

French Romance

PHOTOGRAPHY



THE COMPLETE PLANNING GUIDE FOR OUR CLIENTS

Welcome



First, as your personal wedding photographer, I want to thank you for choosing our company to capture the essence of the most important day of your life! It truly is an honor! My goal is to guide you through the process of planning your wedding days to ultimately give you the best experience possible. This guide will help you through your photography process as well as planning with your other vendors.

We know that coordinating every detail of your entire wedding can be a daunting task. But, don't worry, we are here to help. We want to ensure that you have the best experience possible; therefore, we have created this guide on how to have the most perfect wedding ever—while also getting to remain relaxed and excited on your big day! Following these steps will give you the best experience, and ultimately the best result for your photos!

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10 Guidelines for a Well-Planned Wedding

so, you're engaged and you are starting the process of planning your wedding, fantastic! But now what? Let's make sure you have everything else taken care of. The first thing we recommend is that you hire an experienced wedding planner who can walk you through the basic fundamentals of planning a wedding. Now, if you are still thinking about doing most of the leg work, just follow these 10 guidelines.

1 – Ceremony time

This is an important decision because it will not only determine the schedule for the day but also the lighting for your photos. We usually like to recommend shooting your photos approximately two hours before sunset. This gives us the best lighting and allows you to have a wonderful sunset photo for print or in your album. You should consider traffic and driving time, also remember that sunset hours change throughout the year. Our preferred way to figure out the time of sunset is to do a Google search. Find an online almanac and it will tell you the time of sunset on your wedding day, and then you can create your schedule accordingly.

2 – Where to take your wedding photos

Hopefully, the venue you've chosen has some beautiful locations to offer for your wedding photos. If those locations are not so great or nonexistent, then you probably need to find a better location that we can drive to after the ceremony. Remember, a great location will give you great pictures. The location should be local to your venue and offer a beautiful background with natural lighting. Some ideas include a park, the beach, an interesting building, or a lake. Now keep in mind that this location near to be near buy to be able to drive there quickly because more time you get for your pictures, more pictures you will get.

Last, some locations require a permit, so research the location and make sure you secure the permit before your wedding day to avoid any issue that could ruins your day.

If you're not sure, just ask, we might know the perfect location.

#3 – Talk with your DJ about the reception schedule

A good wedding DJ will understand how to coordinate all of the vendors together without missing a song or a moment. He/she will also be sure that the other vendors know what is about to happen before it begins. We have seen many weddings with DJ that were not up to professional standards. These receptions get boring or / and moments are totally forgotten to the biggest regrets to our clients. So, please, do not cut corner on a DJ. A good DJ will provide you with a detailed reception timeline that you will be able to share with all of your vendors such as your photographer. Please contact them, they will be happy to help you.

#4 – Your florist should deliver your bouquet first

We know that it sounds obvious, but we had unfortunate experience with brides that never got their bouquets delivered on time for getting ready pictures. That's right! You need your bouquet when you are getting ready. But this is not everything. Bridesmaid's bouquets as well as boutonnieres and corsages need to be delivered on time to all the different locations where everybody is getting ready. This is particularly important if you are getting ready in a different location from the main venue.

It is also common that we take pictures of the Bride and her Bridesmaids as well as the groom and groomsmen BEFORE the ceremony. These pictures cannot be taken without the flower.

So, talk about this with your florist and give him/her a complete timeline and locations of your wedding day. If he/she can't deliver in those circumstances, well, get a better florist. It's worth to spend the extra money for a better-quality product and services.



#5 Don't try to DIY everything

Planning your wedding is equal parts art and skill. It requires a lot of time and great attention to detail. It can be extremely easy to make a mistake or simply overlook something. This is why we always recommend hiring professionals. If you still want to be more involved, you'll need to delegate tasks. Don't try to be the florist, the caterer, the make-up artist and set up the venue by yourself. Also, try not to use your immediate family members on the day of the wedding because they will need to be dressed and ready for pictures. A few friends that you can trust who are not in the bridal party will usually be a good choice. If you still want to be more involved, pick one or two tasks like the invitations or the center pieces, and focus your time and resources on those.

