

THE ULTIMATE

WEDDING GUIDE

TIPS, TRICKS, & RESOURCES TO
CREATE A SEAMLESS WEDDING DAY



SHELLY PATE
PHOTOGRAPHY

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THE ULTIMATE WEDDING GUIDE



WOOT WOOT! Y'all are getting MARRIED!!! I'm truly honored to be your wedding photographer. I take pride in choosing my clients as much as they choose me, and I am so so excited for your special day. I can't wait to spend the coming months getting to know y'all and hearing the details as your day comes together.

I believe that the best photographs are captured organically. My favorite wedding moments are ones that represent a couple's unique relationship and personalities.

This is not "a rule book," but a resource guide to help you feel more prepared as you start to plan your day. Each wedding is so unique and there is no right or wrong way to do things! Everything in here is based on *my experience*. Please share your ideas! I'm always down to get creative! The more I know you, the better I'm able to create photographs that look and feel like you. Thank you for trusting me with your wedding day!

Let's dive in!

HELLO & THANK YOU

01

HELLO & THANK YOU

02

WHAT TO EXPECT.

This guide will help give you an idea of what it's like to work with me & help set expectations for the both of us throughout the process. My hope is that working with me is consistently three things: collaborative, simple, and fun!

COLLABORATIVE

Working with me is a very collaborative process! I like to take time to get to know each of my clients' needs & wants (including things that I may not know about your wedding day). From the time you get this guide to the time I deliver photos, I want you to feel comfortable chatting with me about *anything*. So please feel free and supported to share your ideas, dreams, and tiny magical details that you hold in your heart! This day is about the two of you and **your** story.

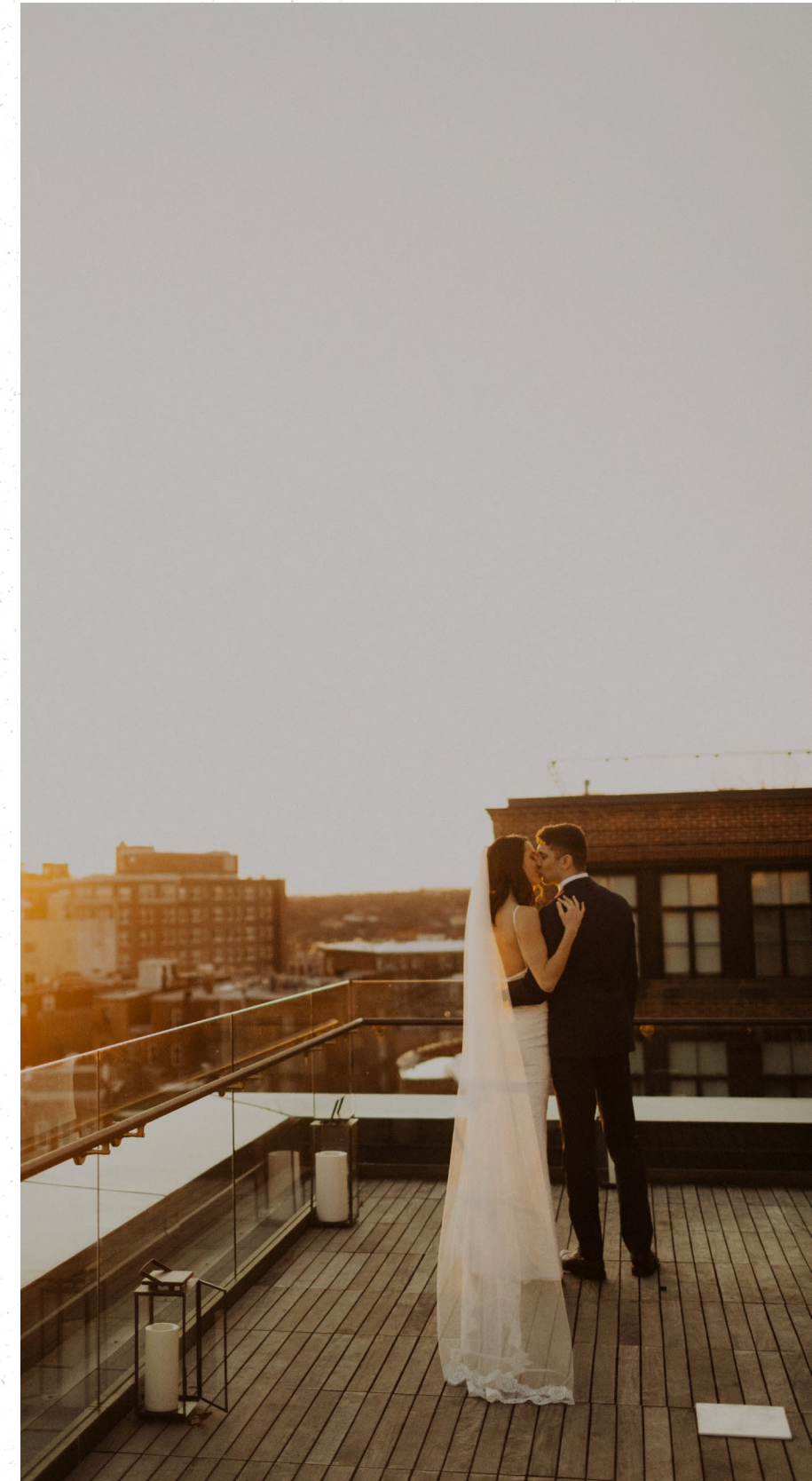
WHAT TO EXPECT

SIMPLE

My shooting philosophy stems from the age-old "less is more" mantra. I'm a pretty simple person, and believe in creating *timeless* photographs through natural, genuine moments, and being fully present with the ones you love on your wedding day.

FUN

I am a very quirky, creative person who is always down for a good time! The last thing I want to feel like at your wedding is a vendor... I'm a friend who happens to be a professional wedding photographer! We will have a kick-ass time, I promise.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Here is what to expect as we move forward in our planning together! I'll be checking in with you along the way and sending along additional guides with even more details + reminders as we get closer. Feel free to reach out at any time in-between for brainstorming sessions or questions!

NOW

- Expect a few “getting to know you” questionnaires
- Start thinking about when you would like to take your engagement photos
- If you haven't decided your location, expect a dream location questionnaire + info following

10-12 MONTHS OUT

- Schedule your engagement session
- We'll work together to create a draft timeline

Think about your favorite season + places that bring you joy.

