

Questions to Ask the Photographer



1. Do you have photos of entire weddings that I can see?

Request to see the images from a few complete weddings, instead of just a sampling of several events. This way, you can better judge the photographer's work and see how he photographs the entire spectrum of a wedding—the bride and groom getting ready, the ceremony, the reception, and the portraits. If possible, try to see a proof book: a collection of raw prints before they were retouched.

2. Do you have references I can call?

Ask to speak with two or three former brides. Ask them: Would you recommend the photographer to your best friends, and why? Was the photographer on time? How was he or she dressed? Was he or she professional to work with throughout the entire process? Did the guests have any comments?

3. Do you post the proofs online, or will I receive negatives?

If your photographer shoots on film, you will receive traditional negatives. If he or she shoots digitally, the proofs should be posted online. Digital proofs posted on the photographer's website or on another specific site are usually available sooner than negatives, and they allow you to share your photos with family and friends soon after the wedding. Be sure to ask how long the pictures will remain online.

4. Who will be photographing my wedding?

If your photographer works for a large studio, he or she may be one of several other photographers working for the company. Since every photographer has his or her own style, technique, and personality, it's important that the person you interview and like will be the one doing the picture taking. Some studios do not know who will be shooting a wedding until the very day of the event. If the studio cannot guarantee you your first or second choice of photographers, consider moving on. You do not want to risk ending up with a photographer you won't be happy with.

5. When will my proofs, prints, and wedding album be available?

Find out your photographer's turnaround time. Also, ask how long you have to choose the photos from your proofs and order your prints and album.

6. How many pictures will you take?

A photographer usually shoots about 500 exposures at an average wedding, but how many of those images will you have to choose from? Some photographers charge per roll of film, so find out that price as well.

7. What happens if you show up late or can't make it to the wedding?

The photographer should let you know his or her backup plan in case of an emergency. He or she should supply you with the complete contact info of another photographer on call that day and the studio's after-hours phone number.

8. Can I see a sample contract?

Your prospective photographer should be open with his or her procedures before you sign anything. The contract is a binding document that is agreed upon by both parties and should protect both. If he or she doesn't show you a contract or use one, pick someone else.

9. Are you part of any professional associations, or do you have extra training in your field?

Someone who keeps up with the latest technology and information in the industry is serious and passionate about his or her work, which will show in the photographs and how he or she works with you.

10. Do you have liability insurance?

All your vendors should be covered by their own insurance in case anything goes wrong. For example, if a guest trips over

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the photographer's equipment and gets hurt, you could be liable, since you hired that person. The photographer's insurance should take care of the incident. Some venues will insist that all your professionals be insured. Find out well before the wedding date if this is required by the venue.

□ **11. What type of cameras do you use, and will you have any backups in case something breaks or doesn't work?**

If you want the best pictures, hire someone who uses the latest top-quality equipment. A true professional will arrive at the wedding prepared with more than one camera and lens.

□ **12. How many years have you been photographing weddings?**

Since a talented pro with fewer years of experience can outshine a 30-year veteran (and vice versa), what you want to know is whether weddings are the person's specialty and if he or she enjoys photographing them. The photographer's enthusiasm will translate into sharper pictures.

□ **13. What do you charge for overtime?**

Make sure the contract specifies the amount of time the photographer will be on the job and how much it would cost to keep him around if the celebration runs longer than scheduled.