But, keep in mind that it's never too late to hire a wedding planner.

#6 - Your wedding dress needs some prep to be ready for picture!

When you get your dress, and you might think you are all done! Well, not quite yet! Always try the dress on with all the accessories a couple of time about 1 to 2 months before the wedding. You would be surprised to see how many brides don't do that and realize they do not remember how to lace the back of the dress or how to get into it. So, it is always good to rehearse this part once or twice with your bridesmaids. This way, everybody knows what to do on the wedding day. You might get scared to get it dirty because at the end, let put it out there IT WILL GET DIRTY. Try it on above the clean rug and do it without wearing any make up.

Now, did you think about the bustle of the dress? Here is the thing, if your dress has a train, the chance is that you won't be able to dance or move around if you don't have the dress bustle. And no, wedding dresses do not usually come with it. It is something you have to add-on and talk about with bridal shop when you receive your dress the first time. So, make sure you have it done.

When the dress is home with you, make sure you take off all the plastic, paper filler, tags and other things that you won't need the day of the wedding. Just keep the dress in the bag. And don't forget to try it on a couple of time at home. Just keep the dress in the bag. And don't forget to try it on a couple of time at home.

Last thing, buy a nice hanger to display your beautiful dress on your wedding day. Your photographer - wait, that's me! - is going to love it.



#7 – Bridesmaids and groomsmen.

Having a nice bridal party to support you as you're planning your wedding is an incredible asset but be wary of taking advantage of their friendship or going beyond the boundaries of bridesmaid duties. The best rule of thumb? Don't ask your bridesmaids to do anything you aren't willing to pitch in and help out with yourself. They should not have to do anything during the wedding day beside showing up on time, getting ready for you and take pictures. The role of the bridesmaids is just to help the bride by her side (holding the dress, veil or bouquet) and the groomsmen role is pretty similar. Your bridal party should not be evolved with decorating, welcoming your guests and running errands the day off.

Another overlooked aspect is the size of your bridal part. There is no rule about how small or big it should be, and it doesn't have to be the same number of bridesmaids and groomsmen. But keep this in mind : beside a financial aspect, bigger is your bridal party, more time it is going to take to get ready and to take picture. At French Romance photography, we require 2 photographers if the bridal party is bigger than 10 people (bride & groom not included).

#8 – Your wedding start with a solid hair and makeup Team!

We just talked about bridesmaids and this bring another part of the planning that can cause a lot of drama if not well thought out. Having a nice professional team for hair and makeup is important because they are the one starting the day. The point they should keep you on schedule no matter what. If you have a makeup or hairdresser that show up late or take way more time to get you ready picture, this can delay the show . Meaning, the first thing that get cut off from the timeline is the photography time. So, since you are spending a large among of money on photography, let make sure this doesn't happen. First, hire real professionals and make sure you have a solid among of time and enough people to take care of your girls and yourself. Here how you figure it out.

For example, if you have 4 bridesmaids and yourself, you will need 2h per girls. $5 \times 2 = 10h$. if you team bring 2 people, this will take 5h to get ready, if they bring 4 people, it will take 2h30 to get ready. Basically, you divide the total among of time needed by the number or makeup/hairdresser showing up. Our experience is that more money you spend on a very well renown makeup artist hair stylist better and easiest you day will be.



#9 – Alcohol control.

We are not here to tell you that you should not drink but we have seen our fair of drinking going wrong during a wedding. The key word is MODERATION, and not just the bride & groom but also the bridal party, Family & friends. Keep in mind we are going to take picture all day and if someone starts to look or feel under the influence, it will show on pictures.



10 - Communication

Keep up with your vendors throughout this process! Answer any questions promptly even if it's just to let them know you've received the message. Be organized and check your emails and/or reply to text messages daily. Always inform all of your concerned vendors of any changes you've made. So, please, read your emails, read your texts, especially if you have important vendors who are trying to get an answer from you to make your day easy.

