

# How to choose your wedding photographer

Congratulations on your engagement!

Your wedding photographs will be something that you can enjoy for years to come.

But if you're finding the idea of choosing a photographer a bit daunting then this quick guide will make things a bit easier.

It has plenty of tips and practical details, as well as example images.



## What should you expect from your photographs?

In the past, wedding photography usually involved setting up a few formal posed pictures and a small number of stock shots.

But in the move from film to digital, it has expanded to incorporate:

- A wider range of artistic styles.
- A focus on capturing the real events of the day, along with people's authentic experiences, expressions and emotions, in more of a “documentary” approach.
- A larger amount of photographs, to cover a wider portion of the day.
- More options for receiving the final images, from digital to print.

## Types of photos

You will receive a range of different images that cover the whole of your day. This chapter shows some examples of what you can expect.

But it goes without saying that no two weddings are the same; each one is as unique as the people involved. So your

photographer will naturally change and adapt to the events of the day, to tell your own story.

### Getting Ready Photos

This is a chance to capture the laughs and good times while you're getting ready for the big day.

These pictures can cover the excitement and anticipation of this unique moment, which takes place so early in the day.

They are often documentary-style, showing the process of getting ready, along with visits from loved ones. They can show any unique traditions that you may have with your friends and family.



Then, as people get closer to being ready, the picture style can switch over to slightly more posed shots if you want, with everyone dressed up (but usually still larking about!)



If you have two partners getting ready at different locations then you can consider two photographers for this part of the day.

Or if both groups are nearby then one can switch between them.

Your photographer can have a chat about timings if this sounds like what you want.



Of course not everyone has prep photos; some start their coverage when they arrive at the venue; some wait until they've finished their makeup, and some start with everyone still in their pyjamas!

## Details

This can include anything that you've prepared for the big day, such as table decorations, wedding favours, place markers, bunting or anything else creative that you want to include.

These images are a great way to remember the little things that have gone to make your day so unique.

If there are any important details that aren't immediately obvious you can let your photographer know to make sure that nothing is missed.



## Transport

If you're arriving by unusual means, whether it's a vintage car, a balloon, or a horse and cart, then your photographer can get some pictures of you travelling in style.



## Before the Ceremony

This is a good time to get candid shots of the guests arriving, taking their seats, chatting and generally having a good time.

If you have two photographers then this can be a good opportunity for one to stay with people getting ready, while the other can be at the venue.



## The Ceremony

### The big moment!

In a traditional ceremony, the photographer would normally be poised and ready to capture the bride's big arrival, along with the groom's first reaction.

Then the photographer would normally keep out of the way for the rest of the proceedings.

This can often mean retreating to somewhere near the back of the ceremony, and using a longer lens to unobtrusively capture events, without distracting from the ceremony itself.

Some venues have some restrictions on where the photographer can be positioned, whereas some will only allow the photographer to pick one location and then to stay still. This is something that your photographer can discuss with the venue when you book them.

You may want to consider whether you would like your ceremony to be "unplugged."

This is where the couple ask their guests to put their phones and cameras away for the duration of the ceremony, leaving only the professional photographers and videographers to record.

This may be right for you if you'd like your guests to experience the moment without any distractions.

During the ceremony itself your photographer will aim to capture all the big moments: readings, performances, the rings, the first kiss and the big exit as a newly married couple!



### Post Ceremony

After the ceremony, the registrar will normally ask the photographers not to take any pictures during the signing of the wedding register.

This is to prevent any distraction during the signing. Also, as the wedding register is a legal document, it can contain sensitive information which wouldn't be appropriate to make copies of.

The registrar will normally use a pretend book to pose with once the signing is complete. These photographs can involve just the bride and groom, as well as other members of the bridal party.

If you're arranging a confetti throw it can make for some amazing pictures. Arranging a specific time for everyone to throw together will make for brilliant shots.



## The Venue

Pictures of the venue can cover any details of the building itself such as historic or unusual features.

We often arrive early and grab a few shots around the venue before we begin, as they're a great way to set the scene in an album.

If you'd like pictures taking in a specific location, or with anything in the background, just let your photographer know, and they can

incorporate it into any portraits or group shots of you and your guests.



## Candid

These are the pictures of your guests hanging out, relaxing and naturally just being themselves.

Your photographer should be aiming to capture plenty of these natural and never-to-be-repeated moments.

They will cover the smiles, laughs and unique reactions of your guests enjoying your day.