6 MONTHS OUT

- Check in
- Take engagement photos
- Curate timeline together
- Apply for any necessary permits
- Book special activities

I recommend taking your engagement photos at least 4-6 months before your wedding day so that you can use them for announcements, save the dates, and your wedding website.

3 MONTHS OUT

- 3 month out check list/guide
- Confirm timeline + day of questionnaire
- Communicate timeline, arrival times to other vendors
- Hair + make up trial/ check in with florist
- Alteration appointments, final walk throughs, tastings
- Family Photos Combo list
- Check marriage license procedures for state

Coordinate with Bridal and/or Bourdoir session.

1 MONTH OUT

- Final Chat to review all the details of the day
- Month Out Guide: Details, packing, schedules

WHAT TO EXPECT

03

TIMELINES

Time. Don't rush through your wedding day. It only happens once and it is going to go by so fast. Together, we will structure your day so that you get the most of every part and there is enough time for moments to happen naturally.

The schedule of your day is the single most important piece to make sure things run smoothly. If you are not working with a coordinator or planner, it's important that you and I work together to create a schedule that will not only give me time to do my best work, but also allow the day to be stress-free. I'm serious when it comes to my timelines: I wear a watch and will try my best to stick to our schedule.

The timeline on the next page shows an example of how I typically structure the day. I like to make sure we have optimal time built-in for things like off-location portraits as well as bridal party & family photos based on how many people there are, venue restrictions, etc. If we work together to create an ideal schedule, we won't be rushed for time, which will show in your photos.

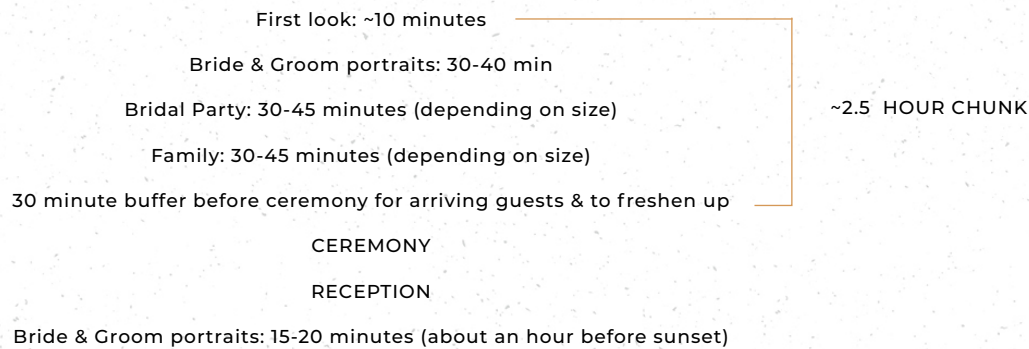
TIMELINES

*We are going to prep so your wedding day is
seamless + stress free!*



IDEAL TIMELINE

The first questions I generally get before a wedding is “how long should we set aside for portraits?” The biggest anchor in setting your timeline will be if you are going to see each other before the ceremony or not. Below is a break down of how long different parts of the day take to capture. These can, of course, be rearranged based on your day!



This is a good starting place. The timeline MAY fluctuate based on how many people are in the bridal party and how many family members will be present for family photos.



If you’re NOT doing a first look, your timeline will be much different. If you have not given any thought to doing a first look, please do! I’ll give more info about first looks later on, but usually they help the day run smoother - which means you’re less rushed and get more photos!. Without one, it can be difficult to fit family photos, bridal party photos, and your couple’s portraits between the ceremony and reception (not to mention missing most, if not all, of cocktail hour).

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY TIMELINE

This timeline is based on a 4:30 ceremony time and a 10 hour package with a second shooter.

11:30	Photographers arrive		
12:00	COVERAGE BEGINS: Getting ready photos (dress, shoes, details)	_____	<i>If bridal parties are getting ready near one another, I can shoot both parties. If not, this is one area where a 2nd photographer really comes in handy.</i>
1:00	Bride hair & make-up complete (second shooter with groom)		
1:15	Bride gets into dress		
1:30	Bride portraits		
1:40	Bride & photographer leave for first look (groom already in place)	_____	<i>The groom needs to arrive about 5 minutes prior to this.</i>
1:50	Bride & groom first look		
2:00	Bride & groom portraits	_____	<i>Locations will be determined prior to wedding day.</i>
2:30	Wedding party arrives ready to go for portraits!		
2:45	Wedding party portraits		
3:00	Family arrives ready to go portraits!		
3:15	Family formal portraits		
4:00	Everyone tucked away for arriving guests		
4:30	Ceremony begins		
5:00	Ceremony ends // Cocktail hour begins		
5:05	Signing of marriage certificate		
	Bride & Groom join cocktail hour when ready		
5:45	Photographer takes photos of reception set-up		
6:00	Guests seated for dinner		
6:15	Grand entrance		
6:20	Dinner served (photographer takes break & eats)		
7:00	Photographer steals away couple for sunset portraits (sunset at 8:01pm)	_____	<i>Obviously this is dependent on time of year, please refer to a sunset calendar to better plan for sunset photos. Typically I like doing these roughly an hour before sunset. If you’re getting married in the winter or somewhere where the sun is setting before dinner, let’s chat about splitting your portrait time differently!</i>
7:30	Toasts begin		
8:00	Cake cutting		
8:05	First dances		
8:15	Open dancing begins		
10:00	COVERAGE ENDS	_____	<i>If the night goes on longer than this and there is an exit you want me to capture, you’ll need to add extra time or we can do a mini version with just your wedding party!</i>

FORGOING A FIRST LOOK

CEREMONY

DURING COCKTAIL HOUR:

- Family: 20 min
- Bridal Party: 15 min
- Bride & Groom portraits: 25 min

RECEPTION

Bride & Groom portraits: 15-20 minutes (about an hour before sunset)

As you can see, being limited to cocktail hour does not leave very much time to document all these important moments and loved ones! However, there are some things we can still do before the ceremony to give us more time for those beautiful, genuine moments to happen! You can also consider having a slightly longer cocktail hour - an extra 15 minutes makes SUCH a difference! I also highly recommend having a second photographer if it is not already included in your collection, which allows us to take photos simultaneously and get all your pretty details and reception space captured before guests go in!

