



GEORGIA RACHAEL

THE ULTIMATE WEDDING PLAN

FOR YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

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AN INTRODUCTION

Welcome



First things first, I have to thank you for trusting in my advice as a wedding photographer. Having captured more than 250 weddings in my (so far) 8 year and counting career, I've put together this beefy & comprehensive guide full of tips I've picked up over the years that hopefully will allow you to plan a stress-free day that culminates in beautiful, storytelling photography.

There's a lot to absorb, so take note of what you might find useful, but don't worry too much about the things that don't seem relevant to you. The tips inside here are just my perspective, that's all. If you have a planner or co-ordinator, make sure you seek their advice too. But ultimately, one thing I'd love you to remember is that this is your day, as a couple, and no one else's. You should feel free to have exactly the kind of day you want to have, and as long as you achieve that, the rest is history.

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A Summer Timeline

Let's kick things off with timings. This is a suggested timeline for a wedding taking place at one venue in the height of summer. Use this as a guide to base your own day on, knowing you'll be maximising your photographic experience as you do so.

1PM: BE READY

Being ready an hour before you need to leave gives you space to breath without worrying about being late for your ceremony. Last minute rushes are never fun.

2PM: CEREMONY

Depending on the nature of your ceremony, the length can vary widely from 20 to 40 minutes. Factor in an hour in total including your confetti exit afterwards.

3PM: DRINKS RECEPTION

After the confetti has been thrown, keep your formal photos to a minimum so you're free to enjoy and be present in your cocktail hour with your guests.

5PM: DINNER SERVED

It can take a good 15 minutes for your guests to be sat down before you'll be introduced to the room, so use it for some alone time with me to do couples photos.

7PM: SPEECHES

Leaving your speeches until after your meal means your caterers won't be in the kitchen freaking out if a speech runs over, and your guests won't be hangry.

8PM: GOLDEN HOUR PHOTOS

Take time out of your evening to enjoy that glorious golden hour to create some beaut portraits of you both, or get the wedding party out to fully embrace it.

9PM: FIRST DANCE

The final formality of the day. Leave this until the sun goes down so your guests can soak up as much daylight as possible - then the party can finally kick off in style.



Tips & Advice

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The Morning

For an easy and stress free morning, wherever possible, I'd advise getting ready on site at your venue (both of you). I'll be able to swiftly jump between both your preps as I document them, and you won't have to counter in travelling time to your ceremony either.

If staying at your venue the night before isn't an option for you, consider booking a fair sized Air B&B that'll either fit you all in, or host a couple of buildings on the same plot of land. / nearby. Waking up and having breakfast with your family and wedding party can be such a special way to begin your day. But also, don't panic if these options just aren't viable for you - these are simply best case scenarios, and as a professional, I'm used to working under all circumstances.

Always get ready in a well lit room flooded with natural light. Switch off those ugly artificial lights, open up the curtains, and make sure any hair and makeup is done beside a window with plenty of space for your photo & video team to move around you.

Be sure to enjoy your morning! Whack on some music, pop open a bottle of bubbly, do things that make you smile, and surround yourself with people that are positive and excited for you. Try and leave any gift sharing until after I've arrived too, if you can. It makes for a great photo opportunity.

Now let's talk about those timings. I personally believe you should always aim to be ready early. I'd say an hour before you need to leave, you should be ready to go. This will avoid any last minute stresses.



The Ceremony

Consider going unplugged for your ceremony. Nothing ruins an aisle photo more than Auntie Jan and her iPad creeping into shot. I've actually had that happen to me! And there's nothing you can do in that moment. But you can prevent it by leaving a sign at the end of the aisle to remind your guests that you want them to be present during your vows, and to turn off their phones, or by having your celebrant or registrar instruct this for you.

Most venues / registrars will operate under their own restrictions for photographers. These restrictions are nonsense - but nonetheless, they still enforce them. Be aware that I may be limited to where I can stand and when I can take photos, which can affect the end result of your ceremony pictures. Talk to your officiant in advance and find out what restrictions they'll enforce, to avoid being surprised on the day by them.

Light is essential to good images. Consider this when you're choosing where to host your ceremony. If you've got the choice of having it against a wall or in front of a window, choose the window every time.

Ceremonies can feel very serious. Remember to enjoy it. It goes by so darn quickly, and doesn't have to be as stiff as some officiants make you feel. Smile at each other, hold hands, be expressive and emotional.

An extra tip: if you're having a Church ceremony, to avoid your photo and video team getting stuck in a rut with parking, be sure to allocate clear & concise parking spots for us. There's so few and far between parking spots at both country Churches and inner city churches, so please consider this.



Formal Photos

The opportune moment to do your formal family photos for me, has to be just after the confetti has been thrown, and there's a bunch of reasons why:

- Everyone is gathered outside - so mission #1 is already achieved.
- It's hard to pull you away from people when you start saying hello to them.
- We're way less likely to lose family members to the bar / toilet.
- Gets people looking at their best, early on in the day.