## “Formal” Group Shots

Weddings are an amazing time to bring together the people you love from distant parts of the country (and the world!)

Weddings days are sometimes the first time that some family members have been in the same room for years, or even at all.

So group photos are an excellent way to capture everyone together (and when they're dressed in their finest!)

But because group shots require some planning it's really useful to prepare a list of shots beforehand.

## The List

It's helpful if the list has the names of the individual people, as well as the name of the group.

So instead of just “Bride's Cousins” it can have “Bride's Cousins: Zoe, Mike and Sarah”

This prevents any confusion on the day and helps everything breeze along.

## Helpers

Another useful tip is to brief one or more members of the wedding party that they'll need to gather together the required guests for each photo.

The photographer will be talking to the guests in the current picture, making sure that everyone is posed nicely and looking great, so they won't be able to leave that location to find the next set of people.

Members of the wedding party will be more likely to know the people involved in the next shot and they will be better placed to put names to faces (and cajole people to put their drinks down!)

We normally bring several paper copies of the agreed photo list (plus pens to tick off shots) which we can give out to any bridal party helpers. (This can be useful if they're a bit merry themselves.)

## Announcing the Group Photos

If you can also announce to your guests that the group shots are taking place then it can help to keep everyone in the same place.

You can ask the registrar, the venue coordinator, the minister, or anyone else that would be appropriate, to make the announcement at the time that you need it.

(Some people take the opportunity of a quiet moment after the ceremony to go for a lie down in their hotel room, or to bring their bags in, if it's a venue where they're staying over.)

If you can let people know that the photos are happening imminently then it can be a big help.

If you can pick a time when people are likely to be milling around nearby that can also help to make sure that no one has strayed too far.

Immediately after the ceremony or wedding breakfast can be ideal, as everyone is naturally together at those times.

If you are providing drinks in a nearby garden, or people are relaxing in a bar area, then it helps if the photos are in the same

area or just round the corner, rather than on the other side of the venue.

If you have a location in mind please let your photographer know.

If you're meeting your photographer at the venue beforehand you can have a wander about and discuss some ideas. You can decide on some options that are outside, for good weather, as well as some indoors.

They will be able to give you ideas for locations, or if you're happy to leave it to them, they can just pick somewhere.

On a sunny day, the best locations are normally where the sun is behind the guests, or where they are in the shade of a building or trees.

That can help to prevent everyone getting too hot or squinting into the sun, plus the soft light in shady areas is very flattering to your guests.

If you know the time that you would like to take the shots then your photographer can check where the sun will be on the day, and suggest some ideas.

Don't worry if the weather means that your group photos need to be indoors.

On a cold or rainy day you can still produce beautiful results inside using the natural features of the venue.

With subtle lighting from your photographer, they should still be able to produce some amazing shots.

(It's obviously still your guests who are the focus and they'll still look great.)

For larger shots you can use steps and natural slopes to arrange your groups into tiers. You can also have the photographer up high.

(We've taken group shots where we've stood on fire exits, balanced on top of walls and leaned out of upstairs windows.)

It can be helpful to get the large shots out of the way first. It's always easier to remove people than to add them.

Sometimes a key family member can go missing before their photo. They can be feeling a bit unwell or tired.

If that's the case don't worry. Just tell your photographer and they can take the shot later in the day.

We have taken lots of adhoc photos later on when people have all got together again.

How many group photos should I have?

A list of up to ten group photos is easy to manage and doesn't take too long for your guests. We do shoot larger lists, but please allow enough time to assemble people and take the shots.

Please also make sure that you've briefed your friends and family who will be helping out.

It will also help if you can shoot the pictures in a specific order. Then the photographer will be clear on where you are in the list.

If you have any family members who are infirm it can help to get their shots out of the way first, so that they aren't waiting too long. Or, if you can, arrange the shoot somewhere with some seating nearby so that they can have a rest.

Also, if you have any family members in wheelchairs it can help to have some seats if you'd like other people in the shots to be sat down. These can be lawn chairs or something similar.



Of course, you don't have to have any group photos, and not everyone does.

You can get amazing candid photos of your guests just having fun throughout the day, interacting and relaxing naturally.

How long do group photographs take?

It will normally take a few minutes per shot to gather people together and make sure they're all posed nicely.

Then we quickly take a burst of pictures of the same shot - enough to make sure that there's at least one with no one blinking!