THINGS WE CAN DO PRECEREMONY WITHOUT Y'ALL SEEING EACH OTHER :

- Your respective sides of the wedding party
- Individual photos with your parents/ siblings
 - Solo bride + groom portraits
- Reading letters to each other on either side of a wall/ door, ect

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY TIMELINE (NO FIRST LOOK)

This timeline is based on a 4:00 ceremony time and a 10 hour package with a second shooter.

11:30	Photographers arrive		
12:00	COVERAGE BEGINS: Getting ready photos (dress, shoes, details)	—————	Second photographer is with groom + his party
1:30	Groom + party are dressed (Groom + party photos)		
1:00	Bride hair & make-up complete (Groom solo photos)		
1:15	Bride gets into dress (Groom's immediate family photos)		
1:30	Groom heads back to getting ready space		
1:40	Bride's first look with dad		
1:55	Bride & party group photos		
2:20	Bride's solo portraits		
2:50	Bride's immediate family photos		
3:15	Bride & groom read letters	—————	Couple will be on either side of door/ wall so they cannot see each other.
3:30	Everyone tucked away for arriving guests		
4:00	Ceremony begins		
4:35	Ceremony ends (Cocktail hour begins)		
4:40	Full immediate family photos		
5:00	Full wedding party photos		
5:35	Bride + Groom Portraits (2nd Photographer takes photos of reception space)		
5:40	Guests seated for dinner		
5:50	Grand entrance + first dance		
6:10	Dinner served (photographer takes break & eats)		
6:50	Photographer steals away couple for sunset portraits (sunset at 7:30pm)	—————	Obviously this is dependent on time of year, please refer to a sunset calendar to better plan for sunset photos. Typically I like doing them roughly an hour before sunset. If you're getting married in the winter or somewhere where the sun is setting before dinner, let's chat about splitting your portrait time differently!
7:20	Toasts begin		
7:30	Parent dances		
7:55	Open dancing begins		
8:45	Cake cutting		
8:55	More dancing		
10:00	COVERAGE ENDS	—————	If the night goes on longer than this and there is an exit you want me to capture, you'll need to add extra time or we can do a mini version with just your wedding party!

04

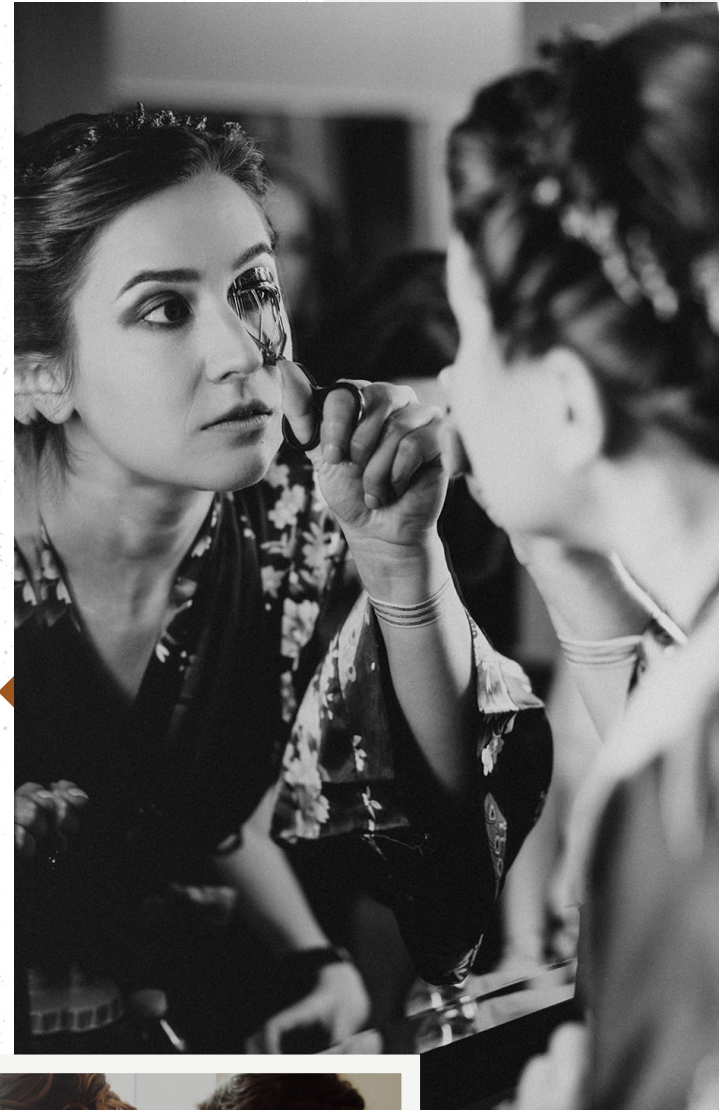
GETTING READY

The getting ready portion of the day is one of the most fun and memorable parts of a wedding. You can feel all the excitement and butterflies, which makes for great photos!

However, people often forget how chaotic the getting ready portion of the day can be. Cramming eight bridesmaids, make-up artists, hair stylists, *and* the photographers into a single room filled with make-up, curling irons, hairspray, duffel bags, garbage cans, water bottles, food, and clothing can start to feel over crowded and LOOK very cluttered. The goal of classic and elegant getting ready images is space & light.

I often recommend couples consider their getting ready space early on instead of leaving it until the last minute...and it doesn't have to be limited to a traditional hotel room. My favorite DC getting ready boutique hotels in DC are The Line, The Eaton, and Mason + Rook. Homes on VRBO or Airbnb are a great option as well — they tend to have more interesting and lovely backgrounds AND better light, not to mention more room to spread out.

GETTING READY



The best photos are documented organically.

Keep clutter hidden and to a minimum. Keep bags, suitcases, and food in another room if possible. If there's not extra space, please make sure things are picked up and put away by the time your coverage starts. If your room isn't tidy, I'll need to do a sweep before I start photographing, which means I might miss some important moments.

If you are getting ready in a hotel room, consider getting an extra room OR asking friends if their room can be cleaned and used as a clutter-free zone — aka people's belongings are not allowed to be there! (It's best if their room is on the same floor as yours.)

Are you getting ready at your venue? Perhaps there is a separate room where the dress can be photographed free of clutter. For both of these options, light is something to take note of as well.

You'll want rooms with lots of window light for the best photos.

I like to shoot in a room with all of the lights off, so this means lots of good natural light. Mixed light of any kind (natural light + lamps + overhead lights) tend to lead to odd skin tones.

Don't forget about the groom! Often, the groom and his party get left with the dark, tiny basement room. He is just as important and deserves awesome portraits too!