It is also very important to communicate to your bridal party and your family (such as parents and immediate family) about anything related to their presence during the timeline such as all of the moments they will be taking pictures with you. They must know when, where and what they need to do for a very smooth day.



Engagement Session

WHEN

We suggest that you book your engagement session not less than 4 months prior to your wedding date. This allows us time to do any necessary editing of your photos and not be rushed through the design of your custom guest book (if you have ordered one) Also, we recommend that you schedule this session on a weekday as our weekends are usually reserved for our client's weddings.

We prefer to schedule these sessions approximately 1 to 2 hours before sunset in order to capture the most beautiful natural light and each of our session is 1 to 2 hours long depending of the locations and if you have more than 1 wardrobe.

LOCATION

How do you choose the perfect location? Often that can be difficult. Our suggestion is to pick a place that has a sentimental meaning to you. That usually helps make everyone more relaxed. Some ideas might include the location you became engaged, or perhaps where you had your first date or first kiss.

Now, keep in mind that it also needs to have a nice background, provide good lighting and preferably not have a lot of people around. If you still aren't sure or have no preference then we can usually suggest some great locations from beautiful parks, beaches, historical buildings to campus to museums.

Now, some locations require a permit, and the fees can be a lit bit expensive. We provide a complete list to all our clients with everything they need to secure a permit of they choose a location that needs one.





WHAT TO WEAR

Once you've found the perfect location, then you should think about your wardrobe. It's important for you to look good, because when you look good you feel good, and it will show up in your photos. We like to suggest that your clothes have the same color palette that you're using in your wedding. Perhaps even have your hair and makeup professionally done. From casual to semi-formal, everything is fine as long as you avoid flip flops, active wear and "the tank top look".

It's always great to add a splash of color! You can't go wrong with high heels and a cute dress for the ladies. As for the gentlemen, a nice button-up shirt is always a good choice. Keep in mind that outdoor locations such as a beach or natural setting will allow you to dress a bit more casual.

BRING OUT YOUR PERSONALITY

We like to bring out your personality in the photos. Many couples decide to show their cute or playful or romantic side by bringing props to the shoot. Some have brought a picnic basket and a bottle of their favorite wine. Others brought signs or vintage luggage, even a classic car. Kids and pets are always welcome on our shoots. The point is that there are no rules so have some fun with it. For more inspiration feel free to look at our previous client galleries on our Facebook page and on our website.

If you have kids already, bring them too. They are a part of your story and same goes with your pets. So bring them too if you choose a location that allows it. Just make sure to have someone that can watch the kids and/or the pets while we are shooting the session during the 2 of you only section of the photoshoot.





Before the Wedding day

Let's talk about the tuxedo or suit.

About 1 month before the wedding, our groom and his groomsmen should think about renting their tux somewhere (or buy it if it is the plan) The idea is that you DO NOT PICK UP the suit THE DAY OF, but 2 days before from the rental place. if you buy it, make sure you have it size on time for the wedding.

Now, when you go pick it up, it is really important that the groom and his team, ALL try their suit on. You have no idea how many time rental companies will give you the wrong size of pants or jacket by mistake. In fact, it is pretty common.

Make sure the vest, cufflinks, pocket square, and vest are also included, those items also get forgotten once in the while. Ask me how I know that. Having shot over 350 weddings, we have seen our share of things going wrong and this is one of them.

Now, where is the groom getting ready? Hopefully, most venues have a room for our groom and his team. so, you should not worry about it too much. Now, if you are not planning to be dressed at the venue, make sure you also have a room at the same hotel as the bride. if you are planning on using a place nearby such as your house or friend house/apartment, make sure the room you are using is CLEAN and LOOK GOOD with good lighting. No exception. if it is messy, well your pictures are going be really bad.

