



Your Ultimate Wedding
Guide



Congratulations

Firstly, I just want to congratulate you! You're getting married! This is such an exciting part of your life. So before we get stuck into all things wedding, just breathe... look at each other... smile. This is the person you are about to commit to spending the rest of your life with. Congratulations!

Next thing ... Hello! Welcome to your wedding guide. I hope this helps you collate all the ideas you both have running through your heads and start being able to put them into action. Or just give you some ideas and help with how to plan your big day. You've already started off well by coming to me, I've seen a fair few weddings in this job, so I offer my wisdom to you.

This guide is my way of telling you everything I know and have learned about making your wedding day how you want it. Its entirely up to you what you choose to listen to or don't. Its your day after all. I hope this helps puts things into your mind that you may not have necessarily thought of.

So go browse, skim, re-read, highlight, doodle. Be inspired and excited! Use this guide however works for you, and never hesitate to contact me with anything that pops into your minds. I always love to help where I can!

Nika x



Where do I start?

So you have just gotten engaged, you're excited, you are talking about everything you want and don't want. But what do you actually need to do to get there? This is the daunting part, exciting, but daunting. But it doesn't need to be! Just knowing where to start is going to let everything flow into place, so here is a helpful guide.

1 Venue and Celebrant

Before you do anything else, you need to have your **venue** picked. This will determine what dates they have available, where all your vendors need to be local to and what style of wedding you are going for.

Once you have confirmed your venue, its time to pick your ceremony time. If you are having your ceremony at the venue, you'll need to contact the **registry office** to see when they have available times for the registrar to attend, or if you are having the ceremony at a **church** or registry office, you'll need to book these with consideration to travel time to your venue.

Don't stress at this point. This is just you making your base plan and once this is done the rest just all flows into place

2 Big Vendors

Now you know the important information it's time to book your **big vendors**; **photographers**, **videographers**, **caterers**, **dj/musicians**, **venue decorators**, **florist**, **transport** or none of the above if you don't want them. But these are the people who will be booking up and who need time to prepare for your wedding date.

3 Wedding Dress Shopping

Once you know what kind of wedding you are having you can start planning some trips to look for your outfits for the day. **Wedding dress shopping** is such a memorable moment, inviting a few people who will hype you up and give you some confidence, strutting around the shop trying on your favourite dresses. Give yourself time to go to different shops and find the dress you are most happy in. Remember to account for practicality for wearing it all day at your chosen venue, as well as doing all the activities you want to include in your day.

Once you have your dress picked you'll want to go ahead and start booking in the dress fittings. Find a seamstress who you'll be comfortable with. You'll be meeting a few times and you want to be confident you are getting what you want from your dress so it fits you best.

You can also start looking for all the wedding party outfits about now too, groom and groomsmen's suits, bridesmaids dresses etc.

4 Personalisations

With all the big decisions made that make your day run smoothly you can now go ahead and start making and planning all the little things that will make it exactly your day. Your rings, hair and makeup, guest books, music choices, shoes, vows, seating charts, invites etc.

It's your chance to pick exactly what you want and when you have time to fit it in. Remember these are the fun bits, no pressure to have them but super exciting to create and have if you love them.





Timeline

Getting an idea of how you want your day to go is going to help you make most of your wedding decisions. This is the part of planning you do just need to sit down and work on over the pre-wedding period. Don't be afraid to go back and change it, wiggle things around and remove things, but do keep coming back to it. It doesn't matter if it looks messy, you can always make a finalised one closer to your day. Don't worry, I'm that person too.

This is where you can work out what parts of your day are important to you, where you can fit ideas you've seen and been inspired by or just get rid of things you don't find personal to you.

Check out the example one as an idea of how they can help you out.



Timeline Planning Advice

Having a timeline is going to be the difference between a relaxed day where everybody moves around effortlessly or a rushed one where you are pestered all day. So here are a few tips to making a successful plan;

1

Plan Lightly. Scheduling in every minute of the day leaves no room for those organic moments you'll look back on and cherish. Remember to just enjoy the day, which you can do if you aren't rushing to the next thing you have planned. You've invited all these people to celebrate with you, leave time to just sit down and chat to them. And remember it's your day and it's okay to have time for just you as well.

