

a few handy
WEDDING
tips

FROM YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER

*Cherish
Harper*



A romantic photograph of a couple kissing in a forest. The woman has vibrant pink hair and is wearing a black fur collar. The man has dark hair and is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a soft-focus green forest.

WHAT'S *in here?*

TIPS, TRICKS, & IDEAS TO
MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER

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Getting Ready

You may not think much of "getting ready" photos now, but you will appreciate having these precious, exciting, fun moments to look back on. The energy of the morning is just full of anticipation and joy with your favorite people all around you.

Clutter

I know there is a lot going on, but try to keep clutter hidden and to a minimum. Keep bags, suitcases, laundry, etc in a different room, or the closet. I often do a short sweep when I arrive to clean up the area anyways!

Light

Window light is my favorite light. If possible, get ready in a room with lots of window light, where we won't need to use lamps or artificial light. Having an orange tungsten light mixed in with the window is not ideal for color. So I always prefer to turn all lights off and rely only on window light whenever possible!

Hair/Makeup

If you will have a hair/makeup artist, they will need as much light as possible. I suggest doing your hair and makeup next to the window, for them and for me!

EAT!

While you are getting ready in the morning, it is beyond important that you eat! Have snack trays, muffins, protein bars, or fruit for you and your bridesmaids to eat. You will not get another chance to eat until well into the reception, and being hungry can make you feel (and look) miserable in your photos.

Drink

I recommend drinking lots of water for weeks before your wedding day. Make sure you drink plenty the morning of to avoid dehydration. Make sure you pee before you get your dress on, and once again before the ceremony.

And...Drink If your venue allows it (and you want to), having mimosas or champagne while you are getting ready will help you relax a little. If you are super nervous, a drink or two will help to loosen you up a bit and get you all mushy lovey-dovey for photos. Be careful though, too much (especially on an empty stomach) will make for a miserable day. Please don't make yourself sick!





First Look

WHAT IS A FIRST LOOK?

A first look is a special 15 minute session between the bride(s) and/or groom(s) in which they see each other for the first time in a private setting before the wedding ceremony. If you've always dreamed of the walk down the aisle as the first glimpse of each other, then we'll do it that way. It's your day!

I always recommend a first look for those who don't mind veering from the traditional ways, and here are a few reasons why:

- **It makes the timeline easier to work with.** If you see each other before the ceremony, we can do all family portraits (formals) and all bridal party photos **before** the ceremony as well. When the bride and groom can't see each other before the ceremony, many photos have to wait to be taken until after the ceremony which will cut into your party time.
- **It gives you both time to take it all in, and get it all out.** Enjoying a few quiet moments alone before the events begin can help bring you out of "event mode" and back to what this day is really about – The two of you becoming one. You can share what you are feeling, cry in private, comfort each other, get all giddy and excited to get hitched, and complement each other on how amazing you look – all things you can't do during the ceremony.
- **It gives you another chance for couple portraits.** Every chance you get to do a quick shoot with just the two of you is worth taking. Wedding days are long, but you don't get to be alone too much without others waiting on you. Each opportunity for a few photos in a different location with different lighting will add more variety to your final album.
- **Your family and wedding party can relax.** The main problem when trying to do family and bridal party photos after the ceremony is finding them! Once the wedding ceremony is over, your guests are instantly in party mode. Everyone heads off to cocktail hour, or straight to the reception. Trying to pull the family members and wedding party back out for photos can be an extremely daunting task. Once people have access to food and/or drinks, they are much more difficult to track down. When we do a first look, all of these can be out of the way so your guests and family can enjoy being in party mode without interruption.

[CHECK OUT THIS BLOG POST FOR MORE REASONS WHY I LOVE FIRST LOOKS!](#)



Groups

When should we shoot 'em?

The best time for family and wedding party portraits is before the ceremony (Assuming you have done a “first look”). Everyone is present, clean, and relatively sober.

It's possible to do them after the ceremony, but gathering everyone once they've gone to cocktail hour is always a difficult and time-consuming task. I've seen it done both ways multiple times, and those who opt to shoot the groups after the ceremony end up much more exhausted, stressed, and frustrated than those who do it before.

How long do we need?