Full wedding party shot

A photograph of all your wedding guests is a great way to remember the people that attended.

One of the amazing aspects of a wedding is seeing all the random combinations of people that come from different parts of your life. For example, your distant relatives dancing with your workmates or your in-laws chatting to your school friends. So it's a great opportunity to capture everyone all together.

Some great locations for this are places where the crowd can be arranged on different levels, such as steps in front of the venue, or places where the photographer can shoot down to get everyone's faces from above.

The venue coordinator will probably have some good ideas for locations, both indoors and out.

This shot is best arranged for a time when it can be announced to the guests. This can be straight after the ceremony or the wedding breakfast.

Of course, staging a big photo like this may not be for you. Again, if that's the case just let your photographer know.

### Portrait shots

These are a good opportunity to take some more intimate shots of you relaxing and enjoying each other's company, in beautiful surroundings.

They are normally photos of just the two of you, away from the rest of the wedding.

They can be a chance for your photographer to try out some more creative and artistic styles, and possibly take a bit more time to set up shots, as well as explore some other parts of the venue.

This is also a good time to get individual portraits if they weren't taken earlier.

It's worth talking to your photographer to let them know how important these are to you, and how much time you'd like to spend on them.

(Or if you just want to get back to partying with your guests as quickly as possible!)



## Meals and Speeches

If you are having a formal meal or “wedding breakfast” then this is traditionally when your photographer will take photos of the two of you entering the room, to the applause of your guests.

Then they will probably take a break, leaving your guests to eat, relax and chat without worrying about having their picture taken.

Your photographer will normally be ready again for the beginning of any speeches.

During these, your photographer will normally be capturing pictures of the speaker, plus the reactions from your guests.



### Sunset shots

The hour before sunset can be a great time to take some portrait shots.

The low sun and diffused light can give the images an ethereal quality which can make you and your venue look even more romantic.



## First Dance

If you have a first dance then it can make for some amazing pictures.

Your photographer might make use of the lights provided by the venue or a DJ, plus they may also have flashes or other lights set up within the room.

These images will show the two of you but can include your guests nearby, especially if they rush the dance floor as well!



## Cake Cutting

Pictures that show the two of you cutting the cake are obviously a traditional classic.

Just make sure you're confident with the knife!



## Dance floor

The dance floor lights, combined with people letting their hair down, can make for some amazing action shots.



## Seeing more examples

If you find a photographer that you like then it can be useful to see several full weddings that they've shot.

Their best images will normally be used on Instagram and Facebook, so it's useful to see a whole wedding, to make sure that they are consistently delivering beautiful images.

## How many pictures will I receive?

Every wedding is different but most photographers offer somewhere between 500 and 1000 images.

This can depend on the length of the day, the number of different events happening and whether you have two photographers.

## How will I get my pictures?

You can receive your collection in a variety of formats. Your photographer will usually offer digital images, but may offer some some printed options as well.

### Online gallery

This is a great way to view your pictures because as soon as the photographer finishes them you're able to take a look.

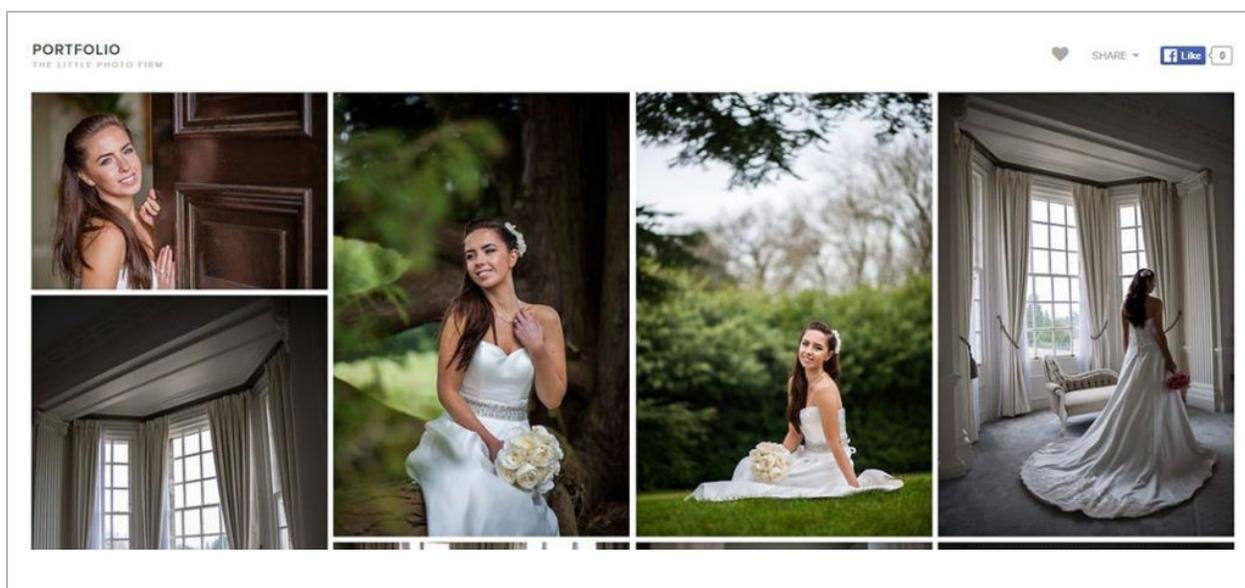
It's also easy to share the link with other people, or post it on social media, and you can immediately download your copies to keep.