Thoughtfully consider who is there getting ready with you. You have so many wonderful people who want to celebrate with you, but you don't want to feel overly crowded. Remember, there will be an extra 1-5 people (if you have a videographer) and their equipment as well. I highly suggest keeping it to just the wedding party and mom/ grandma. Other friends and kids are fantastic but can create a very cramped and chaotic environment. They can totally come hang out before and just head out when photos start!

GETTING READY

BRIDE + CREW

Remember the importance of window light? Your hair + make up team also LOVES natural light and will set you put by the window for hair + makeup.

HAIR + MAKEUP

If you feel your best, you'll look your best, so make sure you trust your hair + makeup team. Usually, I recommend not using the artist who cuts your hair to style your hair on your wedding day— it usually results in your hair either not looking like you've envisioned or coming undone halfway through the day. Choose someone who *specializes* in wedding hair!

You should aim to hire a team that is not only good at what they do, but is also very organized and timely. In my experience, hair + makeup is usually the biggest cause of wedding day delays, so make sure your team is given the timeline in advance. This way they will know 1. how many artists to bring and 2. when they *absolutely* need to be finished. I also recommend adding a little buffer time, just in case.

You, as the bride, should go last so that I can photograph your hair + makeup when it is just about done, capturing those final touches! Along with the bridesmaids, mom should be done with her hair + makeup before the bride. It breaks my heart when mom doesn't want to be photographed zipping up her daughter's dress because her makeup isn't done yet.

GETTING READY



ALL THE PRETTY DETAILS

I will be photographing details upon arrival. Have all your details out and ready to be photographed. This includes your dress (out of the bag/ price tags removed), shoes, jewelry, rings, veil, hair comb, important mementos, and your invitation suite. Ask your florist to bring some styling blooms, too! (You'll get a check list closer to your day!)

It is also great to have a wooden hanger instead of the plastic one the dress comes on. Sometimes hotels have them in the closet, but not always. No matter the hanger, you want it make sure it's no-slip hanger to keep your dress from falling off.

FLORALS

Let your florist know to bring the bouquets, boutonnieres, and styling blooms to your getting ready space so we can use them in portraits. Florals should arrive 30 minutes before coverage starts so that the bouquets and styling blooms can be included in detail photos as well.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

All VIPS (mom, bridesmaids, etc) need to know when they should be dressed for photos. If you want to do photos with the bridal party in robes/ PJs, then we need to work that into the timeline. Everyone should be fully dressed and 100% ready to go with shoes, jewelry and all to help you get into your dress so your photos look put together and clean.

Carefully consider what shoes you wear. You'll want to be comfortable all day. Consider multiple shoes like a flat pair for dancing or boots for when we are outside and it's super cold. I also recommend you think about beading on your dress, shoes, and bracelets as these can get caught on one another!

GETTING READY

THE GUYS

If y'all want photos of the groom getting ready, you will either need to include a second photographer or you both need to get ready at the same location. The groom and his party should also have a great space to get ready with tons of natural light.

DETAILS

Have your details gathered in one space so my team can photograph them upon arrival. These include: cufflinks, tie/ bowtie, suspenders, watch, shoes, and any other special items the groom is wearing. In additon, I recommend communicating with the florist, coordinator, or wedding party in regards to how and when the boutonnières will arrive. It is best if they arrive as close to the start of coverage as possible.

TIMELINE

Let the groom's party know that they should make sure they have everything they need earlier in the day. Everyone should have their pants, shirts, and hair/ beards ready to go at least 20 minutes before coverage starts. Be prepared to just hang out and relax with your friends until it is time to get those jackets, ties, and details on!

SUIT/ TUX TIPS

If you plan on buying your suit and want to customize it, I recommend Indochino. You get to customize every detail! If you plan on renting, I recommend The Black Tux. The Black Tux carries modern fits + cuts and allows you to try it on ahead of time.

GETTING READY



Fellas, y'all can let your personality shine in your attire. Make it you.

05

FIRST LOOKS

A first look is when the couple sees each other for this first time privately before their ceremony. I recommend first looks because they allow us to capture intimate, raw emotion annnnddd makes for a much more relaxed day. On the fence? Here are a few more reasons why I love them:

- 1) On average, you get to spend about 4-5 hours MORE with your significant other on your wedding day (that's huge!)
- 2) With a first look, you actually get TWO extremely emotional + meaningful moments— a private, intimate experience, and another when you walk down the aisle and it hits you again.
- 3) They allow you to enjoy time with your friends during cocktail hour because we aren't scrambling for photos. Bring on the apps, drinks, and go mingle!
- 4) We aren't rushed to do your couples portraits, family portraits, AND wedding party photos during cocktail hour (not rushed = more enjoyable experience).



This is your choice to make, I just want to be sure you are aware of all the benefits of doing a first look.

I ABSOLUTELY LOVED DENNIS &
MEGAN'S FIRST LOOK — THEY WERE
SO ANXIOUS AND EXCITED.

FIRST LOOKS



DO WE NEED A SECOND SHOOTER?

MORE MOMENTS. MORE VIEW POINTS.

Including a second shooter has less to do with the number of guests at your wedding (although that is a factor) and more to do with multiple events happening at once.

I can only be in one place at one time, so a second shooter (photographer) can allow for overlapping of events. For example, if you and your partner are getting ready in different places. A second shooter also gives you a wider variety in angles and viewpoints of the same moment, like both of your reactions during your first look or walking down the aisle.

WHO I HIRE FOR THIS ROLE

I have the absolute JOY of working with my husband Patrick as well as a close circle of photographers that I know and trust in the area to shoot with me.

MORE PHOTOS FROM ME

Having a second shooter means more photos in your online gallery.