Family Photos (aka. “Formals”) I recommend keeping your formals list short (we can still get photos with everyone else later!). If it's kept to just your parents, grands, siblings, and kids, then about 20 minutes is all we need, if done before the ceremony. If we have to do wedding party photos as well, then I would add about 20 minutes to that time.

If these group photos are done **after** the ceremony, then add about 15-20 minutes more to those estimates.

I recommend keeping the list short, because on your wedding day smiling at the camera posed with tons of different groups will be exhausting! I also recommend having food, drinks, and games or entertainment for your guests while they are waiting for group photos to be done.



Family List

We will work together on a **family list** and on your wedding day timeline. I will have both of these with me to make sure we stay on track and get photos with all of your VIPs.

This list of family members is incredibly important to ensure this goes smoothly. Without it, I have to rely entirely on YOU to make sure everyone you want in each photo is there and in the right group.

Your list should include information about VIPs (people we need to pull aside for a special moment with you), divorces, step-parents, and step-siblings with clear instructions on whether you want pictures with those people, and who should not be in a photo together.



The Couple (YOU!)

How long do we need for photos of just us?

I recommend 3 time slots for portraits of just you two together: Right after the first look (if you decide to do one), right after the ceremony, and just before sunset (weather dependent). Going out two to three separate times will give us a great variety in lighting, mood, and energy. I will need about 20 minutes carved out for each session.

Why after the first look?

The first look has some amazing energy to it. Seeing each other for the first time all done up in your wedding gear brings up some intense emotions, I like to feed off of that exciting, loving energy and get a few photos during that intimate time.

Why after the ceremony?

Because the pressure is off, and you're ecstatic, giddy, in love, and ready to party. I've gotten some of the best, most genuine joyful moments at this time.

Why before sunset?

Because it's when we get the best light, At sunset we'll that gorgeous, glowy, golden light. And right after the sun disappears we'll get some of the best moody, "blue" light that I love to shoot in.

How can we make sure we get good photos?

The most important thing to ensure we get great photos is trust. I will prompt and guide you into actions with your partner that won't feel or look awkward or posed. Remember to relax and try to ignore the camera all day. Just enjoy your time with your friends, family, and partner, and I will do the rest. Just trust me, we will create amazing images you will love for the rest of your lives.

PRO TIP: Designate a 15-minute period after the ceremony and the post-ceremony photos to be totally alone. (We will plan this in your timeline meeting.) Your wedding day is a whirlwind that tends to feel like a big show you are putting on for your friends and family. Taking the time to stop, relax, reconnect, and be together will help you remember why you are doing this and give you a moment to recharge before heading into the hug-filled reception.

I will make sure you have snacks and drinks delivered to your hiding spot!





The Ceremony

Lighting

The lighting is not always something that we can control, especially outdoors. That's why you hired a professional! However, there are a few things that can help me ensure that we are getting the best lighting possible for your ceremony.

Outdoor Ceremonies

Spotty sunlight peeking through leaves and harsh uneven light are not ideal. If you have a choice of ceremony location, one set in full shade is the easiest way to ensure even, flattering lighting. If you're having your ceremony close to midday, try to backlight yourselves. This means set up the ceremony so that the sun is behind your officiant, and you two are evenly lit. If one person is in the bright sun and the other is in the shade, try rotating so you are both evenly lit or evenly shaded.

It's not always possible, of course, but a ceremony set in the late afternoon, or early evening will have a better chance at nice, even lighting. But this is Washington, so it will probably be cloudy - which provides PERFECT lighting! so set the ceremony time however it works best for you.

Indoor Ceremonies

A window behind your officiant will be fine in a pinch, but A spot with windows across from it, or on both sides is perfect. Natural light is ideal, but artificial light is totally fine too. We will work with what we have and it will be pretty!

If you are unsure of where to set up your ceremony for the best light, I'd be happy to help you arrange!



DO A REHEARSAL WITH MUSIC!

Even if it isn't possible to do it AT your venue, do some sort of run through so everyone knows when and how fast to walk, where to stand, and what to do.

Before your day, If you have any special requests, special events, rituals, or expectations as far as your ceremony goes, it's a good idea to talk to me about them before hand.

Knowing what's coming helps me to ensure I'm at the right place at the right time to make those moments last forever.