Once these photos are over and done with, you have total freedom to proceed with your drinks reception, neck back as many cocktails as you want, and really relax in to saying hi to your guests, without being interrupted by me at any point to catch up on those photos.

You'll be surprised how often someone important disappears completely once the drinks start flowing, whether that's to feed their baby or grab something from the car.

Obviously, the fewer requests you have, the less time it takes, so keep it minimal. I'd say as a general rule of thumb, expect a well behaved crowd to take 2 minutes per photo, meaning 10 requests can take at least 20 minutes. The list should only consist of combos you'd be gutted to come away from your day without. Anything else should be in the moment and spontaneous, more consistent with my style of shooting. As you're chatting to people, simply just grab me and ask for a group photo to be taken. After all, candid stuff is where the emotions are at and the emotions make way better images.



Meal & Speeches

Something worth bearing in mind for the decor: the taller your centrepieces are for your tables, the harder it may be to capture certain guests at their seats. That also applies for you both on your top table. Try not to put anything too tall or distracting in front of you, if you want to get accessible reaction shots of you and your guests.

It's tempting to get your speeches 'over and done with' before you eat, however it's worth bearing in mind that most caterers prefer that you keep all of your speeches until the end of serving time. They almost always tend to overrun and in turn, mess with their carefully curated timings. And if their timings overrun, we might end up missing that golden light.

Depending on the time of year you're getting married, you may find that the best light of the day falls during the meal anyway. As the top table always get served first, there may be time after you finish eating to run out and grab 5 or 10 minutes of good light, and your guests won't even notice you've gone because they're only just tucking into their food.

Don't worry about sitting your photo and video team with your guests for the meal. It's honestly a lovely thought, but sometimes it's just as nice to sit and stare at a wall for ten minutes whilst we devour the food you've very kindly provided us with. We'll be up and back at it throughout the meal too, so it just leaves for an empty chair most of the time.

And remember, don't start speeches if we're not in the room! I cannot stress this enough.



Couples Photos

The ideal time to do your couples photos is just before sunset. We're assuming you'll be blessed with that sunshine, but in the event you're not, be reassured that us photographers enjoy the challenge of utilising indoor spaces for your couples photos. Some truly beautiful shots can be made when stood by a window or on a staircase indoors. Believe me!

How long we take for your photos comes down to you, but personally speaking, I've gotten pretty good at nailing these images in just 10 minutes. That's all most of my couples want to take, but if you'd like to really take advantage of it and maybe even travel out of your venue to a nearby beach, then you'd be better off allowing a solid 30 minute window.

Now, everyone always asks me if I have any secret tips on how to 'look good' in their images, but there's no secret - in fact, the answer is annoyingly simple.

It's about happiness. Be uninhibitedly happy! Forget about chins, teeth, or side profiles. None of that matters. When you're free and in the moment, this joy radiates off of you and frankly makes a photo what it is.

I have my own ways of getting you moving and chatting that will hopefully lead you to forgetting that I'm pointing a camera your way. But this is a collaboration, and I can only do so much. Superficial things like blemishes or slightly yellow teeth are easily fixable in the editing process. But I can't make you smile if you weren't. I can't make you hold hands or look at each other, if you don't. If you choose to be present, be uninhibited, and sincerely joyful in your photos - well, that's the only secret I have for you.



The Evening

If you're lucky enough to be blessed with good weather, consider holding your first dance outside after sunset, under a ceiling of festoon or fairy lights. I'd highly recommend this for those warm summer nights! People love to gather outside, so bring the dancing to them.

Want to know the secret to a packed dance floor? Good music goes without saying, but the lesser known key is being present on the dance floor yourselves. Couples lead the way on their wedding day, and people are drawn to where you are. So if you're having a good time and dancing the night away, they'll soon follow your path and join in just the same.

You might think lighting is only relevant for the day time. However, a great set of DJ lights can bring the party atmosphere from 'alright' to 'outta-this-world' in my opinion. When a DJ or band has decked out their set up with lasers or colourful lights, it makes your photos so much more dramatic and atmospheric. Chuck a subtle smoke machine into the mix and you're ravin' it up.

If you plan on having a sparkler photo or fireworks display, time this to be during your band's break. Most bands play 2 or 3 sets in an evening with time between each to allow shots like these to happen, so no one has to be reluctantly dragged off the dance floor and everything flows better that way.

If you're having an outfit change later on, let me know so we can schedule 5 minutes of direct flash portraits like this one to the right, just so you have photos of you wearing it other than on the dance floor.



A few other notes...

Remember to spend time with the people you want to be photographed spending time with. It's so easy to fill your time working through every one in the room, but natural candid moments of you laughing with your Mum, holding your Nan's hand, or hugging your best friends can only be taken if these moments actually happen. Seek them out to spend time with.

Give your guests something to enjoy during the cocktail hour such as garden games like giant chess or jenga. They make for great photo opportunities, capturing expressive & authentic candid moments of people having fun, rather than solely standing around and chatting.

