

Wedding Angles

Being a wedding photographer is part art, part business. Photographer Graham Monro M. Photog. of G M Photographics outlines the essential images to capture at a wedding.

Like most things in life, preparation is the key. To get great wedding photographs, you need to plan out the wedding day and be prepared for all outcomes. What will you do if the weather turns bad or the bride simply changes her mind about where she wants to be photographed? Obviously we have to be adaptable and able to change with the mood and flow of the day.

All weddings are vastly different, yet at the same time similar. A couple get ready, usually separately, get married in a church or

at an outside ceremony, go on location for a portrait shoot and then head to the reception for formalities and partying.

Making the Booking

We have a street level boutique studio based in Mosman, Sydney. Most of our work comes through recommendations from past clients and wedding suppliers, a good website and a profile in the major wedding magazines. Potential couples either phone or email us with questions about our availability for their wedding day and our wedding packages.

All our prices are on our website and we are very open about our charges and what services we provide. This is part of a process of validating our couples. We want to make sure that we are the right fit for them and they are the right fit for us.

When they contact us, we are very excited about their forthcoming wedding and congratulate them! We ask for as much information about their wedding day as possible and then arrange an appointment time for them to come to our studio to meet us.

Our studio is very well presented and all our products are in excellent condition and prominently displayed. Clients are happy to buy a variety of quality products, so it is crucial that you have a comprehensive range of items to present. You cannot sell what they cannot see.

Before the wedding, we spend a lot of time with each couple, getting to know them and finding out all about their wedding day. It's important to build a rapport with them so they enjoy their day and so we can get the best photographs. We want our clients to love us – and to recommend us to their friends.

A wedding day is all about timing, preparation and adaptation. It's a 'time poor' day with lots to achieve. As the photographer, your couples will appreciate your input, guidance and experience not just with the photography, but in generally keeping the day running smoothly and everyone happy. It's not always that easy to achieve.

Once the couple has booked us, we also try to book in their two album planning sessions, plus a pre-wedding planning meeting one or two months before the ceremony. We also suggest they have a portrait shoot, several months



All photographs by Graham Monro M. Photog.



before the wedding, so they can get to know us and be relaxed in front of the camera. These photographs may be used as a cover for a signature book at the reception, and maybe a framed print or two as well.

As the wedding day approaches, all the details are confirmed and a run sheet is obtained with all the suppliers' details and mobile numbers. Payment is also made prior to the wedding.

The Groom

Before the wedding, all the cameras are prepared. Sensors and lenses are cleaned, memory cards are formatted and batteries are charged. We have spares of everything and all cameras are synchronised (same time and date). My assistant and I use two Canon EOS 5 Mark II cameras each, one with a wide-angle lens and the other with a telephoto zoom.

Our first session is of the groom. We arrive early and when we knock on the door, we are ready to shoot whoever opens it. The element of surprise and candidness is always good. Shots to get at the groom's home include:

- the general mayhem and disorder as the boys get ready – alcohol and sports are generally the go.
- wide shots of all the guys hanging out
- close-ups of the best man writing his speech
- the groom with the rings in his hand, including a close-up
- headshot of each groomsman and groom
- groom with mum and dad and individually
- photos with the groom's parents involved

- anything spontaneous and candid.

Detail shots are great to use as an opening page for the groom's chapter in the album.

The Bride

Once again, we have our cameras ready when we knock on the door. There are lots of shots to get at the bride's home as she gets ready. Normally you'd expect all the bridesmaids to be dressed with their hair and make up finished, but the bride is still putting on the final touches. Shots to get at the bride's home include:

- bride's dress hanging on a door or in a window frame
- lots of detail shots of hair pieces, jewellery, shoes, veil hanging, flowers
- the bride having her dress being done up
- the moment dad first sees his daughter
- bride with each bridesmaid
- bride with mum and dad and individually
- get all the girls together in relaxed candid full length shot laughing
- all bridesmaids together

The Ceremony

Whether the ceremony is held in a church or at an outside location, be respectful and out of sight as much as possible. Remember, it's a wedding day with lots of guests wanting to see the bride and groom, not your arse. Well, not mine anyway!