The Kiss

My favorite place to be for the kiss, is facing the wedding guests. This is not always possible. Either way, I will inform your officiant to step off to the side as he pronounces you married. This allows me to capture the moment without the officiant's head hovering behind you!

Practice your kiss! And remember, to ensure PERFECT photos of your kiss and your procession, follow my formula: Long kiss, Celebrate, Long kiss, Walk.

This gives me time to get the kiss from both sides.

Unplugged Ceremonies

I always recommend an unplugged ceremony! Asking your guests to please put away their devices and be fully present during the ceremony ensures that I am able to do my job without anyone putting their phone in front of my fancy camera.

A sign posted near the entrance, or a message from your officiant before the ceremony begins is usually enough. No one means any harm, but I have had very important shots ruined by people stepping in front of me without realizing it, and once that moment is gone- it's gone!

and they never send them to you anyway!

PRO TIP:

Once everyone is done walking down the aisle, have your officiant allow everyone 10 seconds to take a phone photo, then ask them to put them away.



The Music

To avoid the hiccups I see the most:

Hire someone you trust who knows what they are doing.

Have a wedding rehearsal INCLUDING the music.

Have a backup plan in case of music equipment tragedies.

(A wireless bluetooth speaker has saved the day more than once!)

Have a signal to begin! The most common error I see during ceremonies is the bride waiting to walk until she hears her music start, while the person playing the music is waiting to see the bride walk before they start playing music. so.... SILENCE.

Have someone in charge of giving a signal to start the music as soon as you are ready to walk, and practice it!



The Reception

Run away for a few minutes after the ceremony.

Right when the ceremony ends, you will sneak around a corner with me for just a few minutes before joining back up with your wedding party and family.

Capturing that giddy "we just fucking did it!" energy RIGHT after the ceremony, with just the two of you (and me) is super important. I'm very careful not to let anyone interrupt it when possible.

Once that moment dies down a tad, we will let your wedding party and/or family join you to celebrate together as well. If we didn't already do your group photos, we will get them started at this time.

After we are all done with group photos, I suggest taking 15 minutes or so completely alone (NO photographer) before joining the reception.



Receiving lines are not recommended by me.

They can be very time-consuming, especially for a medium/large wedding guest list.

They leave guests feeling like they got a generic greeting like everyone else.

They leave couples feeling socially POOPED after all of those hugs. Guests appreciate a few minutes of your time during the reception much more than a weird line of handshakes.

Dinner: I eat while you eat. After hours of running around like a crazy person, I will need to eat too. It is ideal for me to be served as soon as dinner begins so I can eat quickly while guests are eating and be done in time for any toasts or dances that might happen during or at the end of dinner. Myself and my assistant will both need a meal and somewhere to sit for a few minutes.



The Reception

Flash

Good lighting is essential for good photographs. Capturing the mood of your event is very important to me. This is why I try not to use flash for anything other than party/dance floor time unless I absolutely have to.

I can make some gorgeous images with flash, or without. Even with low light, but it's good to know that without flash, your photos in low light will have more noise (they will appear a little grainy, colors will be less vibrant, etc.) Make sure to let me know in advance if you have a strong preference one way or the other.



DJ Lights

Seems like DJs should know this, but... Just in case.. While colored/flashy lights that your DJ provides are fun for party time, they can destroy the romantic mood of your first dance and special dances.

If you are having colorful lights, I ask that they be turned off for "special dances". For party time, go NUTS!



A few more things

Have a bustle buddy

Even though I consider myself a bustle master, there have been some that even I can't figure out. I highly recommend bringing TWO people with you to your dress fitting to watch, video tape, and practice bustling your dress. So much time passes between your fitting and your wedding day that most people forget how to do it. This usually results in you standing there for way too long with too many people's faces in your butt trying to bustle your dress and having no idea how. Time is a precious thing on your wedding day! This is not how you want to spend it!

Between Things

We have all experienced it. You attend a wedding, the ceremony ends, and the bride, groom, and wedding party disappear to have photos taken while the guests wait... and wait... and wait... The time between the end of the ceremony and your arrival at the reception can feel like ages to your bored, hungry guests. Don't keep your guests waiting without some entertainment, food, and drinks. If you have some yard games, light hors d'oeuvres, coffee or tea, and alcohol, they will hardly notice you are gone!



