synchronising the clocks, set the frame counter to continuous and make double sure you didn't set it to reset. The benefits of this will become increasingly apparent as you bring your work home for processing. Storage media is important, either Compact Flash (the preferred medium of successful digital imagers) or Micro drives. You will need lots of storage especially for wedding work.

LIGHTING AT WEDDINGS

Rain:

Use studio lights indoors in case of rain, but the time constraints and logistics involved make their use in wedding photography a serious disadvantage unless you have plenty of time, space, and an army of helpers. Flashguns good in this situation, one should have a slave attached to allow it to be triggered automatically when the other flashgun is fired.

Take umbrellas for the bride and groom and plastic sheets, clean linen sheets etc. for sitting and standing the bride on, and cloths to dry and clean your camera gear.

- Priorities when raining:
- Set up smaller groups to keep things running quickly.
- Use uncluttered backgrounds
- Get vital groups done first. Bulk out the photography with plenty of candid photos

Sun:

Shooting with the sun often leads to subjects squinting, the solution is to shoot into the sun to let the sun back light the subjects and this is also particularly flattering for the veil and dress. A lens hood will help to stop stray light from flaring into the lens, the effect is easily missed and much easier to spot if you momentarily close the aperture right down and depress the depth of field preview button while you look through the viewfinder.

Dull Days:

On a dull day set the flash with the correct film rating, with exposure 2-2.5 stops wider than on the camera (f2.8). i.e. If you add 2 stops more power it will expose the subject fully. You could set the flash gun for 1600 ASA and use the same aperture to create the same effect.

SET TASK

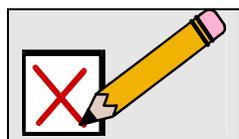
1. Talk with someone who has had a wedding album put together by a professional photographer. (This may be a relative, friend or colleague). Look at their album with them, and ask them to discuss their experience. Ask them:

- Were they happy with what the photographer did?
- Did they have any problems with the photography during the wedding?
- What was the photographer like? (Happy or serious, cooperative, argumentative, or what?)
- What were the best photos taken?
- What were the poorest photos taken?

Make notes of their answers.

2. Look in a magazine or newspaper to find some wedding photos.

Cut out what you think are two photos that might have been taken differently to create a better (or at least different) image.



SELF ASSESSMENT

Perform the self assessment test titled 'Self Assessment Test 5'
If you answer incorrectly, review the notes and try the test again.



ASSIGNMENT

Download and do the assignment called 'Lesson 5 Assignment'.