Last thing, if you know that some of your groomsmen tend to be always late, well, you might have to lie to them about what time they need to show up to the room to get ready and take pictures. And don't forget to have a meeting with them a few days before the wedding where you can go over the timeline and give them a copy of the itinerary. This way, no excuses for them to forget anything or be late.



Wedding Shoes

Do you want to wear fashionable shoes on YOUR wedding day!? Have a good think on it before you swipe your card at the register.

Lots of brides and grooms are in pain all day, and many even end up barefoot on the dance floor (or even way before!!)

So here what you can do.

A nice pair of shoes for the accessories pictures are always good You might want to wear them during the ceremony, but the chances are that they will start to heart a lot.

So, we always recommend our brides to buy a pair of flats or comfy shoes. you are wearing a long dress, right? So, chances are that we won't see your feet.

The idea is that your flats and your nicer shoes can be change quickly if we need you to for pictures purposes while you can walk around and enjoy your day.

Same advice goes for the bridesmaids by the way.

How to get a good night rest before the wedding

The number one mistake that all brides seem to make is barely sleeping the night before their wedding and It will be nearly impossible if you don't plan for it.

This super important beauty sleep escapes most brides not only the night before the big day but also the entire week. With so much to do and so little time, it's not surprising that the magical mix of stress and excitement is a perfect caffeine cocktail. If you want to wake up on the right side of the bed the morning of your wedding day, here are a few tips on how to fall asleep when you're having trouble.

#1 - DO NOT PLAN ON DOING ANYTHING THE DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING!

Wait, what? yes, you heard me. You should be packed and ready 2 days before the wedding. dress and accessories packed & timeline done. No party, no errand, no driving around like a busy bee. you should be done with everything.

Now, if you are planning on spending the night to the hotel before the wedding day, yes, you can do that. Drive early & avoid traffic. Then just enjoy a relaxing evening in your room.

Now, if you are not planning to go to the venue until the day of the wedding, schedule for a massage or spa day. Whatever can relax you.

#2 - DO NOT PLAN A PARTY

I have seen this mistake with men more than women, they want to have fun and start drinking at the bar. The hangover can be quite heavy, and it will show on pictures. On top of that, this could cause you to be late and forget important items.

Bachelor & Bachelorette party should be planned at least one week before the wedding. If you are planning on having a glass of wine, do it at dinner with food in the early evening.

#3 Make a to-do list for the day of the wedding - You're doing this already in your mind, so why not put it on paper? Writing it down takes the responsibility off of your brain and puts it on paper, giving your poor head a break and the opportunity to relax. By having this list this you, it will ease your mind about forgetting something.

#4 - The night before the wedding - Do Not Disturb

Speaking of your phone, either turn it off or silence notifications. I like the Do Not Disturb feature on mine. In addition, try to limit night phone activity to before you get in bed. I know we all look at our phones in bed, but this week, break up the cycle to get to sleep faster.

#5 - Breathe

One of the easiest things you can do when you're lying down is breathing. I use this trick for myself and for my two-year-old as well if she's having a hard time calming down before bed. Simply take three, deep breathes in a row, holding them at the top, and slowly exhaling. This will send messages to your brain that it's time for a snooze.

#6. Do not take sleeping pills

First, try to get up early the day before the wedding, like that will get tired enough to go to bed earlier. But don't take sleeping pills. They will make you fuzzy on your wedding day. I get that you're likely doing all of these things and are hoping for some chemical aid. Skip the wine, because while wine makes you sleepy, it doesn't lead to a solid night's rest. Instead, try an all herbal, non-addictive solution.



WEDDING TIMELINE

Approximately two weeks before your wedding, you should have finalized both the wedding and reception timeline and schedule. If you have a good wedding planner, he or she should take care of that for you.

However, if you're planning the big day yourself, please make sure that both the DJ and the photographer have received a copy of the schedule and allow them to make suggestions or changes if necessary. If you're still not sure about how to schedule your day, ask your photographer (that's us!) for help with the first half of the day and your DJ for help with the reception. Because we love to take care of our clients, each of them receives different wedding timeline template that are totally editable. But not only we provide some samples, we also review and correct their timeline if we think something important got forgotten or/and is on the wrong order.



