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Vendor Checklist & Questions to Ask
Photography

Your photographer is definitely a key vendor. Once the big day has come and gone, it's the work of your photographer that you'll have forever. Photography can be very expensive, but this is one area that we firmly believe is worth the money. You will spend a ton of time with your photographer on the day of your wedding so it is critical that you feel very comfortable with his/her working style and demeanor. The more comfortable you feel, the more natural your photos will be. Also, if you can afford it, it's a great idea to have your photographer do your engagements too. You'll get a preview of how your photographer works and you'll be able to gauge your comfort level. In addition, many will give you a nice discount for booking both the engagement session and wedding.

Below is a checklist of things do to before you start contacting photographers, questions to ask them and things to look for when you get the contract.

Before the Meeting

Ask Everyone
When looking for a good photographer, ask everyone you know for recommendations. If you have a friend who has a recommendation, ask to see her full physical album or online gallery to get an idea of if the majority of the photos are good. If you've already booked your venue or florist, ask them for recommendations as well. They'll know who is great in your area.

Review Websites
As you gather a list of photographers, start visiting their websites. Your goal is to see which photos and overall style speaks to you. When you see a collection of photos you like, you'll *feel* it. Take note of what you like about the photos/style.

Know Your Style
Whether you are looking at your friend's album or a website, figure out if their style matches yours. Are the pictures cheesy? Are they overly posed? Or, are they all candids with no formal shots? It is helpful to understand the various styles of photography so you can make the right choice for your wedding. There are 3 major styles of wedding photography and some will be combination of the styles. They are Traditional, Journalistic and Artistic. For more info on these three styles, check out the Downloads in the Members Only Area for Photography Styles.

Questions to Ask Prospective Photographers

Business & Experience

- Do you have my date available?
- How long have you been in business?
- How many weddings have you done? How many weddings have you shot that are similar in style and size?
- Do you have liability insurance?

Style & Work

- How would you describe your photography style?
- Do you have a recent portfolio of a wedding that you've done? Are all the images yours or are some done by a second shooter?
- What makes you and your work unique?
- What type of equipment do you use?
- Do you shoot in digital or film format?
- Do you shoot in color, black & white or sepia?

Service

- How would you describe your working style? *It's helpful to know in advance if you prefer a photographer that will stay in the background and blend in or one who directs you and your guests).*
- Do you like to work with a shot list? *The answer should be yes!*
- Have you ever worked at my venue before? *If they haven't worked there, ask if they will visit it prior to your wedding. Most will want to scout out the best areas to shoot and check out the light, policies of the location, etc.*
- Have you worked with my videographer before? *Ask the same question about any other vendors such as florist, DJ, caterer, coordinator, etc. It is VERY important that the photographer and videographer work well together on the day of your wedding as they will be shooting the same events all day. Ask your photographer for a recommendation.*
- What information do you need from me before the wedding?
- May I have a list of references? *They should be excited to provide this to you!*
- Do you photograph more than one wedding in a day? Do you have any other jobs on the day of my wedding?

At the Event

- Are you the photographer who will shoot my wedding? *If the answer is no, you should ask to meet with the photographer who will be at your wedding and ask them these questions.*
- Do you provide a second shooter or an assistant?
- Do you have backup equipment in the event something goes wrong with your camera?
- If you are unable to attend my wedding, what is the backup plan?
- Is it okay if my guests take photos while you are taking photos?
- How will you and your team be dressed at my wedding?

Contract & Payment

- Can I see a copy of your contract?
- Do you charge a travel fee?
- What time will you arrive at the site and for how long will you shoot?
- If my event goes longer than expected, will you stay at the wedding and how do overtime fees work?
- What deposit is required to hold my date? When is it due? Do you offer any types of payment plans?
- What is your cancellation policy?

Packages

- What packages do you offer? Can I customize a package?
- How many hours of coverage will you provide on the day of the wedding?
- How many photos are included? Will I get a CD or do you have an online gallery?
- How long after my wedding will it take to see my proofs?
- Is an engagement photo session included?
- Do you provide albums? What types do you have? How much do they run?
- Do you provide photo retouching, color adjustment or other corrective services?
- What is the ordering process? Can my family order photos directly?
- Will you give me the negatives or the high resolution digital images? Is there a fee?

Reviewing the Contract

Once you've narrowed your photographers down to one or two vendors, request a contract. Here are a few things to consider when you receive them:

- How responsive was the photographer? Did the proposal arrive when he/she said it would or did you have to call/email several times? If you did have to bug them, this is not a good sign. They could just be very busy or they could be unorganized, something you don't want for your wedding.
- Read the contract carefully and make note of any possible additional costs such as travel fees, hotel accommodations requirements, vendor meal requirements, etc.
- Call all the references provided. Talk to other brides and find out what their experience was. Talk to your other vendors to get their feedback.

Booked!

- Enter in all the vendor information in the Vendor Contact Book
- Note the vendor on your Budget Spreadsheet - vendor name, total, deposit paid and date remaining payments are due (in notes section of budget).
- Put together a shot list of photos you want to make sure your photographer captures