

# TIPS FOR CREATING MEMORABLE WEDDING PORTRAITS

Quick Guide  
Written by Karthika Gupta







Photo by Karthika Gupta Photography

Wedding photography is perhaps one of the most challenging, yet rewarding, genres of photography.

As a wedding photographer, you are responsible for documenting one of the most important days in a couple's life. That responsibility should not be taken lightly.

Yet with a little preparation, and a lot of practice, you too can master the art of wedding portraiture and learn to create a memorable session of pictures for your wedding clients (or anyone, for that matter).

Learning things like how to pick a shooting location quickly, where and how to find good light, how to photograph couples in a flattering way, and also how to handle portraits in all types of weather conditions are just some of the things that wedding photographers need to be aware of.

As a Chicago-based wedding photographer, here are some of the things I think about when I am photographing weddings.





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1

## FIRST, LOOK AROUND. THEN HAVE SOME ALONE TIME WITH THE COUPLE

Quite simply put, a 'first look' is when the couple sees each other for the first time in their wedding outfits. It is generally a very emotional time for the couple, as the gravity of the whole day comes crashing down on them when they see their significant other in their wedding finery.

Some couples opt for a first look because they want to take those few moments alone to absorb each other before walking down the aisle. Some opt out of it because they want to see each other for the first time as they are walking down the aisle of the church.

I typically try to convince my couples to opt for a first look, because I know those photos are filled with emotions and it is a chance for them to be alone for a few moments with each other!

When photographing first looks, I always try and work with my assistant





photographer to capture emotions and reactions of **both** the bride and groom.

I will capture a wide-angle perspective of the scene just before they see each other, and then the individual reactions of the couple after they see each other.

Generally, this setup also provides many opportunities to capture candid images of the bridal party and/or family that are close by, because they are also caught up in the moment.



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**💎 Key Lesson:** Try and get to the scene of “the first look” a few minutes before the couple so that you can figure out your camera settings based on the lighting. I shoot in RAW 100% of the time, so I am checking my ISO and aperture prior to photographing the first look. This is also a time where I will have the multiple frames per second setting on my camera turned ‘on’ (the drive setting). Generally, the couple is interacting with each other without any prompting or direction from me, so I want to make sure that I capture all of the different emotions via the multiple frames.





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## 2 INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITS

Individual portraits of the couple are important. These portraits generally make it to the wedding album, and are also the photos that will get printed, either by the couple and/or the close family.

There are many opportunities for individual portraits during the wedding day. However, I like to focus on two specific moments.

The first moment is when the bride and groom are getting ready for the wedding.

These portraits are done earlier in the day, so that the couple is more relaxed, and family members surround them.

There are many opportunities here for candid photos with the bridal party and family members. I also like to make sure the portraits include some of the wedding details, like the bouquet, invitations, and rings.



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The second opportunity for wedding portraits is right after “the first look” when the couple is hanging out together. I like to take a few moments for individual portraits of the bride and the groom.

If the couple has opted out of a “first look,” then we schedule a portrait session with both the bride and groom when they are getting ready.





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When taking individual portraits of the couple, choose poses that are flattering for the couple.

For women, preferably have your subject at a slight angle from the camera. This makes the body angles more flattering. I avoid having a bride stand straight on, with her body pointed towards the camera.

Also, use details like the bouquet and the veil to add dimension and interest to bridal portraits.



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For men, either have them sitting down or standing up with their hands in their pockets.

Men tend to be stiff when being photographed, and are generally more awkward during their portrait session. Placing their hands helps to relax them.


 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to learn how to create amazing portraits, grab a copy of [Photzy's Art of Portrait Photography](#) premium guide.





Photo by Karthika Gupta Photography

### 3

## FUN/CANDID SHOTS WITH THE WEDDING PARTY AND FAMILY

Weddings are a very emotional, as well as stressful, event to plan. However, they present a great opportunity for families to get together and celebrate.