2

Give Yourself Time. You will be surprised how quickly time disappears. You'll also just appreciate a breather (or a pop to the toilet) every now and then if you do find you have a bit of spare time here and there. Give yourself an extra 5-10 minutes for everything.

This is especially true for your getting ready time. This part of your day shouldn't be rushed. You should start your day feeling relaxed and perfect, give yourself the time to fix the makeup mistake that's nagging you, to put deodorant on, to eat! So give yourself more time than you think for this.

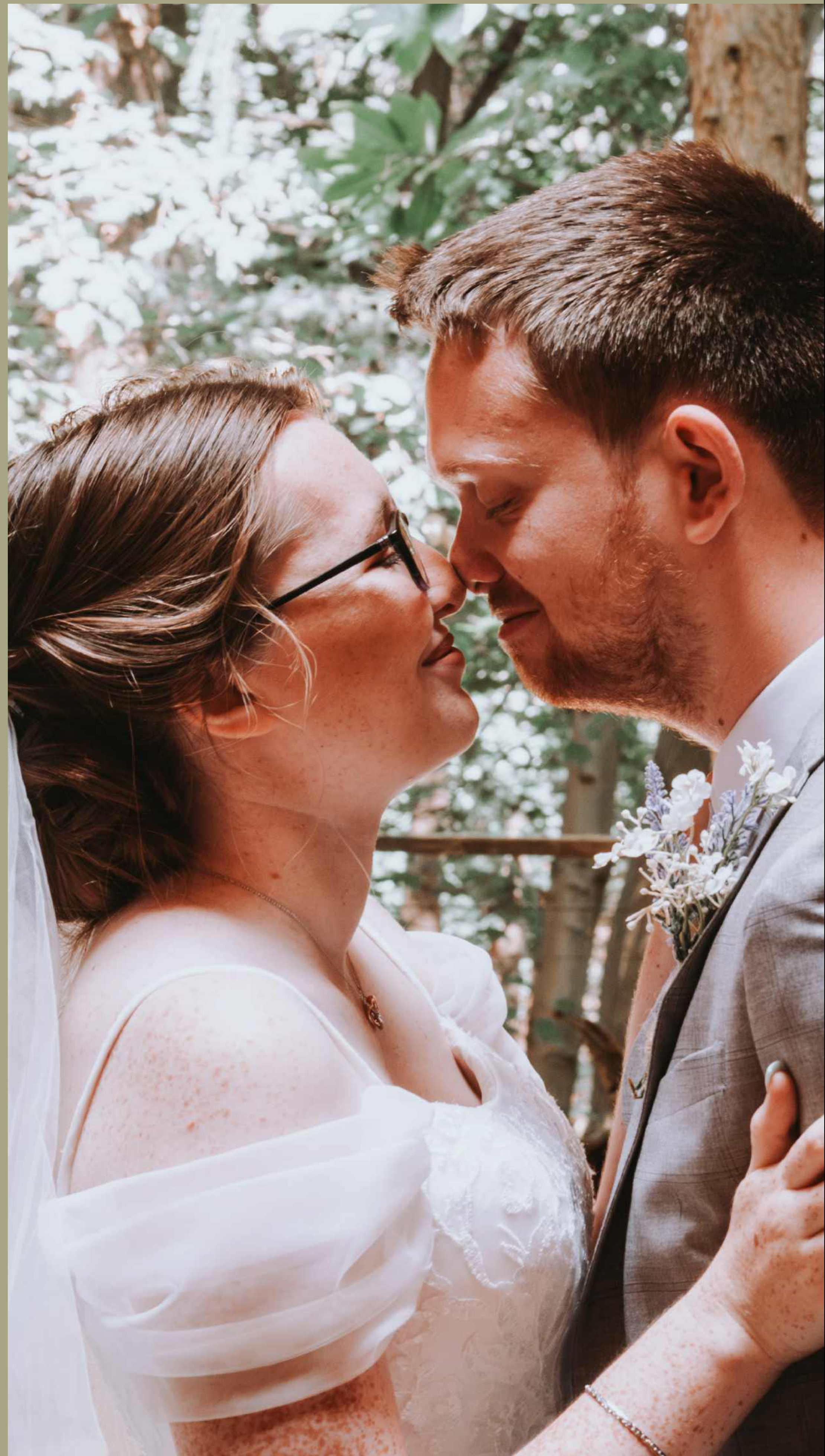
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Consider your Locations. Don't forget to account for travel time. If you aren't at the venue in the morning. If you have a big venue, account for the walk from one place to another. If you are moving to multiple locations, remember to account for guests parking, waiting for each other, wandering. Grandma can't walk as quickly as you. Remember this is time you have to yourselves too, so see this as valuable quality time with one another.