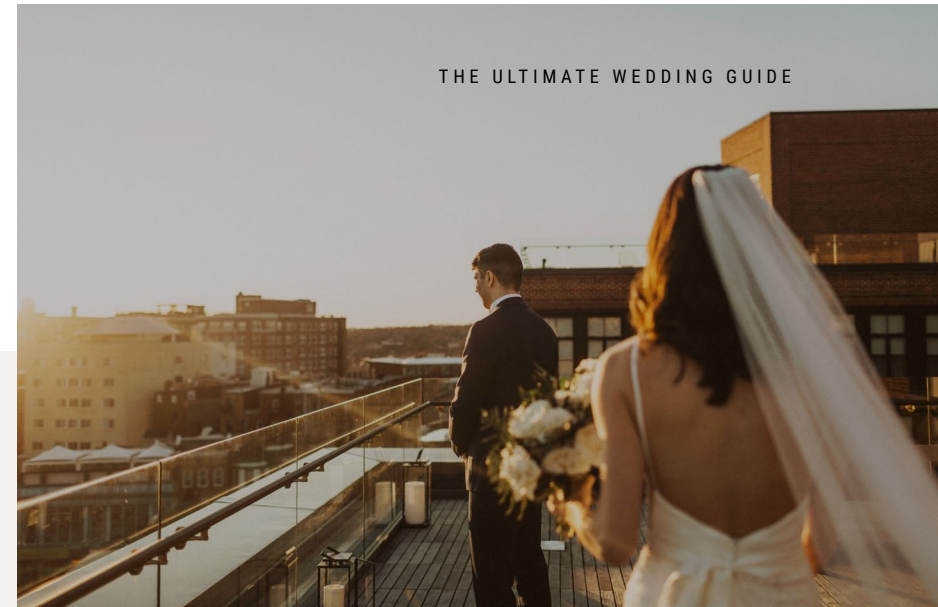
YOU MAY NOT NEED ONE

Some weddings don't need a second shooter. I'll be completely honest with you if I feel like you do or don't need one. For elopements and intimate weddings that are more relaxed in nature, it may be best to stick with just me.

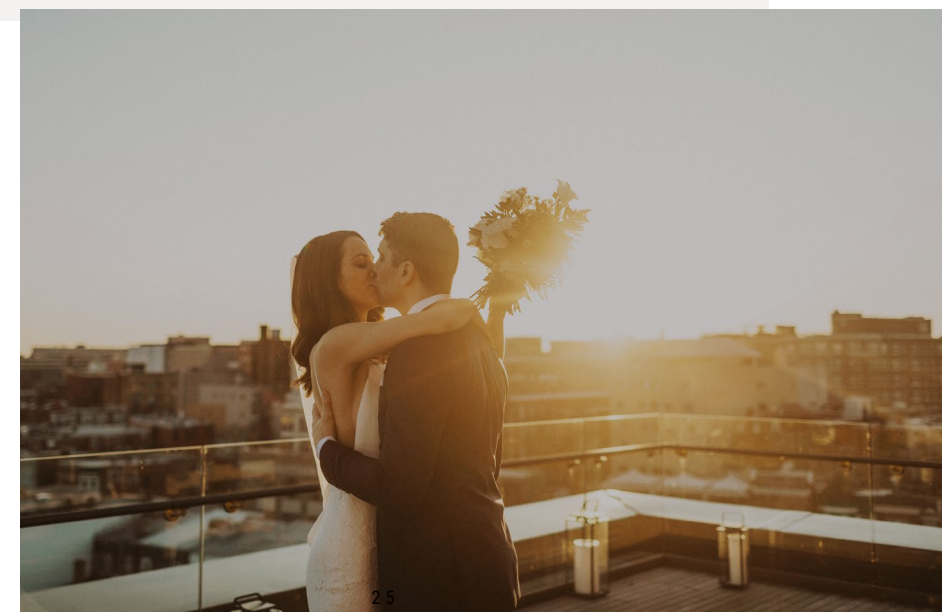
WHEN DO WE NEED TO DECIDE?

You have up to 2 months before your wedding day to add a second photographer.

Your wedding collection may already include a second shooter— BUT IF NOT and you are thinking about adding one, everything you need to know is above!



THIS IS THE
NUMBER ONE
QUESTION I
RECEIVE FROM
MY COUPLES!





JESSY & INDIANA / ICELAND

STRESS-FREE WEDDING TIPS:

DO A FIRST LOOK

HAVE A WEDDING DAY COORDINATOR

LIMIT FORMAL FAMILY PHOTOS TO
IMMEDIATE FAMILY

HAVE AN UNPLUGGED CEREMONY

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO ENJOY IT ALL



06

PORTRAITS



Getting a great variety of photographs requires shooting in different parts of the day with different light. To make this possible, I love to be involved in planning your wedding schedule. Your portraits are photos you'll hang on your walls, show your grandchildren, and the ones family will hold as keepsakes forever. Make sure your schedule reflects the importance of these photos with ample time.

We can utilize your amazing venue or go to a beautiful location nearby!

BRIDE & GROOM

Couples are often a little nervous before they get in front of the camera. This is completely normal! I *highly* recommend doing an engagement session so we can get all those camera shy feelings out *before* the wedding day.

When we are shooting one-on-one, I'll prompt and guide you to do things together that use your love languages and personalities in a way that is your own, which is why getting to know you ahead of time is so important. My goal is that your photos capture you being your authentic selves.

I like to take time to scope out where we'll be shooting beforehand, and rely on instinct to take me through the day. Some things will change on a whim, while others may feel more expected. I simply ask for my clients to trust me.

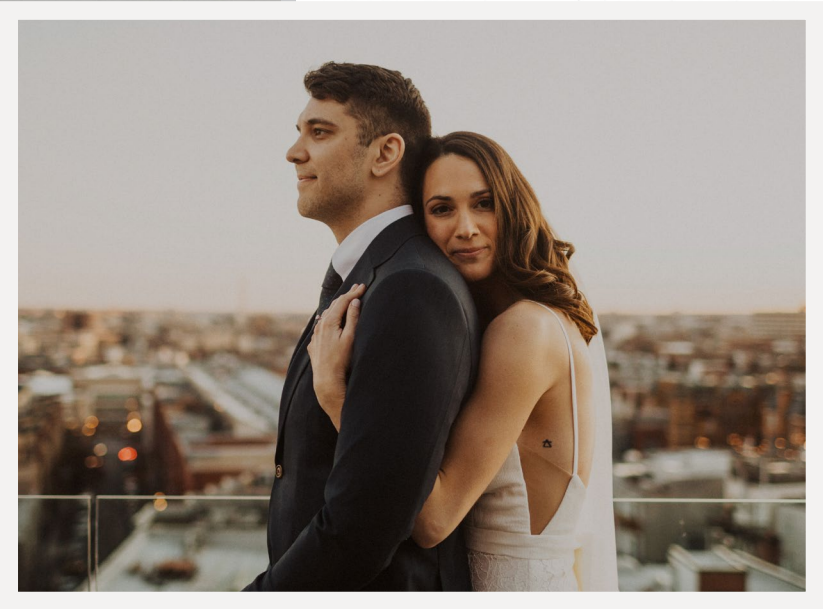
I recommend two portrait time slots for couples on their wedding day:

- Right after the ceremony— you're ecstatic, giddy, and ready to party, which creates the most joyful moments!
- Within an hour of sunset— Sunset has the most beautiful golden light! It's very romantic and absolutely timeless.