If you don't have a co-ordinator on the day, you should allocate the job of being MC to someone. This means 'master of ceremonies' and they're given light responsibilities such as directing your guests on where to go. Make sure you give the job to someone who doesn't mind being centre of attention.

Put your personality in to your day. Ditch those traditions that don't excite you, wear that bold red lip, or change into that sequin jumpsuit to party in. If you worry too much about what's supposed to be wedding-y, you'll end up having a day that ticks boxes, rather than feeds your soul and spirit and feels authentically you.

Don't rush anything. The day goes quickly enough, so take your time walking down the aisle. Take your time with your first dance. Take time to look at your reception dressed up before your guests enter it. Take time.



Frequently Asked

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01

Should we hire a videographer?

Videographers are capable of capturing things that photographers can't. If capturing memories is your biggest priority, then hiring a professional videographer just makes sense. However, make sure it is a professional. An inexperienced videographer can ruin the atmosphere. You want them to be stealth like and unobtrusive. I've had the lucky privilege of working with a bunch of different local videographers who really compliment my style, and I've included all of them on my recommended suppliers list.

02

Do we need an on-the-day co-ordinator?

Most venues provide an on the day co-ordinator, but for those of you DIY-ing it, your day will run so much smoother if someone is there to co-ordinate it. They'll take care of everything on the day so that you don't have to worry about a thing, both behind the scenes and centre stage. Again, I have some recommendations on my website's supplier list. However, if budget doesn't stretch to it, you can allocate the job of MC (master of ceremonies) to a guest with a loud voice and big personality instead. They won't be able to run your day like a co-ordinator would, but they'll take care of simple jobs and rally the troops when needs be.

03

Do we need to cater for our team?

It's such a kind perk of the job that couples almost always provide us all-day suppliers with meals, but you never have to if your budget doesn't stretch to it. Let your team know if you won't be so we remember to bring a packed lunch on the day, but if you very generously are feeding us, make sure your catering team are well aware of this too. We so often get forgotten or ignored by caterers specifically.

What to do if it rains...

There's no denying that challenging weather can impact your wedding plans. What goes on up there can even set the tone for what happens down here. So you're not crazy for letting it worry you. But, do know that worrying leads to nothing good. This is so out of your control, you're better off putting your energy into preparing for it than worrying about it.

First things first, decide on your plan Bs. Have a backup to the outdoor ceremony easily accessible, or if your weather app is indecisive, ask guests to bring their own umbrellas ready to potentially sit under should the heavens open mid ceremony.

I think it's also wise to decide, on the very rare occasion that it should rain non-stop, which things you're willing to sacrifice or turn on their heads. For example, if your priority is keeping your dress clean, make the decision on whether you want to brave the weather for things like couples photos and confetti shots. If you don't want to, believe me when I tell you that is okay.

But also believe me when I tell you that a dress can always just be dry cleaned.

See what can be transferred indoors, whether your venue will allow for an indoor confetti photo and consider where there's enough space for big group photos indoors.

Be ready to cosy up and turn your aperol spritz wedding into an intimate, candle lit affair. However it turns out, the enjoyment part is in your hands.



How to explain documentary photography to your parents...

Would you believe I've had enough experience now to understand that this requires some explaining to some more traditional parents - and if those parents are yours, let me tell you where to begin with it.

Start by sharing the work with them. Let them see the beauty of it themselves. And as you flick through your favourites with them, tell them that all of these moments are genuine, that they're being documented naturally, as they're happening. Not because I forced it.

Let them know that formal photos will still be taking place, but it will be based on a list you're providing me with. And, if you think they won't try and control it, share that list with them and give them the opportunity to say if they want to add 1 or 2 of their own. They sometimes think of things you hadn't considered.

Lastly, make sure they know that I'm not an ego maniac that can't be approached. They're so welcome to ask me for photos on the day, preferably after the official list has been taken care of. The one thing I can't do is read their minds, and I hate finding out after the wedding is long over that they're "gutted" they didn't get "a photo with x person" despite it not being on my list, and never having been approached or asked for it. They have to understand that I'm not a photographer that stages moments for my benefit.





The Final Word

Unsolicited advice comes from all corners of your life when you're planning a wedding. The good thing about trusting in the team of suppliers you have around you, is that our advice doesn't come from a place of inexperience. It's literally the opposite. We always mean well, and we're always on your side. Achieving the best results we can is everyone's main aim.

If you ever feel overwhelmed by the options out there, lean on your team of professionals. We'll carry the burden of choice for you, and help you wherever possible, however possible.

But what's also important to keep in mind, is that this day can only be as enjoyable as you allow it to be. Some things will always be out of our control, but it's how you soldier on and power through despite those restrictions that will determine the outcome.

Be present.
Be relaxed.
Be yourselves.

And consider this, if it has to be the best day of your lives, then the rest of it can only be downhill from there. Maybe instead, aim to simply have a great day, and if it ends up being one of the best days of your lives, you know it's because you didn't force it. Release the pressure & have a good laff.