- discreetly shoot the ceremony, walking around and getting different angles
- shoot church details and family
- shoot down a family line in sequence changing focus as you go down the line
- go above to the choir loft to get an overall view of the church
- position yourself well for the kiss shot, make sure there are plenty of frames left on your card
- shoot the couple leaving the church – the walk down the aisle is a hero shot
- outside the church gets lots of family and friends hugging and congratulating the bride and groom, especially key players like Mum and Dad.
- get a big group shot and all the relevant family group shots – be quick and direct and fun

The Location Shoot

The location is usually somewhere between the church and the reception, which means people can get lost. Always get the mobile number of the driver of the lead car and give him your mobile number as well. You'd be surprised how easy it is to get lost or go to the wrong spot.

I put the second shooter in the bride and groom's car to take shots of the couple snuggling up and having a laugh. If there are traffic delays or you get separated, at least you are getting shots.

When you arrive at the location, here is a list of photos to aim for:

Introduce yourself to the minister or celebrant and with the celebrant, find out where she will be standing. This is possibly your opportunity to decide on the right angle and lighting for the couple, so when appropriate, guide the celebrant about this. Shots to get include:

- groom and groomsmen awaiting the bride's arrival – grooms can look very nervous and a long lens will work well
- the bride arriving – shoot wide and then shoot tight
- capture the car pulling up with the church in the background – always go for a strong sense of place
- shoot the bride through the glass of the car
- photograph the bride alighting
- the dad kisses the bride and pulls the veil over – you are shooting the day as it unfolds in front of you, this is photojournalism so capture it all.
- shoot with a long lens as the bride walks down the aisle – use a battery booster on the flash so you can rapid fire if needed
- pan back to shots of the groom – watch for the reaction as the groom first sights the bride



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- usually the driver will serve drinks on arrival at the location, so shoot it
- get a cheers shot with the bridal party relaxing – shoot wide and tight
- think in terms of the album – filling the pages and telling the story with variety and good compositions
- shoot the bride and groom in lots of different ways: tight shots, full length, walking away, walking towards you – lots of shots, lots of variation
- the more fun the bridal party is having and the quicker you work, the more the shoot flows and the better the shots
- photograph all the bridesmaids together with bride, laughing and looking away from camera, looking at camera, looking at groomsmen
- get the bridesmaids and bride walking and talking – shoot it front on, side on and from behind
- shoot it really wide so you get a great sense of place – this might be a great photo to frame (and a framed photo will get more long term exposure than an album, so sign your framed photos so people know who took it).

The Reception

Try and get inside the reception room before the guests are seated, or send the second shooter ahead to get these photos for you:

- shoot all details of the room setup – the bride has gone to great effort to have all those tables decorated
- shoot flowers, all table details, place cards etcetera – shoot both tight and wide shots, use shallow depth-of-field, high ISO with no flash
- shoot really wide room shot – go up high and look down
- get shots of guests mingling
- shots of bride and groom mingling with guests
- shoot candid, capture the fun, maybe with a long lens
- get lots of shots of the family – have you photographed both sets of parents separately and together, and check that you covered all the family shots as this will be your last chance
- position yourself to get good shots of the bridal party being announced into the reception – when they first walk in is the best time with their arms waving

- shoot back into the reception area for the guests' reaction to their arrival
- shoot food shots
- shoot time exposure of room – this gives a very good sense of place, atmosphere and room design
- shoot exterior night shot of venue and, if it has a good outlook, shoot that as well
- shoot all speakers – take tight shots of them and wider shots of the reactions to their speeches (watch the bride and groom especially)
- shoot the cutting of the cake and then shoot back and photograph all the paparazzi there
- really work the bridal waltz – shoot a variety of tight and loose compositions and anticipate the dance moves.

Wedding photography is more than a list of shots, but when you're starting out, a shoot list can be a great help as it will ensure you don't miss important moments in what is always a very busy day.

While this article covers the practical side of shooting a wedding, Graham and his studio business manager Lauren Miles will be conducting a series of business and photography workshops around Australia on how to take great wedding and portrait photos – how to please your clients, make great albums and get great sales. To check when they are coming to a capital city near you, please visit www.gmphotographics.com.au/workshops. For more information, please email info@gmphotographics.com.au.





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