

Randy's Fine Art Photography

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How to select a photographer

First, Why are you still looking?

Second, select Randy's Fine Art Photography to shoot your wedding. You won't be disappointed!

Ok, so I'm already booked on your special day or you're not willing to pay me to travel 3,000 miles to shoot your wedding. Well then, here are a few things to keep in mind and questions you should ask prior to signing a contract with any photographer...and, yes, that includes us.

You may be looking for bargain prices there's more to a photographer than having the right equipment at the right price.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHEN CONSIDERING A PHOTOGRAPHER

☞ *Web site*

All wedding photographers should have some type of web presence. What's the site look like? Is it easy to navigate? How's the overall look and feel? Is it professionally done or something thrown together? Why does it matter? The photographer's web site reflects who they are and is their storefront to you, the customer and should be a good representation of who they are. If it's disorganized or sloppy, you may find these same qualities in the photographers work. (shoot, I hope you don't think that about my site www.randysfineart.com...I know...a shameless plug)

☞ *Portfolio*

Take a look at their portfolio. Do their photographs appeal to you? If not, look somewhere else. There are plenty of photographers out there, so take your time and find one that fits the style you're looking for. Keep in mind their web site should contain the best of the best and nothing less... hmmm did that rhyme?

☞ *Packages*

What type of packages are they offering? Are they in your price range? What if you really like their style and they are out of your price range? Ask if you can mix up packages and remove or switch around items to try and get the cost closer to what you can afford. This may also give you insight into how easy it will be to work with the photographer.

WARNING SIGNS

☞ *New or Seasoned Photographer*

Many people would urge you to go with a seasoned wedding photographer. They know the ropes and can work around most situations. While the newbie may not understand the flow of the ceremony (where to be and when), they are usually more economical and may shoot in the style you are looking for, so don't rule a newbie out altogether. Having said that, keep in mind that some people who buy a DLSR camera think they can shoot a wedding. Your wedding photographs can only be shot once, so make sure to check out their portfolio. If you wanted pictures like Uncle Harry takes, then you would have had Uncle Harry take the photo's! Whatever you do embrace the newbie we've all been there before...haven't we?

☞ *References!*

This is the big one. My favorite is talk to a friend who had a positive experience with a photographer at their wedding. Better yet, what are the photographer's references? In a word DON'T. Why? Your friends are different, we are all different. By all means check out the photographer like you would any other photographer, but never sign a contract with a photographer for the simple reason someone else recommends them. As for references? Do you really think a photographer is going to provide you with an unhappy customer as a reference? I don't think so, which means they will all be glowing references. Remember, the photographer and their style must be compatible with yours. This isn't someone else's wedding it's yours. 'nuff said.

☞ *Pricing!*

Everyone is charging \$2,500+ for a full blown package, but there's a guy out there offering up a full day and all the images for \$800! What a deal! Whoa! Hold on. Why so low? Are they a newbie? If so, check them out, they could be commanding thousands of dollars per wedding in the coming years. If they're seasoned, proceed with caution. More than likely they are unable to land good paying "gigs" due to bad references, bad shots, whatever. Steer clear of these deals unless you thoroughly check them out, and I mean thoroughly.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK

☞ **Who will be photographing my wedding?**

This is very important. You may be meeting with a marketing or salesperson for the company. Come on! They get paid to be liked! Make sure you are interviewing the person who will be shooting the wedding, otherwise you run the risk of having someone taking your wedding photographs who you don't even like. I can't stress how important it is for you to get along with the photographer.

☞ **Can I see your portfolio?**

While a good body of work should be found on the photographer's web site, it's always a good idea to see examples of wedding albums, cards, or other items they have put together in the past. This will give you a better understanding of their style and skills in presenting your precious photographs.

☞ **Can you provide me with references?**

See above. Better yet, go online and try and find some unsolicited feedback. Just go to Google, or your favorite search engine, and type the company name and city. If they've been around awhile you will probably be able to find something about them.

☞ **Will you work off of a checklist?**

It's a good idea to have a checklist of the most important pictures you want taken throughout the day (you don't want to miss Mom and Dad). Your wedding day will be hectic and this will ensure that the photographer knows what shots are important to you.

☞ **Are you willing to work with someone at the event?**

It's a good idea to assign someone to assist the photographer when it comes to taking photographs of the families (mainly for the family shots). This should be someone familiar with both sides of the family. The photographer doesn't know who Grandma is, so it's best to have someone helping pick the people out.

☞ **How much are reprints and enlargements?**

See if you can look at their price list. While they may be inexpensive up front you may find that the cost of reprints increases as time goes by and may become unavailable at some point. Albums can be even more expensive. There's quite a bit of work on the back-end to put an album together which is why they can be so pricey, but when done properly are worth every penny.

☞ **Do you have access to backup equipment?**

You should know what type of equipment will be used, but it's even more important to understand what equipment the photographer has as a backup in case of a malfunction.

☞ **Do I need to sign a contract?**

If so, make certain you understand everything in the contract. If you don't, ask questions. Look for and understand areas such as;

- **Deposit and Payment**

Most photographers will require a deposit to reserve the date, with the total due prior to the wedding. You don't need any surprised on your wedding day.

- **Cancellations/Rescheduling**

Ok, it happens. Make sure you understand what the penalties are for rescheduling or, god forbid, canceling. Many times if the photographer can fill that date you can get your deposit back, but again read the fine print.

- **Restrictions**

Make sure you know about any restrictions. There are some photographers who refuse to have anyone else taking pictures while they are working. Flashes could cause problems, people can get in the way of just the right angle, etc.

- **Coverage**

How many hours will be covered? What if the wedding takes place at a church and the reception is across town? Make sure this is included in the contract. Some photographers will charge to go between two venues.