

HOW TO POSE FOR YOUR WEDDING PHOTOS



A MOMENT IN FOCUS PHOTOGRAPHY

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In this section, we look at four universal basics in posing for photos: your smile, your eyes, your posture and your hands. All important factors to making a great photo.



A moment in focus
PHOTOGRAPHY



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INTRODUCTION

So you're getting married! Congratulations! This is going to be one of the most thrilling times of your life. However, planning a wedding is not that simple and sometimes we don't appreciate how much is involved. Many exciting and sometimes difficult decisions need to be made: the purchase of the engagement and wedding rings, the amazing must-have wedding dress, the service and reception venues, who to invite. Then there is the cake, table decorations, the photographer, the wedding celebrant, entertainment, invitation cards, the ante nuptial contract, bridal cars and – most importantly – the honeymoon. Wow! It's enough to make anyone think of just eloping! Yes, we all have been through the same scenario and it's just a part of that experience and a big part of your future life.

Forever...

Now let's face it, the groom tends to think that all the above is not that important, but the bride does. She wants that romantic occasion to be remembered forever. Wondering how we've come to know so much? Well, as wedding photographers we've had the privilege of capturing the love, joy and dreams of bridal couples for many years. And what we know for sure it this: When the party has been had and the cake has been eaten, the only tangible memories will be the moments that photographers captured on that day.

This thought is enough to make most brides have a little nervous breakdown. Not only do you have all the emotions of a huge life event, but you have the pressure of being at your most beautiful for photos that you will have to live with forever. Your wedding photos will also be a major expense so you want to be sure you are happy to show them off to your friends and family.

Live Happily Ever After...

The truth is that even the most confident brides and grooms are a little nervous about posing for their wedding photographs. It's just such a momentous occasion. If you're not confident, or not comfortable in front of a camera, or you have a few niggling hang-ups, it can be downright scary. But fear not, we are here to calm

your nerves with a heap of really useful tips and tricks we have learnt over the years that will help you look your very best. That's what this e-book is all about. We'll kick off with some very important foundational considerations and then move into general posing hints. Then we give you the low-down on how to minimise the features you might feel self-conscious about, while maximising the ones you love. Our parting shot includes simple dos and don'ts that you might never have thought would make a difference to photos. Get ready for photos you will be proud of forever, because our tips will have you striking a pose like a pro!

FIRST THINGS FIRST

In this section, we lay down a few fundamentals to always bear in mind. We look at the most important considerations when choosing a wedding photographer and planning your budget. We also give you some general advice about what to do before and during the wedding to ensure that you get the best photographs. Finally, we talk about things to consider afterwards, to make sure that your memories of the day are shown off at their best.

What is the memory worth?

Client: *Why are you so expensive?*

Photographer: *We are not expensive, we are priceless.*

Not all photographers are equal and, as with so many things in life, you usually get what you pay for. It might be tempting to trim your budget in this area, but as professional wedding photographers we owe it to you say this. Choosing a wedding photographer is the subject of a whole separate e-book, but we want to caution you right here to choose carefully. You need an experienced photographer who will make you feel at ease, listen carefully to your wishes and concerns and add to your ideas with expert knowledge to make the most of this unforgettable occasion. Trust is possibly the most important element in creating beautiful photographs – you need to feel secure in the knowledge that your photographer knows what you want and will direct you well to create magical images.



Before...

You might feel a little silly taking this bit of advice, but the best thing you can do before the photo shoot on your big day is to practice! Believe us, it really pays off. So take the tips and tricks we give you in this e-book, stand in front of a full-length mirror and try them out. You should be able to see the difference immediately when you apply what we teach you and you will also get a sense for what the different poses feel like. Every bride is a different shape and various poses will accentuate our best features. For example, try turning your body slightly to the side and just turning your head and shoulders towards the camera, or standing with one foot in front of the other. Also look at the way models pose in bridal and fashion magazines. This is a good starting point to see what looks good and why. High fashion poses might not be suitable for your wedding day, but note the shapes the model's body makes. Ask yourself why they've been posed like that. What is the overall effect on the body is? Does it make the model look slimmer, taller or curvier? Does it highlight or hide a certain feature? One of the best ways to practice is to have a pre-wedding or engagement photo shoot. It gives you and the photographer an opportunity to get to know each other's quirks and style. We find that the pre-wedding shoot helps us all get used to one another, and get to know what's going to be expected on the wedding day. It also gives you the client an opportunity to see how we work and what we produce.