GETTING READY LOCATIONS

It's very important that you know where you're getting ready, especially if it's not at the same venue as the ceremony. We like to recommend that you book a room at a hotel near your venue. This will allow us to take nice pictures of you as you're getting ready. Be aware that some venues have very small bridal dressing rooms. Please, check out the bridal dressing room prior to your wedding day to ensure that it is both large enough for you (and your bridesmaids etc.) and that it is attractive enough to be used as the backdrop in your photos.

Wedding Photography Location

Hopefully the ceremony location offers a great background for pictures. If not, then you should consider making a quick trip to another location for pictures. Someplace between the ceremony site and the reception works best. Places like a beach, a park or a garden are nice. We have also used lakes or interesting buildings. Pick someplace that makes your photography stand out or offers a different look. Even if your venue offers a great location, some of our clients simply wish to have a different look or a variety styles for their wedding photography. Just be sure to allow enough time. Usually, two hours is sufficient.

Vendor List

Ask your wedding planner to give the complete list of all your vendors from invitation, to DJ, rings designer, dress designer, caterers, venue, party rental etc. This will allow us to communicate with each other before and after the wedding. Often vendors will use photos of a wedding in their advertisements or publication. However, without the complete list of vendors a magazine, for example, will refuse to publish the photo. For this reason we ask our clients to make a complete list of all the vendors involved in their wedding. The list should include all business names, websites, social media accounts (Facebook & Instagram) contact numbers and e-mail addresses.

Wedding Emergency Kit

This simple step can often times save the day. Yet too many brides forget to prepare one of these and they come to regret it. In our experience, the emergency kit will be needed at a wedding more times than not. It's an inexpensive form of insurance that no one ever regrets having it on hand.

Things to have in the kit include; corsage pins, safety pins (both large and small) super glue, hot glue gun and glue sticks, tweezers, floral tape, extra yards of ribbons, a lighter, needles and thread (be sure to have the color of the wedding dress, bridesmaid dresses and tuxedo), nail clippers, tissues, mirror, strong hair spray, bobby pins, deodorant, antacid, Advil, scissors, water, zip ties, a pair of flat shoes, Band-Aids, tampons, condoms (just checking to see if you're actually reading this) curling iron, eyelash glue, Q-tips, eye drops, a blank personal check and credit/debit cards. This kit should to be with you all day.



BRIDAL ACCESSORIES

Let's talk about how to organize your bridal accessories for your wedding day.

In our experience, brides tend to put all of her accessories in different bags without really trying them on or taking them out of their packaging. So, when we show up, our dear client is looking right and left for her accessories and when we find them, they are not even ready for pictures. Meaning, they are still in their packaging and we are trying to locate scissors (if we are lucky) to cut their tags off. In the end, what ends up happening is that we have to cut time off the timeline and wasting precious time to take beautiful pictures.

So, here what we suggest to all of our clients.

#1 - Find a nice box (that can accommodate a pair of shoes and a few other things)

#2 - Put all our accessories together. Now, take them off their packaging and make sure that price tags or stickers are removed. yes, we know, but trust us on that one.

#3 - Grab a couple of small ziplock bags and put your small jewelry in it. but before that, make sure you tried them on and you know which ones you are going to wear.

#4 - Put all the items in the nice bigger box. here a list to remind you what to bring but you know you might not use those items.

Garter, jewelry, high heels shoes & flats, wedding invitation, all of the rings (those can stay in their original boxes) hairpieces, a nice, personalized hanger for the dress (please, let's not use the ugly plastic one) family heirloom/charms, bible, lasso, rosary, coins, etc.

You might not need all of those, but this list is just here to help you not to forget anything.

When your photographer shows up on your wedding day, just give him/her the box. They will know what to do with it.