That REAL love. That TIMELESS love.



*I recommend we take y'all's portraits together
during golden hour for all those warm,
romantic feels.*



WEDDING PARTY

I typically start with the full group shots, followed by splitting up each respective side of the wedding party. I will also photograph you with each member of your respective side. (The wedding party needs to know when to be ready, including flower girls & ring bearers).

The best time for wedding party portraits is before the ceremony since everyone is ready to go and no one will miss cocktail hour or wander off.

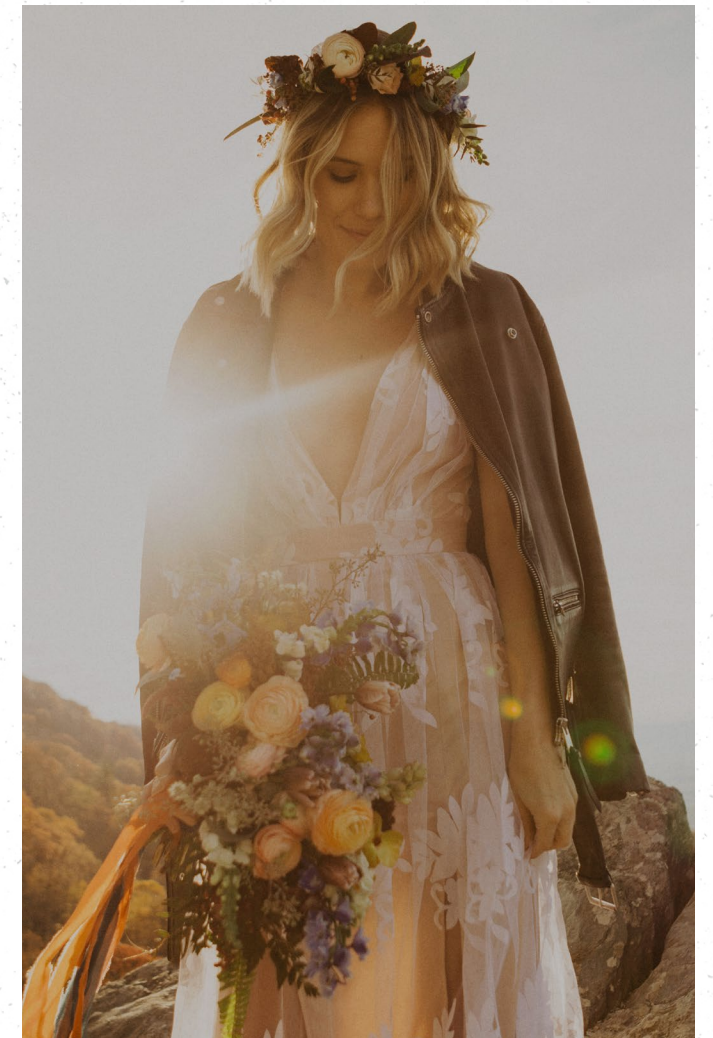
How much time this usually takes depends on the size of your wedding party and where you'd like the photos to take place. Larger parties naturally take longer to photograph, as do off-site locations. Also, you know your crew way better than me, so if they typically run a little late we will want to buffer a extra time. I'll scout beforehand to ensure that we have spots picked out for all weather scenarios.

PORTRAITS





I always recommend doing a bridal session so we can really spend time capturing you in your georgous dress!



We can time this with your hair + make up trial.

BRIDAL SESSION



FAMILY PORTRAITS

Formal family portraits are the most straightforward part of the day — we will take time to capture numerous combinations for each side of the family, as well as a few of the new families all together. This process can be long, tedious, and surprisingly overwhelming for some couples, so it's the only part of the day where I shoot from a defined shot list.

I have all my couples fill out a questionnaire about eight weeks before the wedding to share which family members are included in these photos. From there, I create a list of all possible combinations (you with mom, you with dad, you with mom & dad etc.) that is then approved before the wedding. This helps us to be quick and efficient! You can expect this portion of the day to be anywhere from 25 minutes to an hour depending on the size of the family.

I recommend we take these starting an hour before the ceremony. I also *highly* recommend keeping these formal photos to the immediate family only. Right after the ceremony, we can take the larger, extended family photo groups if y'all would like! If there's a cousin or someone important you'd like a photo with, that's certainly something we can do after the ceremony, during cocktail hour, or later in the evening.



CEREMONY & RECEPTION

07

CEREMONY & RECEPTION

Lighting & locations DURING the wedding : setting you up for success.

CEREMONY

For the ceremony & reception there are a few questions worth asking before you make final decisions that vastly improve the quality of your images and how they feel. Keep in mind, light is the most important aspect to getting good photos.

IF YOU'RE HOLDING AN OUTDOOR CEREMONY:

- What will lighting be like during the time of your ceremony? Will you both be in direct sunlight? Will one of you be in the shade? Take a look at the light, research photos from past weddings at your venue to see what to expect, or ask your venue. This allows us to make adjustments such as moving you both into the shade or shifting the ceremony set-up slightly so you're not squinting into the sun ahead of time.
- Will there be anything above you or behind you like a gazebo or arch, or maybe you're up on a platform? These things will play a part in your images and we want to make sure they aren't casting shadows on the two of you.
- Is there enough space for me to walk around the perimeter of the ceremony? If so, this will allow for a lot more variety in your final images (i.e. images of your parents, bridal party, guests, etc.)

OUTDOOR CEREMONY TIPS:

- Let me know when you are choosing your ceremony time! I am happy to visit your venue or chat with the venue staff to help determine the best time and spot.
- You want the sun to be **BEHIND** you when you are at the "altar".
- If you are getting married in full sun hours (the afternoon), I suggest the ceremony area be in a spot with **EVEN** shade. This will make for much more flattering photos! If that is not possible, still situate the sun behind you.
- Tell your officiant to stand in the middle of you two, slightly behind you so that your photos will be balanced. This also prevents them from casting a weird shadow on you.