During...

The best way to guarantee lovely photos is simple: RELAX! Pretend the camera is not there and just have fun. Otherwise, your movements will be stiff and you will lose the magical spark that the photographer wants to capture. Forget the pouts and bedroom eyes you find in magazines – these will only end up looking forced and fake. What you want is the huge smile, the crinkled nose, the loving gaze – honest moments that will warm your heart with fond memories for years to come.

If you're very camera shy, have a friend or family member trail you like a paparazzi for a few hours, while you try to ignore them. Again – it might sound silly, but it works! This is another reason why we're such huge fans of pre-wedding shoots – it's a way of getting that awkward feeling out of the way. By the time the wedding rolls around, we're not random strangers anymore. We've shared something – special moments.



And After...

The digital age has revolutionized photography in amazing ways. But unfortunately, technology has made printed photographs an after-thought. Don't fall into the trap of "shoot-and-burn" photos, where your beautiful images are forever trapped on an electronic device. As with photographers, processors are not all equal either. Make sure that you're referred to a truly professional printing service so that justice is done to the photographer's work and your precious memories.



THE BIG PICTURE

In this section, we look at four universal basics in posing for photos: your smile, your eyes, your hands and your posture. These elements have the biggest impact on your wedding photographs. As photographers, not only do we want to capture the most flattering images, we want you to know what to expect so that you can be at ease and feel relaxed and, most importantly, have fun!

Smile

Forcing a smile never leads to a good photo. The “say cheese” kind of option only creates a tense, fake smile and unemotional eyes. Instead, think a happy or excited thought (you should have plenty of those close at hand with your beloved nearby!) While this may sound trivial, it works. If you are thinking and feeling sexy and confident it really will come through in your expression. Keep your smile and eyes soft and confident. Of course, someone who makes you laugh is always good. Natural laughter always makes a great photo, even if your face is a little scrunched up. Right before being photographed, turn away for a second and then look back at the camera for the shot. Ask your photographer to take one shot and then take another shot immediately after. It’s likely that second photo will be better. A great tip is to push your tongue against the back of your front teeth to keep that smile bright and natural looking.



Eyes

Calling eyes “the windows to the soul” might sound like a cliché, but it is very true. Nothing can communicate emotion like your eyes can. Often, in trying to accentuate their eyes, brides will try to open them as widely as possible. In the process, they raise their eyebrows and unwittingly create a startled look and a wrinkled forehead. Instead, remember to keep your eyes and forehead relaxed. To emphasise your eyes, rather lower your chin a fraction. This will effectively bring your eyes



closer to the camera and make them appear bigger. As we mentioned before, practice in front of a mirror until you’re familiar with the movements. Lower your chin too much and you run the risk of causing a double chin, so use this trick sparingly and practice! As an aside, looking directly into the lens takes confidence but creates a dramatic image when the right emotion is behind those eyes. Looking down slightly will create a more demure effect, whereas lifting your eyes and chin up to the sky will give the impression of confidence.

Hands

One of the most common questions that clients ask photographers during a shoot is, “What should I do with my hands?” On your wedding day, you will often have something to hold (whether it’s your bouquet or your new husband) and that helps a lot. But it’s still important to be soft and natural with your hands even if you do have something to keep them busy. Think loose, think relaxed. If you feel your hands tensing up, shake them out and start again. Relax your arms, shoulders and hands and move them where it feels natural. A slight curve of the fingers always looks more flattering and natural too. Many times, brides look as if they’re hiding behind their flowers. The bodice of your wedding gown is beautiful, so why obscure it with your flowers? Holding your bouquet too high will also place your forearm in a horizontal position to create a line that visually cuts your body in half. Rather rest your wrists on your hipbones lightly to create a pleasing 45-degree angle that makes your body look longer and leaner.