The gallery may need a password to download the images, or even just to view, whereas some galleries are available to anyone with the link.

Some will also allow you to buy prints, so you can send the link to parents and other family members who might want to buy.

Some might allow you to mark pictures as favourites, or share on facebook, or create collections of your favourites.

There's an example gallery if you click the image below:



Or you can click this link:

<http://thelittlephotofirm.pixieset.com/portfolio>

Other download options

Your photographer may make your pictures available to download via other means such as Dropbox, Google Drive or as a download from their own website.

USB memory stick

Your package may include your images on a USB memory stick.



These are often individually decorated, for example they may be engraved with your details, and they are often delivered in packaging like wooden boxes or drawstring bags.

These are possibly becoming less popular in favour of downloads.

## Looking after your images

For any images that you receive digitally, it's obviously important to back them up safely.

You can make several copies and possibly give one to parents or other family members. You can also put them on a service like Dropbox or Google Drive.

Your photographer may include something in their contract where they promise to keep a copy of your pictures for a certain period of time after the wedding, so this could be worth checking.

## Prints

Your wedding package may include some or all of your images as prints.

Even if you're receiving your photographs digitally this can still be a great option.



Viewing prints provides a different experience of remembering your big day. It can feel very special to hold images of your loved ones, and your big day, in your hands.

## Albums

An album gives you the highlights of your day in a beautiful tactile experience.

While you'll want a large body of digital images to cover your whole day, an album is an emotional and powerful version of your story.

We normally create a draft design of an album first, to give an idea of layout and design options. Then we email the proof and the couple can let us know how much or how little they would like to change.

Sometimes they don't ask for any changes and sometimes they have very specific ideas about the layout and contents, which we respond to straight away.

(If you'd like to see some example album proofs that we have designed for our customers then please send me an [email](#).)

## Music Slideshows

Part of your package may include a video of your images set to music.

This is an enjoyable and emotional way to experience your images, especially if it's the first time that you've seen them.

(Some photographers send these as a “sneak peek” shortly after the wedding.)

It may not be on your list of what you're looking for, but it can be great to watch and to share.

## File formats

Your photographer is likely to say in their contract or on their website that they provide digital pictures as “jpeg's.”

This is the normal format for your computer or phone, or uploading to social media.

You may hear about another format called “raw.” These are the big files that a professional camera produces, but you normally can't view them without special software.

Changing the pictures from raw to jpeg usually involves making lots of choices about the final image, such as colouring, brightness etc.

This is part of a photographer's style, so the jpeg format is considered the “finished product.”

### Licensing

Your photographer would normally provide your images in high resolution and without watermarks, so you can use them to order prints in the future.

However, your contract may have restrictions around what you can do with your images. You probably wouldn't be able to sell them to a publication or use them for any of your own commercial purposes.

It's standard practise that the photographer keeps the copyright of the images, but you can normally print them yourself as much as you like. This normally includes using them for any other personal purposes.

So it's worth checking that you'll get the images as high resolution, with no watermarks and the ability to print what you want.

(This is the case for all our weddings.)

Black and white

Your photographer may include a mix of black and white images as part of your collection.

This can be part of their artistic process, as some images are more powerful in one format or the other.

Other photographers provide all images as colour as well as black and white.

## Number of Hours Coverage

Some photographers offer a fixed number of hours coverage.

Depending on the price and package, this may be between 6 and 12 hours.