4

Account for Heat and Light. Consider the weather when booking your ceremony. If you are having an outdoor wedding in the heat of summer, you may appreciate some cooler weather or having fans and water laid out for guests. You also might want to account for this when choosing what you are wearing. That three piece suit may be a little warm.

If you want golden hour lighting, factor that into your timeline. These are definitely the questions a photographer will have already considered. So don't hesitate to ask me for advice.





Villager



Getting Ready Planning

This is my favourite part of the day. The start of something really special; the anticipation, the excitement, the nerves. Its just such a special moment in your life. Make sure to stop and take it in. To feel those emotions and remember them. Then pop your most favourite music on and feel your vibes. Have fun!

For me, its the photographs I know you'll see first- the beginning of the journey. There are a few things we can prepare for to make sure these photographs are timeless and as magical as the rest of your day.





Where should I get ready?

This comes down to a few factors. Where are you going to feel most relaxed? Where has the capacity to fit everyone you want to be around you? How accessible is this location for everyone you want there and the vendors?

As a photographer I am looking for somewhere with lots of natural light and space to move around comfortably without knocking a makeup artist or tripping over shoes. Bright/white decor and little need for lights on inside will give your photographs the best finish.

You want somewhere with comfy seats and space to spread out. There is a lot of morning chatting to the person in the makeup/hair chair, so think sociable spots. Don't get FOMO when you are getting glam!

Allocating a room or cupboard for dumping bags, luggage, shoes etc is going to make sure you have no clutter in the back of all your beautiful photographs.

A lot of venues will offer bridal suites to get ready in. Some are brilliant and made with both your comfort and photographs in mind, others, not so much. So just have this in mind when deciding if this is your spot. You may want to consider booking an Airbnb for space and convenience if you do want to be closer to your venue if needed.

What should I get ready in?

You should always prioritise comfort! You'll be lounging around chatting away and snacking whilst you wait for people to be ready, so don't wear restrictive things.

Also consider the lines and marks it may leave on your body when you change into your wedding dress. Take off all those tight socks and bobbles on wrists.

Remember you are about to spend significant time having beautiful hair and makeup done, so wear something that will be easy to remove over this. Comfy silk pajamas and a bridal robe is always a favourite and looks timeless in your wedding album.





Extra Tips:

Prioritise Yourself. We all love a generous bride, but keep that for gift giving and breakfast spread. You should be the person ready first. This way we can get all those beautiful shots of you in your dress, having your first look etc. whilst the final few are finishing off. You'll also have time to get the touch ups you want and a breather before leaving. Being ready about an hour before you are due to leave will give us plenty of time to get your portraits, group shots and have a little party.

Have your details ready. You've put time and effort into making so many small decisions, I want to capture them all. So have your invites, save the date, jewellery, perfume, shoes, flowers, anything sentimental etc. collated somewhere accessible as well as your wedding rings. It may be tempting to hand them to your ring bearer or groomsmen in the morning, but once they are on your fingers you won't want to take them off, so let's get some beautiful pictures of them before that moment. Make a plan of how they are getting to the person that needs to have them, even if that is for me to hand them to the groom as I capture his pre-ceremony photographs.