Be comfortable. When dress hunting, make sure you can slouch, sit, breathe, and move comfortably. More room is better than too little room. You will have a much better day if you can freely move around without feeling like you are going to bust a seam. When your dress is so tight that you can't wait to get it off, it shows in pictures and makes it really difficult to get beautiful photos.

On the same note, bring a pair of comfortable shoes to put on between things, while walking to photo spots, or to party in when all the fancy stuff is done. You will thank me for that one.

Have a rainy day plan. We are in Washington. I am perfectly comfortable shooting in rain and think it can make for some real romantic shots, but your guests will appreciate the cover if you can find a way to do it. Just plan for the worst, and hope for the best!

Go with the flow. Weddings can be unpredictable. Just relax and remember that it is not the end of the world if it rains, or that obnoxious family member made a scene. It's YOUR day to soak up all the love and good vibes you can. Leave the things you can't control for someone else to worry about.

Getting your images

I will send you one photo within 24 hours of the wedding so you have something to post right away.

I also post a “sneak peek” of about 20 of your images on my Facebook page & Instagram page a few days after the wedding (please allow up to a week, because life.).

Some couples would prefer that their wedding photos be shared by themselves first, before I share them, if this is the case just let me know! I get very excited and can't wait to show the world.

I ask for 6-8 weeks to edit and deliver your final images. Your images will be delivered via an online gallery where you can download, share, or purchase prints or albums of your photos.

When you access your online gallery, your images will be organized into scenes (Getting Ready, Ceremony, Couple, Venue & Details, Groups & Formals, and Reception.) When downloading your images, you have the option of downloading the full-resolution images, or the web-sized images. Full-resolution images are for printing, The web-sized images are to be shared on social media.

Please try to tag my business whenever possible. This is to ensure my images aren't stolen and used elsewhere without my permission, and to let people know who took them. Cherish Harper Photography on Facebook, or @cherish.harper.photo on Instagram.



If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or e-mail me.

Thank you so much for choosing me to capture your big day! It's an honor that I will never stop appreciating.

360-520-1371 HELLO@CHERISHHARPER.COM



Wedding Day

EMERGENCY KIT CHECKLIST

HEALTH & HYGIENE

- Band-Aids
- Nail Clippers
- Mints
- Mouthwash
- Floss
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Clear Deodorant
- Pads/Tampons
- Cotton Pads & Q-Tips
- Eye Drops
- Tweezers
- Ibuprofen
- Allergy Relief
- Pepto Bismol or Tums
- Cough Drops
- Razor
- Lotion
- Moisturizer
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito Repellent
- Hand Sanitizer
- Baby Wipes
- Tissues

HAIR & MAKEUP

- Tiny Scissors
- Bobby Pins
- Brush/Comb
- Hairspray
- Eyelash Glue
- Makeup Remover Wipes
- Primer
- Finishing Spray
- Lipstick
- Waterproof Mascara
- Eye Shadow
- Nail File
- Small Mirror
- Rubber Bands/Hair Ties
- Waterproof Eye Liner
- Concealer
- Blush/Bronzer
- Highlighter
- Oil Blotting Papers
- Spare Earring Backs

WARDROBE MALFUNCTIONS

- Permanent Marker
- Dress Tape
- Straight Pins
- Safety Pins
- Sewing Kit
- Scissors
- Lint Roller
- Steamer
- Nude Nylons
- Wrinkle Releaser
- Clear Nail Polish
- White Chalk
- Stain Remover Pens
- Clear Tape
- Static Guard

OTHER STUFF YOU, OR SOMEONE ELSE WILL NEED

- Zip-lock Bags
- Permanent Marker
- Boxes
- Grocery Bags
- Trash Bags
- Duct Tape
- Comfy Shoes/Slippers
- Towel
- Batteries
- Protein Bars
- Mints
- Straws
- Little Cups
- Lighter/Matches
- Water Bottles
- Bottle Opener
- Bluetooth Speaker
- "To-go" Food Boxes
- Black Writing Pen
- Superglue
- Cork Screw
- Phone Chargers
- Paper & Pen
- Post-its or Labels
- Electrical Tape
- Blank Wedding Invitation
- Clear Umbrella