Posture

People tend to tighten and raise their shoulders when they are nervous and this causes a couple of problems. It makes your shoulders appear narrower and your neck shorter. But worst of all, it creates a look of tension. Hunching your shoulders is often an unconscious action. A quick way to combat this is to deliberately pull your shoulders up as high as you can and then drop them – you'll notice immediately how different this feels. Simple relaxation techniques like breathing properly will not only guarantee better looking photographs, but will actually make you feel less nervous.



Having a photographer you can trust implicitly will also make you feel more at ease. Sometimes a pose can feel odd in “real life”, but will look great in photos. But if you feel that you cannot trust the photographer’s directions, the effect will be ruined and you will appear uncomfortable in the shot.

THE SMALL DETAILS

Let's be honest – we all have little things we don't like about our appearance. No matter how many thoughtful compliments our beloved gives us and no matter how much we primp and preen, those self-conscious twinges just don't go away. Whether the “flaws” are real or imagined, having a camera pointed at them can feel like having them under a magnifying glass. The real problem not the imperfection, but the way you feel about it. When you feel self-conscious and awkward, that's how you will look in the photo. As they say – the camera never lies. The good news is that we can trick the camera. We've collected some tips for overcoming the most common worries in this section. Armed with this knowledge, you can practice in advance so that they will disappear into non-issues by the time the big day arrives.

Chin and Nose

Many women have hang-ups about their chins and necks. To combat a double chin, raise your chin by a few degrees and twist your head slightly away from the camera. Then, either focus your eyes a point above your natural eye line or look back down the lens. Tilting your chin upwards



will elongate the neck, smooth out the skin and give your jaw definition. Even if your photographer is shooting from a low angle or straight on, this pose will look a million times better than looking straight at and directly down the camera. The most flattering angle for disguising a prominent chin area is from above. The high angle also makes the face look softer and the eyes bigger and brighter.

Noses and profiles are another common worry. It is quite unlikely that a photographer will want to take a straight profile portrait, but just in case: turning your face 45 degrees will improve the look. Tilting your chin slightly down will also be more flattering to a prominent nose.

Arms

Upper arms are one of the biggest problem areas, but one of the easiest to remedy with good posing. Simply keep your arms away from your body. If you pose with your elbows touching your sides, your body will look as wide as the elbow-to-elbow dimension. And if your upper arms are not perfectly toned, they will get



squished and look even bigger. Move your elbows slightly away from your sides, creating a small separation between your body and your arm. This will emphasise your waistline and make your torso appear slimmer too. Just remember to keep your shoulders relaxed at the same time! Putting your hand on your hip or upper thigh is an easy trick, but remember to keep your hand soft, relaxed and resting lightly. The same principle applies if you're leaning against something too. Lean too hard and your upper arms will suffer the dreaded "squish spread". Instead, lightly brush whatever you're leaning against rather than putting your full weight on it.

Curves

Many wedding dresses feature a fitted bodice and full skirt, which is flattering to almost any waistline. But posing well can make you look brilliantly svelte. Look at red carpet photos of celebrities. Notice how they all pose similarly? This is not coincidence of lack of imagination. It's just good posing.

By turning your body to be at a 45-degree angle to the camera, your body appears slimmer. Putting each leg in a slightly different position with all your weight on one leg (usually the back) reinforces the illusion. Pushing out the hip that is carrying your weight creates an elegant curve and looks naturally comfortable.

To make hips and bums appear smaller, make the most of perspective. Lean forward a little and push the area you want to hide away from the camera.