Don't forget to eat: It's a long, busy day. You will be distracted by guests and photos and drinks being handed to you. Don't be a hangry bride, don't be a too drunk bride. You want to remember the whole day, you want to be smiling the whole day, and you want to make it through the whole day, so eat! Have finger foods at hand so you can easily grab a snack. There is always a snack in my camera bag so never hesitate to ask for something if you need it.





The Ceremony



Your ceremony is the main event on your day, it means you are officially married. So remember to enjoy it and make it exactly what you want. Don't forget to account for your meetings before the ceremony in your timeline too. There are a few tips I have to make your ceremony magical. There is a lot going on here in a very short period of time so it's worth knowing what you want to go on.

1 Practice. You don't need to necessarily be at your venue for this, though a lot let you have a rehearsal. But just walking through the process, with the people who will be partaking in it, will help avoid those awkward stumbles where someone doesn't know what seat to sit in, or who to give the rings to. If you want your dress fluffed, or your flowers handed over, practice that with those people. Get comfortable with the order of the proceedings so you aren't nervous.

Interact. It's really easy to slip into the formality of the ceremony and forget that this moment is about the two of you. But this is a moment all about how much you love each other so show everyone you do. Hold hands, hug, smile at one another. If nothing else, these are beautiful candid photographs. You don't want photographs of you both awkwardly stood to attention with a huge gap between you. Stand close, support each other through the emotions and embrace the love. v

3 Slow Down. This is the thing I request the most. Your adrenaline is going to kick in and you are going to start auto piloting, but just slow down. Walk slowly, let me capture all the little glances and beautifulness of your approach to your future. Kiss slow, appreciate the moment with one another. I can't step in and ask you to just do that again, I want you to be in the moment, so give me opportunities to capture that first kiss, the little hand squeeze, the walk together down the aisle.

Room. This one is more for my benefit, but also for yours a little, plus, you hired someone to get beautiful photographs, so this is also for you. Having freedom to capture different angles, being able to get different people's reactions in the background, giving you an album of variety is important. You don't want twenty photographs of the same shot with slightly different body positions. So having space to find more creative shots is key. It also helps when your wedding party finds itself at the top of the aisle and all need space to sit. And don't forget if you have a bigger dress, you are going to want room to lay it out.

Unplugged Ceremony

It is completely acceptable to want an unplugged ceremony. You have already invested in some beautiful photographs, and now you want all your guests to be present during your ceremony. Asking for no phones, tablets etc. out during your ceremony is definitely something you can choose.

You can simply ask your officiant to announce this at the start of the wedding proceeding as part of the house rules. You can also declare it on your invites or make a sign to display before entering your ceremony room.

If this is something you want to be very strict with then just let me and other vendors know and we will kindly ask your guests to put them away when we do spot them pop out.

You can also declare you don't want your photographs published online until you are ready in the same way. It is your event, your milestone to share, don't feel that it is out of your control to share that in your own time and ways. Simply asking guests to wait to see your own posts before publishing their photographs of you both is an acceptable decision.







Confetti

Confetti shots look super organic and natural and only take a few minutes to capture. They are great for those who aren't comfortable in front of the camera because you are focused on all your amazing guests celebrating but still catch the pure joy and celebration of the day, but they do come with a little planning.

First you need to check with your venue that it is okay to have confetti. Most will accept biodegradable but some prefer none at all.

Picking your confetti will depend on your style and wedding theme. I have a more in depth guide next to explain the differences.

When and Where.

Usually it comes after your ceremony, I set up your guests whilst you take a moment alone together and then you walk out to your guests. However, if this doesn't work for you, or you want it later into the evening then that's okay. I am simply looking for a bit of symmetry to help guests gather and lots of confetti to share out.

Slow. Take your time walking down together, react to guests, smile. Avoid squinting and ducking, it looks a little awkward. Most of all, enjoy it. Interact with each other, kiss in the middle of it all, dip her, twirl. embrace the love!

Confetti Captain. Allocating somebody the job of handing out the confetti makes it all run much smoother. This could be children at the door after the ceremony or bridesmaids and groomsmen, but being handed confetti makes it clear to your guests what's next and then they start gathering naturally ready to be guided by me.