Our job, as the wedding photographer, is to make sure that the families have memorable photos to document and remember this important day.

One way to break the ice is to include the wedding party and create some fun/candid shots.

Prompts like making silly faces, striking a model pose, and/or cracking jokes are sure to make people laugh and provide fun photos.









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## 4

### PICK LOCATIONS THAT ARE MEANINGFUL AND/OR CONVENIENT FOR THE COUPLE

Wedding day timelines tend to be very tight. In many instances, there is less than two hours between the ceremony and the reception to create all of the portraits.

Add to that a couple who wants multiple locations for their images, and you have even less time on your hands.

If the couple has specific locations that are meaningful to them, you should try and incorporate them into your portrait locations.

However, if the couple **does not** have any specific requirements for locations to take pictures, try and pick locations that reflect the couple's personality.

State and local parks are great venues for adding some greenery and nature into the images. Cityscapes add more of an urban feel to the portraits.



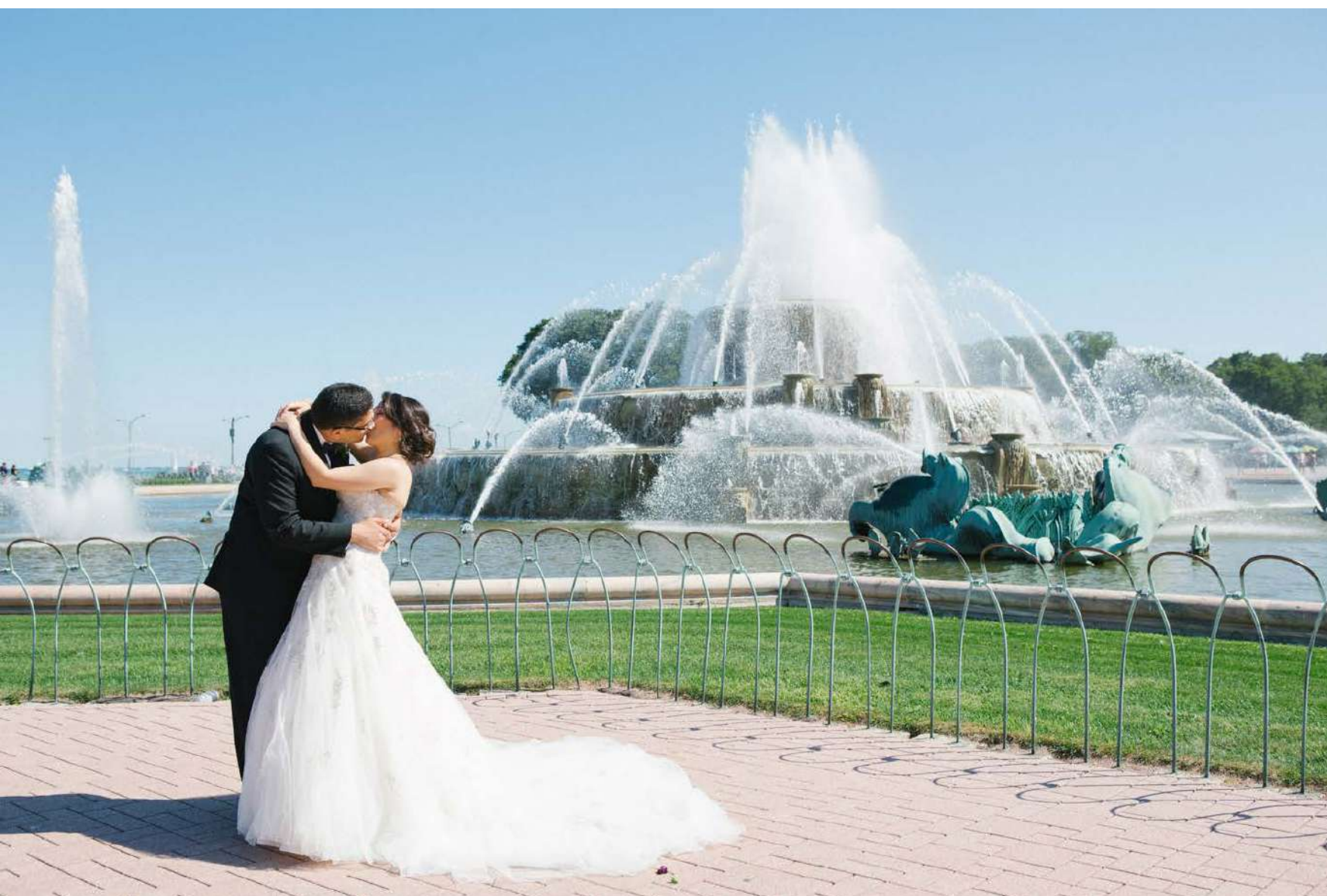


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Here's a tip: Have your couple arrange for a car/limo and a driver who can drive the bridal party to and from the different shooting locations. As a photographer, it is beneficial to ride with the bridal party, so you spend less time on the road and more time taking portraits.





## 5

### FIND GOOD, IF NOT GREAT, LIGHT

One of the key elements of any kind of photography is finding good light. Not all light is equal.

You need to train your eye to read and find light that will be a good fit for your clients.

Since most weddings occur in the afternoon (during harsh midday sunlight) or in the evening (during sunset), you need to be prepared to photograph in these lighting conditions.

If you have a wedding ceremony in hard midday sunlight, try and find open shade for your portrait sessions. Open shade evens out the light and offers some relief from the hard shadows of the midday sun.

If you are photographing in the warmer evening light, use backlighting and/or side lighting to add interest and flare to your portraits.

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If you are photographing indoors, try and use off-camera flash or another artificial light source as a creative element to add some drama to your images.


 **Recommended Reading:** If you're particularly interested in learning more about light and how you can use it to improve your photography, grab a copy of Photzy's bestselling tutorial series, *Understanding Light Book One* and *Understanding Light Book Two*.





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## 6

### CAPTURE MOVEMENTS AND EMOTIONS

I am a huge fan of movement in my images.

Movement not only adds interest, but it also acts as a way for the subjects to focus on doing something while I create the pictures, and that helps them relax.

People tend to be less rigid when they have something to do, rather than just standing there posing for images.

The movement can be subtle, like looking at each other, making each other laugh, or even leaning in for a hug or a kiss.