Legs

Once again, making your legs look great in a photo is all about the angles. And strangely, positions that feel a bit unnatural are very flattering. You might think that a pointed toe doesn't matter with a long wedding gown, but it really does. It's all about shifting your weight from one leg to another, which creates a very pleasing shift in your hip area.



LAST WORDS

No trick will magically transform you into a super-model. But by using all of them - each one improving your image a little bit - the end result will be a noticeable improvement in your photos. Make sure that you use all our suggestions sparingly though – they should be measured in fractions of an inch. Overdoing a good thing can result in negative results. Besides knowing how to make the most of your best features and play down the ones that bother you, here are a few other small details to consider:

- A heavy fake tan tends to look flat in photographs and can come out looking more orange than it does in natural light.
- Using a professional make-up artist will ensure that your complexion is not only flawless, but that your skin tone is perfect for photos. Make-up that photographs well and enhances your best features is also usually more dramatic than you would be used to for everyday wear.
- Choose your dress colour wisely. You may have dreamed of that pure white wedding dress but some skin tones just look washed out next to white.

- Beaded details on a veil can end up looking like spots on a photograph. Ask someone to take a photo of you in your veil beforehand to check the effect. If you're worried about it, make sure you fold it back for the crucial pictures.

Finally, some people just aren't comfortable posing for formal photographs. Despite your best efforts you can end up looking stiff and awkward. Make sure your photographer takes some reportage shots of you mingling with your friends and family. Often, the natural pictures of you laughing and smiling are the best in the end.

Life is made up of a whole series of special moments and experiences. You only truly start to realize this many years down the track and only then appreciate the memories and encounters you have had. This is really the most important thing to remember about posing for your wedding photos: relax and enjoy this very special time.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Nigel and Nina Sparg make up the husband-and-wife team behind **A Moment in Focus Photography**. The couple were school sweethearts, but life took them each on an extended detour before reuniting them in 2006. Their fairy tale romance defied all obstacles (such as living on different continents) and, after Nigel proposed underwater while they were scuba diving, they were married in 2008. They are living their “happily ever after” in Perth, Western Australia.*

Nigel Sparg is a sought-after professional photographer who delivers creative artworks filled with vibrancy and drama. Renowned for excellent service, his images portray unforgettable memories that wow the walls and designer albums of his discerning clients. The breath-taking sights that he experienced as a paraglider are what inspired Nigel to take up photography many years ago. “When you are up there it’s like you’re in another world and nothing can touch you,” he muses. The desire to capture magic to share with others can be seen in all his images – whether the subject is a sweeping sunset landscape or a sleeping newborn. Nigel is an accredited member of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography, the Society of Wedding & Portrait

Photography (UK) and Wedding & Portrait Photographers International (USA). What he loves best about photography is that it gives him opportunities to capture the moment and create something new. If he wasn't a photographer, he'd be a pilot taking people to amazing locations all around the world. His favourite colour is blue and he enjoys a glass of good red wine after a hard day's work.

Nina Sparg has years of photographic experience and works with Nigel as a second shooter and assistant. She was drawn to photography with the birth of her first daughter. It gave her the opportunity to capture the little one's growth and development through the years and the special moments that are so easily forgotten. It wasn't until she did a course and achieved a Best Student award that she thought of taking it further. She then realised that her creative spirit could extend beyond the paintbrush, which is another of her favourite expressive tools. Her indispensable expertise includes compiling *A Moment in Focus'* designer albums. Her vast experience in business-related PR and marketing has helped the team move ahead with a structured plan for each of their clients. Her years of experience and involvement with international leaders give *A Moment in Focus* the unique advantage of being at ease with prominent figures and being able to ensure that their events run smoothly. Nina loves recreating what the eye sees and using her camera as a paintbrush. If she wasn't a photographer, she'd be an interior designer transforming homes into comfortable works of art. Her favourite indulgence is simply cuddling up to her husband on the beach with a glass of wine to watch the sunset.