Picking your Confetti



Paper confetti is affordable, which is great as the more you have the better chances of a great photograph. It is light so floats quickly and comes in an array of colours and sizes. However, due to being so light, a light breeze will blow it far away from the aimed target and rain will obviously affect it too.



Dried flowers are small so you will need lots but are great for the environment. They can be bought pre-bagged with personalised stickers for your wedding guests. They fall fast however, so you will need some rehearsal with a select few if you are looking for a certain confetti photo to be re-created.



Petals fall faster and are usually more expensive but are thick and dynamic in photographs. You can purchase these in your wedding colours and they look more naturally part of the landscape when left behind on the floor.



Natural confetti's like **rice**, **feathers** or **leaves** are great for the environment and are super cheap too. Leaves could be cut with cute hole punch shapes and rice can be died and they give a organic feel to a wedding. They just need time accounting for to have them prepared before the day.



Metallic Confetti is usually available in the party section of shops. These come in cute cut outs and can read messages or be a mixture of wedding related shapes. However, they are not biodegradable and most venues don't allow them to be used outdoors. But an option for indoor confetti with easy sweep up capacity.



Formal photos

You will always look back at your formal photographs and love that they record all the people that were important to you on your big day. But just because they are called formal doesn't mean they have to be stiff and posed. We want you to remember the personality of your friends and family, and the little moments you had with them. So there are a few things we can do to make this part of your day fun.

- Keeping your group shots to a minimum amount of swaps and changes will make this part of the day go quicker and less stressful. I would recommend no more than seven different groups as you will need to wait for all of these people to gather, swap places, transition etc each time, whilst you are stood waiting to start the party.
- Make a list of the people you want your photographs of - remember names not relations, your mum isn't my mum or your bridesmaids when we start calling them over. Ask someone loud and confident to gather people for you, let them know before hand and give them the list too. That way you can be having your photo taken whilst the next group is being gathered.
- Let your guests know before hand that you want some photographs with them so they know to stick around.



Informal Formal Photographs

Capturing more fun and less formal photographs of groups is easily done, it just takes some time to warm everyone up, get everyone on board and move around a bit. There will be a lot more trial and error in these as we have to account for one set of eyes closed or a rogue sneeze in an otherwise perfect shot so do account for a little pocket of time away from the rest of your guests. Usually these are captured with the wedding party as they are already up for putting more effort into the wedding day, and they are all dressed to theme. And obviously, you picked these people as your main people for a reason. But if you have a group of people who you want to show off their personalities and your relationship on camera, we can definitely do that too.

If you have planned things like showing off matching socks, or notes on shoes then let me know and we will play around with showing these off. If you want more interaction then pick people who already know a little of each other so they feel comfortable looking towards one another. Its useful to show the kind of photographs you are thinking of to these people so you are all on the same page about the final results and understand why they are doing random things like running around in circles or holding flowers in unusual ways. Other than that, its on me to shout out queues and prompts to get people laughing or dancing or moving around to capture those beautiful candid group photographs.





Couple Portraits

You don't get much alone time on your wedding day, but this is your chance. Here is where you get to step away from the crowd for a bit of time, you can breath, catch up, comfort one another. This bit usually comes after the group photographs have been taken but if another time works better then lets discuss that.

Once you've had your breather we can catch those stunning portraits. How often do you get to dress up and have photographs of the two of you together, see this as an opportunity, a capsule of all the love and adoration between the two of you.

I think the most common conversation I have with all my couples is about their discomfort and awkwardness in front of the camera. Which I completely understand, we are used to seeing the world and ourselves in motion, so seeing a still of ourselves is unfamiliar and critical. But I can promise you that I have never had a couple say they felt awkward on their day. If you are super worried I would recommend booking an engagement photoshoot where we can find a way to get you comfortable in front of a lens and build a rapport at the same time.

Firstly, you are so wrapped up in the love you have for the person beside you, how you look is a second thought. Secondly, I know a thing or two about how to make it feel very casual. You don't stand and pose for these photographs, you don't even look at the camera. This is a moment to capture the two of you, how you interact, how you smile at each other, how you can't hide the love you are feeling. With a few prompts and directions you'll find your dreamy pinterest worthy photographs create themselves. So please don't stress about these photo's.

