

Photographing Your Best Friend's Wedding – 10 Tips

by [Natalie Norton](#)

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In this tutorial, [Natalie Norton](#) shares 10 great tips that will help you survive shooting your first wedding.



[Jonathan Canlas](#) *the great.*

Photo Credit: My good friend, wedding photographer

You were asked to shoot your friend's wedding? Hmm. Already got suckered into it? Tut, tut, tut. Fear not! By maintaining a good attitude, establishing a strong game plan and setting realistic expectations, you truly can make this lemon into sweet lemonade.

Here are 10 tips to making your first weddings a success.

1. Light Right:

If you haven't already mastered lighting and proper exposure, I REALLY, TRULY recommend shooting in Aperture Priority. If you struggle with Aperture Priority, well you've just got to shoot in plain old [Automatic](#). And hey, that ain't always such a bad thing if I do say so myself. The bottom line is that you just cannot afford the chance of improper exposures when the dude (or nowadays the chick) says "you may kiss the bride."

2. Under Promise, Over Deliver:

If you're going make this work, particularly if this is your very first wedding, you've got to set yourself up for success by managing expectations. You recall the adage, "you get what you pay for?" Well friend, that doesn't really hold true for brides. They generally expect to get what they *want*. Period. I'm not knocking brides. It's their WEDDING DAY for Pete's sake. They should get what they want on this great day of days. But you can't assume that just because you're shooting for next to nothing (or in fact nothing) that there won't be high expectations for you and your work. Under promise, over deliver. You've got to set clear expectations that you know beyond a doubt in the Heavens you'll be able to achieve. If for example you really believe that you will be able to deliver 100 knock out images for each hour of shooting, promise only 50. That way when you show up with 75 awesome images from each hour you shot they'll be ecstatic!

3. Don't Go it Alone:

Get an assistant to come shoot with you. Two cameras are always better than one. Particularly if you're not all that familiar with yours. It's VERY important to have a back up to make sure you've got two chances at each key shot.

4. Request an Infiltrator:

Have the bride/groom assign someone to you to be sure you get shots of all the key players. Its important that you document all the key attendees, especially if you're familiar enough with the family that you *should* (but don't) know them all by name. If every time your bff talks about her favorite Aunt Bessie you're only half listening and don't have a clue who she is, you better be sure you've got someone there to point her out so you can grab that shot of her wiping her eyes during the ceremony.

5. Click, Click, CLICK:

Take pictures until your trigger finger bleeds. If you're not totally sure, check that LCD and try, try again. You've got to nail it. You only get one chance at this. There isn't going to be a do-over. Shoot and shoot and then shoot some more. In this new digital age, particularly as of late when storage space is so cheap on memory cards, you really don't have a single reason I can think of NOT to shoot like a bat out'a hell.

6. Tell the Story:

There are a handful of shots you'll need to be sure to include. Clearly you'll need to cover the ceremony in it's entirety. ie rings, smooch, tears, cake cutting, bouquet toss etc. Beyond that, be sure to get a good establishing shot of the venue, some good detail shots of all the stuff she spent WAY too much money on to decorate said venue, some good detail shots of her dress (don't forget the shoes . . . oh and the rings!!), bride and groom with their groupies, a zillion pics of the bride alone and with her man, and then any and everything else you can possibly think of.

7. Know Where to Go:

Check out your venue before hand. Make sure that you know EXACTLY where it is, even where you're to park. It would not be a happy day for you to come out from your pro bono wedding only to have to fork out \$200 to get your car off the impound lot. It's also a helpful rule of thumb to know what you're getting yourself into for a shoot. Try to visit during the same time of day the wedding will be held. Check out the lighting situation. Ask about the seating and be sure you're going to be able to photograph from the proper angles without obstructing the guest's view.

8. Get the 411:

Talk to the individual who will be performing the ceremony. There may be rules about photographing in a certain cathedral or religious reasons you can't photograph certain parts of the ceremony. It's your responsibility as the photographer to make sure that these concerns are addressed with the Priest etc before you show up on the wedding day.

9. Cover Your Bases:

It just may be a good idea to have a contract. I know it seems like an awful formality, particularly between friends. It's a wise step however to solidify expectations (an extension of what we discussed earlier about managing expectations) in order to preserve the relationship. You really love this friend of yours, as evidenced by your willingness to shoot his/her wedding, protect that relationship by insisting on a contract.

10. Go for it!

You've made the commitment already, now jump in with both feet. Don't let your fear and anxiety plug up your creativity. You're going to be great!

A QUICK NOTE IN CLOSING: I'm really upbeat by nature. I generally err on the side of complete and absolute optimism. I really do believe in YOU and your remarkable ability to be a fantastic xxxx (fill in the blank: photographer, singer, dancer, plumber, pastor, whatever). I am 100% of the opinion that if you want it, it can be yours. Faith, hope and a sane amount of persistence and the world is your oyster. Truly. That said, photographing a wedding is not to be taken lightly. It is arguably the single most important day in a couple's life. If you want experience shooting a wedding ask to shadow a pro. Shadowing is the perfect way to gain experience, there's no pressure, no expectations, just you, your camera and a wedding you're not responsible to document. Ah, beautiful. Not so beautiful however is your under-experienced self, a camera you don't understand, a thousand overexposed images from the wedding day and Bridezilla, Queen Kong (mother of the bride) and the mother-in-

law from you know where all in cardiac arrest when you break the news. Ugly. Ugly. UG-LY. Particularly if Bridezilla used to be your bff. I'm not saying this to discourage you. I merely want to ensure that you prepare amply before you plunge into an event as paramount in someone's life as a wedding!

Happy Shooting and Good luck!

Want more Wedding Photography tips? Check out Wedding Photography: 21 Tips for Amateur Wedding Photographers

Natalie lives and shoots on the North Shore of Oahu with her wonderful husband Richie and her 3 crazy boys. You can view more of her

Read more: <http://www.digital-photography-school.com/your-best-friends-wedding#ixzz1c7FBu426>