



# The 10 Biggest Mistakes Brides Make When Hiring A Photographer For Their Wedding

## And How to Avoid Them

By Paul Spiers



Congratulations on your engagement. Have you ever had cause to search for a wedding photographer before? Chances are that you haven't. Even if you are planning on getting married for a second time, it is probably quite a few years since your previous wedding, and you will remember very little about making the arrangements.

This booklet will help you pick the best wedding photographer for you. Selecting the right photographer can be confusing and sometimes stressful, you want to be sure you make the right choice. You only have one chance to make a wrong decision.





## **#1. Thinking All Photographers Are The Same**

No two people are ever the same so how can this logic apply to photographers? To prove this rule, think about a sport you like to watch on television as an example. Out of all the top players in that sport, do any of them have the same style? Or the same strengths and weaknesses?

I like to watch golf on TV when I have time, I find it quite relaxing. I have this theory that the cameramen are ex army searchlight operators so have a natural talent for not finding things in the sky. Anyway, all the big names all have their own individual style. Some are great drivers and can hit the ball much further off the tee than the rest. Others have a great short game and are much more accurate when chipping onto the green. Some excel at putting.

But there is no one player that is the best at everything. If there was they would win all the time. The winner on a given day is the guy who gets closer to being the best at everything than all the others on that day. Play the same tournament with the same players a week later and you will all but certainly get a different winner.

OK, I think you get my point so enough about golf. There are many different fields of photography; press, wedding, portrait, glamour, wildlife, landscape, commercial, PR, pets, food, architecture, fashion and many more. And within each field there are many disciplines to excel at, or not. Take wedding photography. There's candid, groups, traditional, photo-journalist, formal, bridal portraiture. Some of them you will want, some you won't.

If you want an album full of family group shots and formal pictures of the bride and groom, look at photographers who show great photographs of that type of work. Don't waste your time talking to a photographer who only shows reportage. I know of photographers who will spend a couple of hours taking group shots. I also know of a guy who will want just the bride and groom alone, away from the reception for an hour or so, just to take pictures of them. There is nothing wrong with either of these two ways of working, or any other way, as long as it fits in with the day you want. So give some thought to what you want & do some research to find photographers who offer that.



## #2. Buying Based on Price Alone

Are you the type of person who always buys the cheapest? Are you the type of person that always has to have the best? Or do you fit somewhere in between these two extremes? You can get a pair of Matalan own brand jeans for about £10, is that the best deal? A pair of Armani Jeans will cost you about £170, is that the best deal?

Well neither of these brands comes close to being the best sellers. Levi Wrangler & Lee dominate the market without being either the cheapest or the most expensive. A pair of 501s will cost you about £35, so why spend an extra £25? Why spend an extra £160? Which company do you think offers the best value? And that is the key word when it comes to any purchase you make, you want to get good value for money.

$$\text{Value} = \text{Quality} + \text{Service} + \text{Price}$$

It is impossible for any company in any industry to offer the highest quality, the best service and the lowest price, all at the same time. To offer top-notch service you have to employ great staff. OK staff just wont cut it, they have to be great at what they do, and that has a cost.

You have to train them well, and to keep them you have to pay them well. If you don't want to be giving people refunds all the time, you have to offer quality products & quality products cost more, we found that out earlier.

So because your costs have increased you have to charge more, or go out of business and that doesn't do anyone any favours. So what problems do you think you could end up with because you hired a dirt-cheap wedding photographer:





1. Cheap wedding photographers don't stand behind their work if they make a mistake. Or worse yet you could end up with no pictures because they messed up. Or maybe you only get a few photographs when you were expecting dozens. As with all things, **“you get what you pay for”**. How much are you prepared to pay for a bad experience and pictures you don't like?
2. The second problem is, low price usually means low quality. The best wedding photographers in the world, such as Yervant or Jerry Ghionis, charge in the region of £10,000 per wedding. Do you think the guy down the street who charges £250 does so because he doesn't want to earn £10k? You bet he wants to earn £10k, but he also knows he's not worth it. In fact he thinks he's worth about £250. If he values his products & service this low, who are we to argue? Quality is important not just for the captured images, but also how they are presented. If you don't want your wedding photographs in a £4.99 album sourced from the local supermarket, you need to think about investing more.
3. Then there are the added extras. Let me give you an all too common scenario:

Bride: “How much do you charge for weddings”

Photographer: “Our wedding packages start from £300”

Bride: “Wow that's cheap, can you reserve my date, 21<sup>st</sup> July”?

P: “Our starter package is not available for weekend weddings. You'll need our bronze package, that's £400.

B: “That's fine, book me in please”.

P: “Sure, that will be £400 please.”

B: “I have to pay everything in advance”?

P: “For that package yes”

B: “Not sure I'm happy with that”.

P: “No problem. With our silver package you can pay 25% now, 25% in 3 months, 25% 3 months before the wedding and the rest on the day in cash. And you get an extra hours coverage”

B: “Sounds complicated, erm..., how much is that package”?

P: £500

B: “Still pretty cheap, ok. When would we get our proofs”?

P: “You don't get proofs with that package, I pick the photographs for your album so you don't need any.”

B: “I would rather select the photographs myself”.

P: “No problem, just go for our gold package.

B: “How much is that”?

P: “£700, plus you get an extra hours coverage”.



B: "Still pretty reasonable. Ok. What time will you stay at the reception till? I want pictures of my first dance."

P: "You don't get reception coverage in that package, you'll need our platinum package. That is £900."

B: "Which includes photographs at my home"?

P: "Our diamond package does, that's £1000".

B: "What time would you be at the church, we're getting married at All saints?"

P: "Oh, that's out of my standard area, so there is a £50 charge for travel expenses."

B: "Can you show me what albums I can choose from"?

