

Photographer Comparison Checklist: Apples to Apples

When you compare photographers are you comparing “apples to apples” or “apples to oranges”, as the old saying goes? In the excitement of finding the best deal in photography are you really getting the best deal? Are you paying more but getting more? Are you paying less but wasting that money on inferior quality?

You may assume that you'll get images or that the images will be edited and ready to print. If they are going to shoot and then hand you an un-edited disc you should ask yourself : “Do I have professional image editing software? Do I have the time to edit my own images?”

Look at your prospective photographer's images carefully...is it all one wedding? Are there several or many weddings? Are there a lot of black and white shots or extremely edited and filtered shots? If you love what you see, here are some questions to ask:

1. How long have you been a wedding photographer? How many weddings have you shot?
2. Do you have backup equipment in case something breaks?
3. Do you work alone or do you come with an assistant?
4. What comes with my package? Prints? Albums? A Disc?
5. Will I be able to make my own prints? (Some artists want complete control over the images that represent them and that's o.k., but you should know up front).
6. If you do give a disc and allow printing, what amount of editing will I get without having to pay? Will you re-touch blemishes or dark circles? What do you charge for special edits?
7. What is your shooting style? Do you direct and pose or do you prefer to be a “fly on the wall”?
8. How long before I will see the images and get my prints or disc? When you consider that the average wedding is around 1000 images. If you opened and looked at each image for 30 seconds it would take 8 hours just to look at all of

them, let alone edit or decide which ones to keep or delete.

9. Do you have an example of a wedding gallery that I can see? Portfolios will have the best shots from several weddings but you'll want to see a complete wedding set to understand what you can expect.

10. What about rain or bad weather?

11. What kind of refund policy do you have? What if my wedding gets canceled or postponed?

12. What happens if the photographer can't make it to your wedding? If they are sick or injured or if an emergency comes up...do they have a back up plan?

And here are some things YOU can do to get the best photographs possible.

Have a rain plan...pretty umbrellas can make beautiful rainy day pictures and rainbows are almost a certainty! Lucky you!

Make sure your clothes will be comfortable...that your dress allows you to sit down and move around. Make sure you have shawls or wraps for cool weather (Vermont is unpredictable) and comfy shoes (It's a long day!). Make sure the guys aren't going to broil in the June sunshine at your outdoor, 2 o'clock wedding.

Shorter ceremonies mean fewer pictures of the most important part!

Think ahead! Check out the venue for places to pose large groups. Outdoor photographs are the best (the light is better than anything artificial) so plan to go outside for at least some of the pictures even in the winter. Look for several different places...gardens, patios, stairs...

Plan to sneak out after the regular formals for the most important pictures of the day. I can't tell you how many times I've been thanked for this! After all is said and done and you've relaxed and had something to eat, sneak away for a couple's set...just the two of you. And don't forget sunset or at the very least a parting shot.

Make your wedding photos everything you want and you will cherish them your whole life!