Now, for our groom, let's do the same thing. In a box put the following items : Cufflinks, tie, watch, shoes, and socks.





Consider Doing a First Look

Here something that I think you should really think about if you didn't decide to do a first look yet. One of the biggest regrets with brides & grooms, besides not hiring a good professional photographer, is not to spend the right amount of time for pictures but also with the guests. This implies skipping the cocktail hours because you had to take pictures.

So, what exactly is a first look?

A First Look is when the bride and groom choose to see each other for the first time before the wedding. This is usually done about an hour and a half to two hours (or less in some cases) before the ceremony. It's typically a very private moment, shared with just the bride and groom) The groom is asked to stand in a set location, while the bride walks up behind him and taps him on the shoulder. Then when he turns around he gets to set his eyes on his beautiful bride for the first time.

Why do couples choose to do a first look?

For several reasons! But the main one, quite simply, is time. When you do a first look, it allows you to take all of the pictures of your bridal party (and sometimes your family) before the ceremony even occurs. Traditionally, most of those pictures happen after the ceremony and the bridal party, most of the family, and the couple could end up missing most (or all) of the cocktail hour.

Speaking of the cocktail hour, when you do a first look, you're more likely to be able to actually make it to the cocktail hour, where you can spend some extra time visiting with your guests. Your wedding day goes by so fast and this gives you just a little extra time to enjoy it.

And let's not forget the nerves! If you think you are going to cry when you see your spouse to be for the

first time, then a first look may be for you. It's a good time to let yourself get all emotional and cry it out, or laugh it out, or giggle yourself silly! Remember, it's just the two of you, so enjoy it. And you don't have to worry about ruining your make up because you have plenty of time to redo it before the ceremony starts.

My favorite part about the first look is the pictures. Besides the bride being able to relax and focus on her groom, it allows the groom the opportunity to see his bride without 150 sets of eyes staring at him as she walks down the aisle. He doesn't have to be calm, cool, and collected – her gets to be himself. I have seen grooms absolutely lose it and cry like babies during the first look and I have seen them giggle uncontrollably, like little school girls. It's so funny to watch their varied reactions – and it makes the best pictures! The first look pictures are almost always the ones I see pop up on FB after the wedding pictures are back.

Another reason why doing a first look could be a great idea, is when you are getting married in the winter. The reason why is because daylight is gone way too early and you know daylight for pictures. So, by doing a first look before the ceremony, while you still have daylight, you are making sure that you get these precious pictures and you are helping your photographer a lot. I mean, think about it. Do you only want nighttime pictures on all of your pictures?

No matter what you decide, a good photographer is going to help you absolutely memorable.



Consider Having an “UNPLUGGED WEDDING”

Today, everybody has a cell phone with a good camera. Some even have giant iPads they use as a camera. In this day of social media, it can be tempting to take pictures for all those social media apps. While some couples encourage their friends and family to snap as many photos as possible throughout the day, others are asking their guests to shut off their cameras and cell phones for the day and just be present in the moment. There are strong arguments on both sides — there’s something special about seeing your wedding day unfold from your guests’ perspective. However, many photographers have noted that “guest photographers” often compromise the quality of the professional photography changing the lighting when they use their own flash and even blocking the photographer by stepping in front of him/her. As professional photographers, we have seen our share of pictures being compromised by well-meaning guests, leaving the bride and groom with less than desirable photography. We have even seen some that were completely ruined.

There are several easy ways to avoid these issues from occurring. Before the ceremony, have your officiant formally and politely ask your guests to turn off their cell phones and to be careful not to interfere with the professional photographer.

For the reception, ask your DJ should help by reminding your guests to stay at their table during main events like, the grand entrance, first dances and parents’ dance. Your guests will have plenty of opportunities to take their own pictures with you using their own cameras.

The other important point is to ask yourself if you want your guests to post pictures of your wedding day on their social media network before you or your photographer can post. This is a subject that you should discuss and finalize with your concerned vendors.



If you like this guide and are happy with our expertise. please,
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