Have an idea of the kind of photograph style you want. What is your vibe? Check out my portfolio and browse through pinterest.

Do you want those dreamy romantic photographs, do you want highly stylised shots, are you looking for a more candid photoshoot. Show me the photos that resonate with you and we can create that feel for your own moment.

Remember this is a record of your wedding day, you've put time and effort into looking this good, celebrate that when you look back at these photos. I won't edit your body, for one, you will have hundereds of photographs and that is an unachievable goal, secondly, you look stunning, you have spent your morning glamming up, you have spent your year working on your body, don't let insecurity get in the way of what matters. You at this moment, are your happiest, enjoy that, see that, value that!









Wedding Breakfast

My only advice for your wedding breakfast is, make sure you both actually like and would choose the food. Don't think about the array of food intolerances and picky eaters. They cook for themselves every day and every caterer will have a solution for them. But you both should think back to YOUR day and talk about how good that dinner was. Venues often do tasting days, make a day out of it and try some good food. Don't feel pressured to go with fancy food if you're not fancy people and if you know you're not a big eater, don't book the seven course meal. You are catering for a lot of people, so account for your budget.

Your wedding breakfast is usually scheduled for after all your formal photographs. Your guests will have mingled and if you have opted for them, had nibbles beforehand, but this is the time everyone sits down and eats their main meal of the day. This is becoming a part of the day that is breaking away from the traditional sit down three course meal so don't feel like you have to do anything you don't want or your budget can't afford.

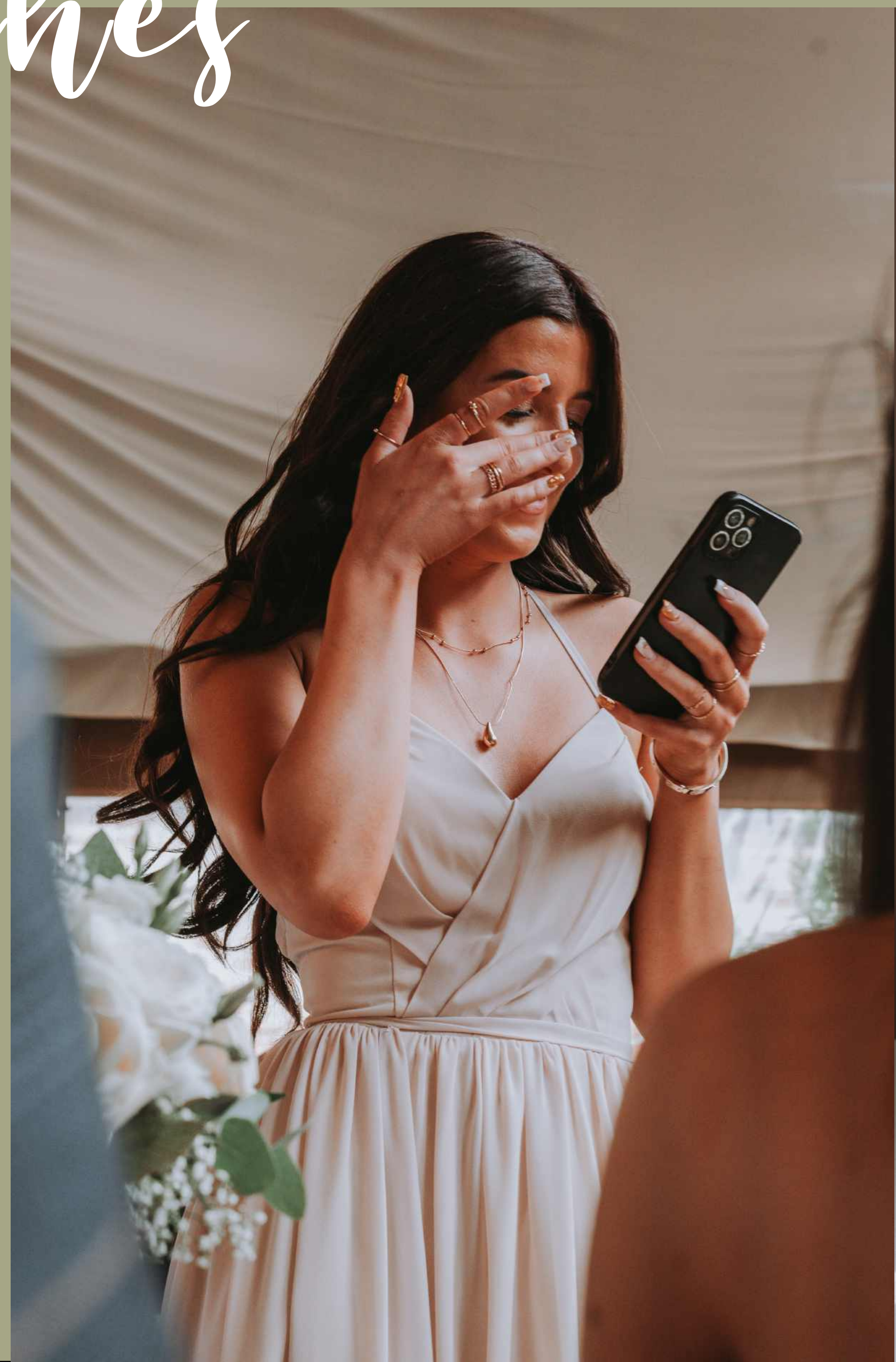
There are now options for hiring food trucks, buffet style servers, table platter serving etc. Have a conversation about what feel you want for this part of your day. You may appreciate the structure of having people sat down, accessing the correct food for them and taking a breather for yourselves. You may opt for a more, grab and go option. Take into account the time it takes for each of these options. Having food served by staff is usually quicker depending on the amount of courses, whereas having tables get up for food takes more time to organise.