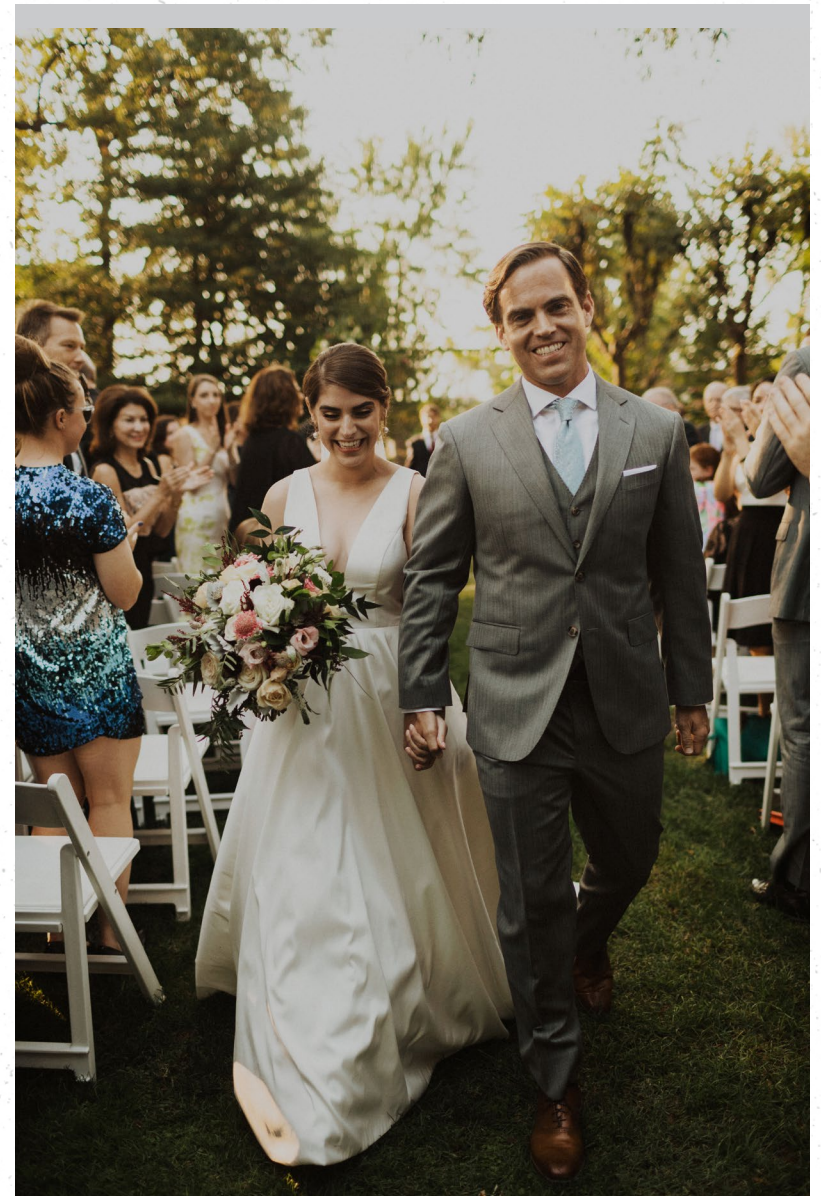
CEREMONY & RECEPTION

IF YOU'RE HOLDING AN INDOOR CEREMONY:

- What is the available lighting? Is there any natural light, or is it all ambient/artificial light? If it's all artificial light, perhaps you can improve this by adding hanging lights, candles, or spot lights.
- Are there photography restrictions? Some churches don't allow photographers past the first pew, for example. Others can be more strict.
- Does your venue/church allow flash photography?
- If you are getting married in a church, be sure to ask your priest/officiant where they plan on standing during vows, exchanging of rings, and your first kiss. You'll want them to stand **BEHIND** you so they aren't blocking those special moments.

GENERAL CEREMONY TIPS:

- Everyone should walk down the aisle *slowly*.
- Share the ceremony order with me in advance so we aren't out of position during big moments.
- Be sure your officiant plans on saying something along the lines of "you may now kiss" so we are prepared for that critical shot! (You'd be surprised at how often this *isn't* included, resulting in a very confused couple!)
- I recommend the officiant steps aside **BEFORE** they say "you may now kiss" so they aren't in your special photo.
- As you are exiting as newly weds, be prepared to stop, smile, and kiss! The energy during your exit is like nothing else we photograph all day, and is always a favorite photo for couples!





BREATHE IT ALL IN.





RECEPTION

RECEPTION SPACES ARE IMPORTANT TOO:

- What lighting are you providing during dinner? Hanging lights? Candles? All of these impact mood AND photos because they change the temperature in which I'm adjusting my white balance. Candlelight & hanging lights create a lovely warm, intimate feel.
- Where is the head table, and what is behind you? For example, is it a full set of speakers? A catering table? A nice clean background? I'd suggest double checking to see what will be in the majority of your reception photos.
- When people stand for speeches, will they be near you, at their seat, or next to the DJ? I prefer toasts are near you so I can get everyone's reactions together!
- Will the DJ use any kind of uplighting or directional light during dances? If so, I'd love to be connected with them to discuss options! No one likes spotted skin. :)

Don't let this section stress you out! Just share some details with me (especially if I haven't shot in this particular location before), which will help me feel prepared and result in even better photos!



Candles + greenery are so simple, yet create such a romantic feel.

LIGHTING

Capturing the mood is very important, which is why I try not to use the flash for anything but the dance floor. For a romantic mood, plan for string lights and a bunch of candles (especially around where you'll be sitting). Uplighting is great too. I recommend staying away from colors—instead, go with warm or white light. Only using candles or super dim lighting will make focusing more difficult, so adding in string lights makes a perfect match and keeps the ambience. If you are unsure about your lighting set up, I can help with suggestions!

SPEECHES

Have people that are giving toasts stand next to you instead of across the room. When my team and I are photographing the toasts, you'll be in the same frame together and we won't miss any of your reactions. This might be something you want to talk with your DJ about in advance to insure they can bring a wireless mic.

SWEETHEART TABLE

Load your table up with candles so it is lit super well. I suggest you stay away from super tall candles and center pieces on your sweetheart table that will block your faces for photos!

DINNER

As per your agreement with us, we either need to be served dinner by your caterer or given time to take a break and get our own food. (Believe me, after 6 hours of running around you'll want us to regroup and refuel so that we can continue doing our best work!) Ideally, you'll want your caterer to provide dinner for us so we don't miss anything.