P: "Sure, they start from £150"

B: "So your packages don't include albums?"

P: "Our elite package does".

B: "How much"?

P: "£1500, but it includes travel expenses too, and an extra hours coverage"

B: "Right, ok. And would we still have to pay in 4 parts"?

P: "No. With our elite package you pay half now, half on the day, in cash".

B: "Can we give you a cheque on the day"?

P: "Erm....., no, sorry."

B: "Don't you trust me"?

P: "erm"

B: "goodbye!"

OK I may have exaggerated things a little, (he may have accepted the cheque) but this does happen. You'd be shocked by how quickly a cheap £300 deal can end up costing £1000 or more. And you could get a decent photographer for that much 😊





### **#3. You Think Just Having The Right Gear Is Enough To Get Great Results.**

Many photographers have state-of-the-art equipment, but that does not mean they know how to use it. A photographer friend of mine met a guest at one of his weddings who was using a £25,000 Hasselblad H3D Camera, but openly admitted he had no idea how to change many of the settings. They can have all the gear, the gadgets, the latest this-an-that, but without the knowledge and creativity to use it they may as well be using a disposable camera. Anyone can own a helicopter, but it takes a pilot to fly one.



### **#4. You Ask a Friend or Relation to Take Your Pictures & Expect Them To Produce Professional Results.**

This is linked to my previous point in some ways, but when it comes to family and friends, you can become a little blinkered. Uncle Bob is probably a really nice guy, and has a great camera, and you might not want to hurt his feelings, but his offer to photograph your big day as a wedding gift, has to be turned down if you want great wedding pictures. Why? Experience!

Have you been to a wedding and thought, “the photographer makes it look so easy”? You can bet Uncle Bob has, and he thinks like many amateur photographers do, that he can do just as good a job as a professional. But the photographer makes it look easy because he **is** a professional. He has photographed countless weddings and got his system down to a T.

In reality wedding photography is tough, hard work, stressful and very fast paced. Most if not all inexperienced wedding photographers would have a hard time keeping up and getting the desired results. Do you want to give a photographer the opportunity to practice at your wedding? Or do you want a photographer who has been through the practice stage of his career and knows how to deliver great results? There is nothing wrong with booking an amateur, just don't expect professional results from them.

Another difference between an amateur and a professional photographer is back-up. An amateur will likely only own one camera. What if it develops a fault on your wedding day? A professional will carry at least two cameras to your wedding.



## **#5. You Don't Allow Enough Time For Your Photographer To Do Their Job**

Mistakes happen when you rush!

If you want some formal or group photographs taking, allow time for it in your schedule. How much time is needed will depend on a number of factors so discuss this with your photographer once you have booked one.

Do you have any special photographic requirements? Your photographer will know you want pictures with your parents, best man, bridesmaids, groomsmen etc. What they won't know is that your favourite Aunt who you have not seen since you were 10, is flying in from Australia and you really want a few pictures with her. You need to inform your photographer of details like this, well in advance.

## **#6. You Have Half a Dozen Photographers Competing With Each Other For Your Work.**

Now at first glance this looks like a good way to do business. And for some purchases this is a good idea. If you want to buy a new car then play all the local dealers off against each other. Whichever showroom you decide to buy from, you'll get an identical product, so only the price is important. And you can go to any dealer afterwards to get the car serviced or if you have a warranty issue.

But let me explain why this is not such a good idea when it comes to a service as personal as a photographer. A good photographer who has been in business a while, has a loyal client base who will continue to use them and recommend them to others. A reputable photographer does not need to entertain the antics of a price shopper.

So just by initiating a cattle auction, you could be alienating the people you really want on your shortlist. Of course price is important, but not more important than quality products, service and reputation.

## **#7. You Don't Read What You Sign**

Now I should be preaching to the converted here, but you would be amazed how many people just sign their life away. Or just skim-read the terms and conditions before committing to a legally binding contract. If your photographer has made you a verbal promise, get it in writing!



### **#8. You Turn Off Your Instincts**

Trust your intuition. If something seems too good to be true, it usually is.

### **#9. You Ignore The Tell-Tale Signs of Being Unprofessional**

The way someone dresses can say a great deal about the type of person they are. There are some photographers who think that being an artist means they need to dress in a way that reflects their creativity. Pierced facial features, multi-coloured hair, ripped jeans and a dirty t-shirt may be at home in an art student's digs, but do you want that at your wedding? The way someone looks and acts whilst trying to get your wedding booking, is a fair insight as to how they will look and act at your wedding.

### **#10. You Take A Sample Album At Face Value**

When a photographer shows you a sample album, they should be able to show you an album of pictures from just one wedding. Why is this important? Simply put, any idiot can go to a wedding, take 500 photographs and get a couple of good ones. So an album of 20 photographs with 2 or 3 from 8-10 different weddings is no real insight into their ability to take great wedding photographs. Taking 500 and getting 50 good ones requires a bit more than luck.

Also, as you are looking at the photographs, ask the photographer about the wedding. For all you know this could be his mate's wedding album. Ask how the different photographic effects are created. A hesitant or nervous reaction is a sure sign that something is not quite right.

### **A Final Thought**

Your photographer is charged with the task of recording your wedding day for you. They will be creating the only material thing that survives past the honeymoon. They will have to interact with the Vicar/Priest, the reception venue staff, your wedding planner (if you have one), the car drivers, the DJ/Band, the toastmaster (if you have one) and all of your guests. You will be spending a good proportion of your day with your photographer. They will have one eye on you all day, watching for the special moments that make great pictures.

This means your photographer is more than just a service supplier. To get the full return on your investment you will need to work with them before, during and after your wedding. So book someone you can get along with, someone who can work around and within your plans.

Good luck for your wedding day, and for your future together.