Speeches

Knowing who is giving a speech and what order they are going in is key here. I would always recommend speeches come directly after your meal. It flows naturally as your guests are looking to you to see what is coming next and they are all already gathered and ready to listen.

Speeches are definitely becoming less traditional too, with less fathers of the bride opening them up and more wedding party members and brides partaking. I recommend having a conversation about who you think are important people you want to talk, and account for their public speaking abilities. Also letting them know what kind of mood you are looking to set and if there is anything you'd rather them keep to themselves to avoid any embarrassment.

Speeches are usually between 2-4 minutes long. You'll be able to allocate a time slot to your timeline once you know how many people you have.



First Dance

Some people love a first dance, its a great way to open up the dance floor to your guests and get people to join you, you also get a bit of a cinderella moment. Other people hate the uncomfortable feeling, the eyes on them and their lack of ability to dance. It is entirely up to you if you want to do this or not. It is not a wedding requirment.



If you do want a dance, I would recommend it being earlier on in your evening. If you have planned a dance, you want to remember your moves, if you are stressing, its good to get it out of the way. Its also a great way to fill the dance floor. Most people find dancing awkward and being the first person on the dance floor is daunting. But if you open the floor after your first dance, you'll find your dancers want to join you for a few songs and then you can leave them to it or spend the night on the floor.

You don't necessarily need to do a formal dance either. I have photographed weddings where the couple and their wedding party had choreographed a couple of steps to repeat through the song and then had their guests join them once they picked up the moves. Some people take a few classes and get their own routine down so they don't feel awkward and there is always the world of internet if you just want to get a few steps down so it feels a little less daunting.

Cake Cutting



If you are cutting your cake, take into account when and why. If you plan to serve your cake as your pudding then cutting the cake before speeches is useful to give your caterers time to serve it. If you are planning on leaving it until later then I recommend leaving it as a stand alone event.

Don't cut your cake immedietly after your first dance, it cuts off the natural flow of dancing and you will feel rushed and less like you're organically enjoying your night.

Equally, don't feel like you have to have a cake or a pudding at all if that is not something you both want. It is not a necessity if you don't want it to be.