However, some photographers are just booked for the full day and will stay until the first dance, or until the end of the evening, or some other agreed point.

So it's worth checking what's included in your package and how it fits into your timeline, plus what would happen if timings change on the actual day.

### Cover for if the worst happens

It's unlikely but there's a tiny possibility that a photographer might be ill, or there may be some other emergency why they can't make it at the last minute.

It can be useful to find out what cover they have in place for if they aren't available, come the actual day.

They may have a second shooter scheduled for the day anyway, or other backup photographers on hand who can step in to cover.

They may also have a clause in their contract to hire another photographer within a certain timeframe.

### What does your photographer do for you?

The work that your photographer does begins before the big day and continues afterwards.

They would normally schedule time for meetings with you, in person and over the phone, to discuss your plans. They would plan

out their day based on your priorities, and communicate the locations and timelines to a second photographer if you're booking one.

They may visit the venue with you, to look at the main locations, if that fits in with your schedule.

I normally write up a document that covers:

- the timeline
- the addresses
- the group shots
- key phone numbers
- the names of the bridal party and family members

Once it's ready, I'll print it out, to make sure I have all the information on hand, in case my phone dies or anything else.

If you're having an engagement shoot your photographer should research location ideas for you, and come up with shot ideas, ready for the shoot itself.

Then they would meet you for the actual shoot and then backup and edit the photos, before uploading the final collection.

They should stay in touch leading up to the big day, to make sure that all the details and timings are all still correct.

Then they would normally arrange another catch up close to the wedding to confirm everything.

The day before the wedding they should be preparing all the little details, like charging batteries, printing timelines, packing bags and preparing memory cards. Depending on the location, they may travel nearby the night before.

On the day itself they would normally arrive early to the venue or the location for getting ready.

Then it's normally all-go, non-stop until the evening, making sure they are in the right place at the right time, with all the gear set up, to make the couple and the guests look awesome!

After travelling home, they would normally begin by backing up your images safely from all the different memory cards.

Then they would begin the process of editing and processing the pictures, to make sure that everything is consistently finished in terms of cropping, brightness, filters, colours and lots of other little details.

They will also remove any images that are out of focus, plus any test shots to check lighting, or any that have people blinking.

This can all take days for hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of images.

Then they will order and upload the finished images for viewing. Then they will begin work on the image selection and designs for any album layout.

Once the album design has been confirmed they will place the order.

Finally, they'll package up and arrange delivery for anything that needs to be posted out as part of your package, such as prints or albums.

### Why not just use friends?

If I can make the case for hiring a professional then it would be to give you peace of mind.

If you know that as much of the wedding as possible is just taken care of then you can relax and just enjoy the moment.

A professional can bring equipment to cover a wide range of situations, as well as backups of everything.

They'll be experienced in capturing the key moments, they'll be able to cope with different conditions and they'll be experienced in directing you, to make sure you feel relaxed and confident (while looking great!)

Friends may offer to help with the best of intentions, but on the day may also want to spend their time enjoying themselves as a guest, or struggle with some of the conditions, such as difficult lighting or large groups.

Hiring a photographer may seem expensive, but they are paying for a lot of costs, including buying and maintaining professional equipment, software, insurance, training, advertising, cloud backups, websites, travel, taxes and more.

Plus, they'll still be working for you long after the other vendors will have finished.

Your pictures will be your lasting memories of the day, so they will be an investment in something that you can enjoy for years to come.

## Should we meet at the venue?

It isn't necessary to meet your photographer at the venue. Most can arrive early on the wedding day and look around, to find the locations with great light and interesting backgrounds.

But a visit can be useful if there are specific details about the location, and how each area fits into your timeline, that you'd like to discuss.

It's also another opportunity to spend a bit of time with your photographer, to get to know each other some more.

You can also talk through any remaining choices with a venue coordinator if they've arranged to be there as well.

Plus it's nice spend a bit of time thinking about your day in the location where it's all going to happen. It can bring your plans to life a bit more than trying to remember it all from home.

## Social media and wedding blogs

Wedding photographers will normally post photos from weddings to their websites and social media accounts.

That gives you the chance to see their other work, and is a normal part of the marketing process. If you'd prefer them not to post pictures from your wedding then have a chat with them to discuss your options.

Some photographers also submit pictures to wedding blogs. If this is something that you'd like (or not) then have a chat.