It's ideal for me and my team to be served as soon as dinner begins (while you two are eating.) Caterers often serve vendors last (after all the guests). This means we maybe miss special moments like toasts, dances, or interactions with your guests that might happen during or after dinner. To avoid any confusion, please make sure to speak to your caterer about this ahead of time!



CEREMONY & RECEPTION

DANCING

While the colorful flashy lights that your DJ provides are awesome for the party, we ask that they turn these off (or keep it on just the white light) for your first dance and parent dances. As for the rest of the dancing, go crazy with them!! They bring the best party vibes to the photos for sure.



THIS IS YOUR WEDDING—
SO, MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

MEANINGFUL + UNIQUE TO YOUR
RELATIONSHIP.

THERE IS NO “WRONG WAY”.



KATIE & MARTY / MARYLAND



MAKE IT YOU



08

TIPS & TRICKS

You probably have a good idea about just how much thought goes into your wedding day coverage. It's a BIG day. It's also a really long day with a lot of people vying for your attention, whether for their own pictures or just to hang out and chat. There are a few tips and tricks that will allow you to enjoy your day that much more AND improve your photos.



1. WEDDING COORDINATOR

No matter the size of your wedding, consider hiring a planner or day-of coordinator that is not otherwise involved in the wedding (i.e. not also a guest or friend).

They will be able to coordinate vendors, answer all questions, and crub any issues so you can spend time enjoying your wedding day and not trying to figure out how you ended up six place-settings short, how to get the DJ an extension cord, or who should be getting ice to chill the wine. While friends/guests seem like a great idea, they too like to mingle, have a few drinks, and enjoy themselves.

Having a dedicated person whose job it is to help make your day run smoothly not only saves your sanity, but also makes my job easier. When couples don't have a coordinator, I often have to spend time wrangling and putting out "fires," which means I may miss special moments.



2. PLANNING FOR RAIN

- Nobody wants to think about it raining on their wedding day, but it's super helpful to have an alternative "rain plan" in place. If you are having an outdoor wedding, this could entail moving the ceremony inside or setting up a beautiful tent.
- I recommend ordering enough clear umbrellas for the two of you as well as everyone in your wedding party. If we don't use them, y'all can return them! For outdoor weddings, it is a good idea to have some umbrellas on hand for guests.
- Sometimes, rain is not in the forecast and completely surprises us. (Yes, even in the middle of a ceremony!) My advice is to embrace it and have fun! Rain makes for epic, romantic photographs and super special memories.





3. UNPLUGGED WEDDING

Consider asking guests to put away their cell phones, iPads, cameras, and electronics during the ceremony. I've had so many almost-amazing moments ruined by large iPads or iPhones being held up in the aisle way. Without all those distractions, your guests will be able to focus solely on the two of you, and the reason they're there. Instagram can wait.

4. MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

Think about how you can tie your personalities into your day as much as possible! Is there a place that is special to you or part of your daily life that we can take photos? Harry Potter cake or programs? Fur babies we can involve? A close friend that can officiate your ceremony? Writing your own vows? The possibilities are endless but those are some ideas to get you thinking!

5. SNACKS & WATER

It is a great idea to have water and snacks accessible throughout the day! I can keep them with me if we are venturing away from the venue.

6. WRITE OUT YOUR VOWS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING DAY

I recommend setting aside some alone time before the wedding day to write your vows. Find a quiet spot at home or go to your favorite coffee place and daydream about your love + your journey so far. Your vows will literally pour out.

7. VIDEOGRAPHER

If you choose to have a videographer there are a few things to consider. Some parts of the day (like your couples portraits and wedding party photos) will need more time allotted. Often, the videographer will want 10-15 minutes to themselves. Also, be sure your getting ready space is large enough for 2 additional people and video equipment. We don't want anyone feeling cramped!

8. SET ASIDE ALONE TIME

You are going to be celebrating with so many people and the day flies by incredibly fast. I recommend building some alone time, even if it is just 10 minutes, for you two to simply enjoy each other and soak it all in.

9. MOST IMPORTANTLY, ENJOY!

Every once in a while, STOP and look around. Take a mental snap shot of what is going on. Breathe in, breathe out. You're getting married!



09

VENDOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are a few of my favorite people in the industry. I admire the work of each of these individuals and have worked with many of them. I'm always updating this list, so if you have a personal recommendations, I'd love to hear them!

VENDOR RECOMMENDATIONS

WEDDING PLANNERS:

Wildly In Love | wildlyinloveweddings.com
Brielle Davis Events | brielledavisevents.com
Lisa Harvard Events | lhavardevents.com

VIDEOGRAPHY:

Sage + Silhouettes | sageandsilhouettes.com
The Pair Visuals | thepairvisuals.com
Harrison Films | harrisonweddingfilms.com
Paperboys | paperboys.co

FLORISTS:

Wander + Whimsy | wanderandwhimsyfloral.com
Ashes to Oak Floral | ashtooak.com
Rocking Bird Flower Co. | rockingbirdflower.com
Bee Inspired Events | beeinspiredevents.com

MAKEUP ARTISTS & HAIR:

Megan Monahan | megsmon.com/
JKW Beauty | jkwbeauty.com/
Styled by Sarah Richards | styledbysarahrichards.com

RENTALS:

Something Vintage | somethingvintagerentals.com
DC Rental | DCrental.com
Emerson James | emersonjamesrental.com

OFFICIANTS:

Jeff Maszal | weddingceremoniesbyjeff.com
Kiana, Ceremony Officiants | ceremonyofficiants.com

INVITATIONS & DESIGN:

Alchemy Calligraphy | alchemycalligraphy.com
Calligraphette + Co | calligraphetteco.com
Ashely Purser Design | ashleypurser.co

RIBBON:

Tono & Co | tonoandco.com
Hey! It's Oh So Pretty | heyitsohsopretty.com



THANK YOU

It's a lot to take in, isn't it? Good thing you hired the best!

You deserve to celebrate your marriage in the most meaningful way possible that truly reflects you as a couple. But you are not alone in this process! I care about you, which is why I created this guide. Educating and preparing my clients for the best possible wedding day photos is what sets me apart from the average photographer.

This isn't a rulebook, but something that I hope makes planning your day less stressful. You pour so much of yourself into preparing for your day, and I hope working with me allows you to enjoy each moment even more.

Cheers!

SHELLY PATE PHOTOGRAPHY



SHELLY PATE
PHOTOGRAPHY

THANK YOU

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