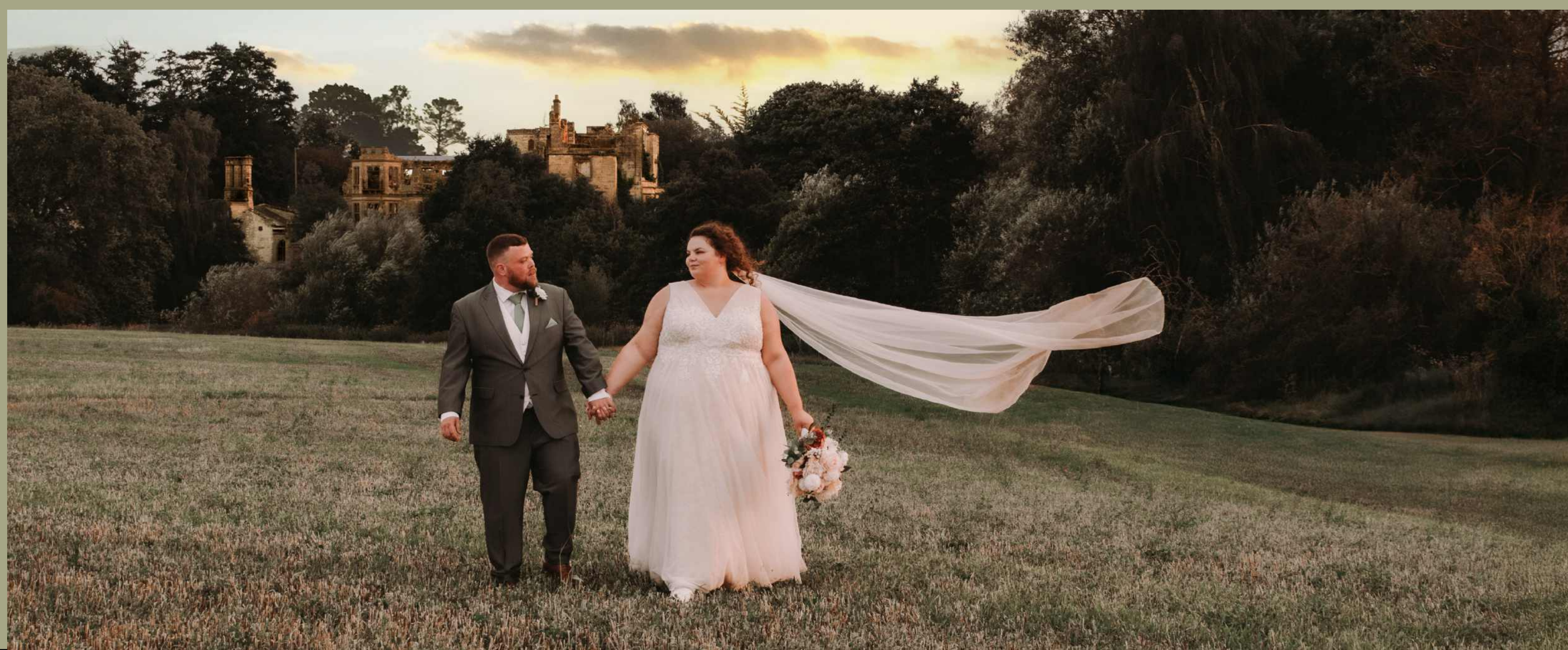


Golden Hour

Golden hour is that lovely hour as the sun is setting where the light gives us this beautiful dreamy feel. It's the part of the day where everyone takes a breath and appreciates just how much of a good day they have had. Its also the part of the day where a lot of couples want those beautiful statement photographs.

If these are photographs you are looking for then please just let me know and we can work out what time this is likely to be and find a good location to capture these photographs. You'll be looking for a spot where we can stand in front of that low sun and get that beautiful orange glow.

You may want your wedding party group photographs around this time too. The more dramatic staged photographs look amazing here. Let the people who you want in these photographs know so they can prepare for them and get themselves back to presentable in their wedding attire, ie. heels and ties back on.







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