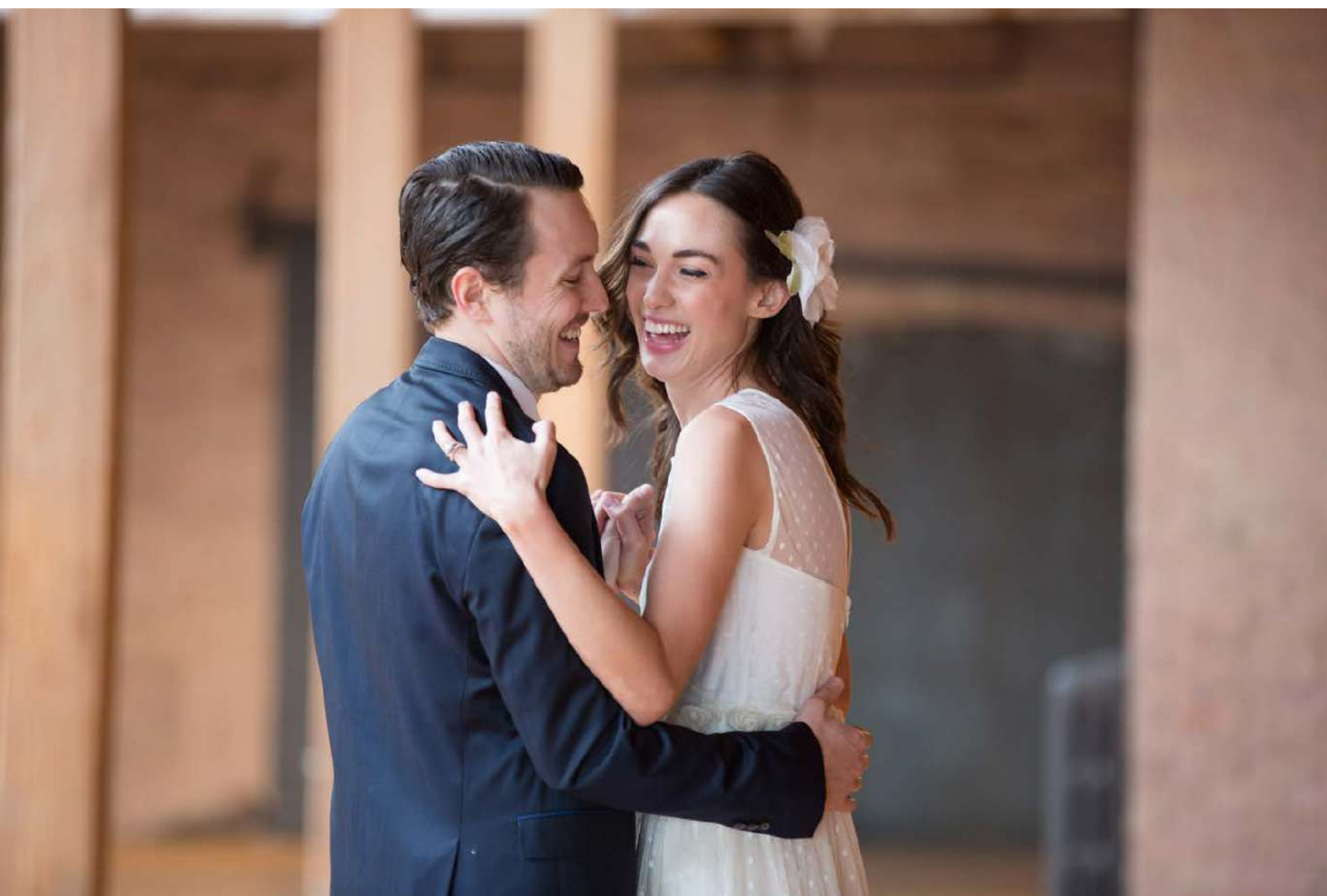



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The movement can also be more dramatic, like running toward the photographer or walking away from the photographer, and then turning back to look at the camera while the bride creates action like twirling her dress.

 **Key Lesson:** Include movement shots where the couple is not looking at the camera but at each other. Lower your shutter speed, and then take some shots where the motion is blurred for a more artistic approach to your portraits.









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## 7

### DON'T FORGET TO DOCUMENT THE DETAILS

Bridal portraits are not always about images with the bride and groom included in them.

It is equally important to photograph the details of the wedding. Details like the flowers, the wedding invitation, the jewelry, and the table decorations are an equally important part of the wedding day. Make sure that these details are also documented.



**Key Lesson:** Photos of the details are great for the other vendors represented at the wedding. This is a great way to help them showcase their work and build strong friendships with vendor.










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## CONCLUSION

I hope that you find these simple yet important tips useful in your wedding or portrait photography.

Remember, you have taken on the responsibility of documenting a special wedding day or creating a special portrait, so take that job seriously. However, also make it a priority to make the experience fun and rewarding for your subjects as well as for you.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to learn how to create amazing portraits, grab a copy of [Photzy's Art of Portrait Photography](#) premium guide.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Karthika Gupta is a wedding, lifestyle, portrait, and editorial photographer based in Chicago. Her style of photography is fun, fresh, and organic. She strives to capture authentic emotions and interactions among her clients and emotive imagery in her commercial work.

She loves connecting with other creatives and photographers and is always ready for an engaging conversation about photography and the art of storytelling.

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