### Associate photographers

If you book with a larger studio then the actual photographer on the day might be picked from a pool of potential people, often called "associate photographers."

This type of arrangement may be fine for you, if the studio has a particular "house style" that you like.

But some wedding photographers operate as a single person, or a married couple. These are great if you'd like to guarantee who will be shooting your wedding.

It may be that you've fallen in love with a photographer's style, or you develop a great rapport in the months leading up to your wedding, and don't fancy meeting someone new on the day, along with everything else going on.

So it's worth confirming exactly who will be shooting your wedding.

## Travel

Your photographer may include travel within their prices or, depending on your wedding location, this may be an additional cost.

So this can be a good item to check.

## Booking Process

You can normally pay a deposit to reserve your date when you sign the contract.

Then the final amount is normally paid before the wedding day, often a month or several weeks before.

Your photographer may offer the option to move the date if you need to, provided they aren't already booked for the new date.

What does my photographer need to know?

Your photographer may arrange some meetings or calls to go over the details of your wedding. They can do their best work if

they know as much as possible about what's happening throughout your day.

It can be useful if you have a timeline that covers the key moments of the day.

They may send you a short questionnaire that confirms the date and location of the wedding, and covers basics like your contact details and addresses for getting ready shots.

We normally have a quick call at the time of booking, but then we chat more as we get closer to the date.

We can also arrange a visit to the venue to go through the locations together.

We're able to just turn up at a wedding and "do our thing" so the couple don't need to think about anything. However, having some meetings beforehand can give couples a chance to let us know anything that's important to them, if they want to.

This can include any unusual events, such as magicians or masquerade balls (both things we have photographed recently!)

You can also discuss any relationships to be aware of, such as guests that don't get on, divorced parents or anything else that the photographer needs to handle sensitively.

You can also discuss any particular pictures or styles that you love. If there is a specific location or type of shot that you would love then let them know. You can also discuss any photographs you'd like to get with any special people that are attending.

### Insurance

Your venue may ask for your photographer to provide details of their public liability insurance.

If so, just let them know and they can provide the certificate to the venue.

### Other Vendors

Your photographer will need to work with other vendors on the day. It can be useful for them to make contact beforehand, to have a chat about how they both work, and any requirements on each side.

They may need to discuss timings and locations with a venue coordinator or planner.

They may also need to work alongside any videographers, to make sure that everyone stays out of each other's shots.

And for dance floor shots they might want to discuss the lighting with a DJ or band.

## Engagement shoots

Some wedding photographers offer engagement, or pre-wedding, shoots. They can be offered as part of a package or as an additional extra.

I would always recommend doing this if you can. It's a great opportunity to spend time with your photographer, and to get used to working together.

Although you may bond really well in your initial meetings, it's good to get the experience of collaborating together on a shoot, before the big day.

I've found that everyone who has booked an engagement photography session with me has really enjoyed it, and found it a

really positive experience.

It may feel like it's going to be a big deal, allocating time when you're already busy arranging a wedding, but it's a fun way to get a sense of how well you work together.

It's also a unique chance to do something different as part of the wedding build-up.

You may want to arrange the shoot at the place you got engaged, or maybe at the venue where you're getting married.

If there are grounds or gardens that would be suitable then this can be a good way to see what the final pictures could look like.

Plus you can walk your photographer through your plans for the big day at the same time.

My engagement shoots normally last about an hour and a half. We just go for a wander somewhere pleasant. Within that time we're able to become comfortable in each other's company and for the couple to be confident that they'll look good in their pictures.

Your photographer should help you out with suggestions for locations, as well as ideas to get you interacting with each other

naturally. Whoever you are, you'll look good in your pictures if you're confident, happy and relaxed. Your photographer should be good at making you feel (and therefore look) your best.



I'm sometimes able to offer a free engagement shoot, if you're interested in booking, but would like to see some pictures first. I only have limited slots so if that sounds good then please get in touch as soon as possible.

## About me

I hope you've enjoyed this book and found it useful.

I'm Ian, a wedding photographer based in Yorkshire, but I shoot weddings everywhere. I love meeting people and finding out about their plans. It's great to spend time with people during some of the happiest times in their life.

If you'd to talk to me about booking your wedding I'd love to talk to you:

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You can check out my work below, to see if the style is what you're looking for:

<http://www.thelittlephotofirm.com>

<http://instagram.com/thelittlephotofirm>

<https://www.facebook.com/thelittlephotofirm>