

The Bridal Extravaganza

Choosing a Videographer

It used to be that the videographer —armed with lights, boom microphones, and clumsy tripods—stood out at a wedding ceremony or reception even more than the bride did. Thanks to new developments in digital technology, camcorders and wireless microphones, a professional videographer can capture your event and barely be noticed.

Technology has also changed the editing process as well as the final delivery medium, with the advent of digital editing and DVD. The fundamentals of wedding videography, though, remain unchanged. Regardless of the type of equipment a videographer uses, you want to find someone who feels like a good fit for your style, your personality, and your budget.

As with photography and other creative services, referrals from friends and family are a great way to begin your search. Another good source for referrals is your wedding photographer, if you've chosen one. Once you have a list of candidates, you can begin the process of interviewing and viewing samples. Keep in mind that videographers can book anywhere from six to 18 months in advance.

Viewing Samples

Ask to see the videographer's sample wedding tape. Most companies will offer to show you a compilation tape of different weddings. Ask about any new technology they have invested in and how proficient they've become. Make sure that the sample you view belongs to the actual person who will videotape your wedding. Creativity is an individual talent, not a company talent. Make sure you meet your videographer in person and add their name to the contract. Beware of high-pressure sales techniques that require an immediate decision. Simply explain that you want to honor all of your appointments before deciding.

Options

Packages can range from a single camera, unedited video to a multiple-camera video with all of the available special effects. Extras can include everything from personal interviews to a montage of childhood photos set to music. Some couples like to send a highlight tape (usually 5-15 minutes long) to key friends and relatives, especially to those people who could not make it to your wedding. Ask about the cost of multiple duplicates. If you see something in a demo that you like, ask if it's available.

Technology 101

When viewing the tape, focus on these fundamentals: Is the tape of good quality? Are the images clear, sharp, and in focus? Are the colors bright and true to life, or do they appear muted or muddy? Are camera movements and edits smooth and the sound clear? Is the lighting appropriate and unobtrusive?

Although technology changes every few months, here are a couple of important questions. Ask about the frequency of the microphones. UHF wireless microphones attract less interference from other sound systems. As for cameras, a basic distinction is 3-chip vs. 1-chip, with 3-chip providing crisper images and color.

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Questions for Your Videographer

There are many details to consider when making a final decision on your videographer. The following questions will guide you to make a qualified decision.

1. Can the videographer handle your specific lighting requirements?

As couples find new and unusual locations for wedding ceremonies and receptions, the issue of lighting becomes more crucial. Inquire ahead of time with your church or reception location, and pass along any information about restrictions or special lighting situations to your photographer and videographer.

2. Does the videographer have backup equipment in case of a technical breakdown, and backup videographers in case of personal illness?

This is very important to ensure the quality of your video and that you will be covered in case of any emergency.

3. What time will your videographer arrive?

Once there, how long will they stay? Are there extra fees for longer receptions? Are there additional fees for travel? Will they agree to a dress code?

4. Does the videographer do editing in house or contract it out?

Is the editing done in-house or sent out? Will you have input in the editing process such as choosing the captions and background music? Is it possible to intersperse photographs of the couple? Are special effects included in the cost?

5. Does the videographer and photographer know each other?

Ask if there is a problem working with the photographer you have chosen, and ask if the two of them can coordinate camera placement prior to your wedding.

6. When will the tape(s) be available?

If you're having your tape edited, ask how long that takes and when you will have the final product. Remember that it takes several days to a week to edit the footage. Ask about waiting periods, especially during peak wedding seasons. It's to your advantage to make your final payment upon delivery—otherwise you are at the mercy of schedules.

7. How long is the master tape kept?

Ask if you will be able to get more copies if desired in the future, and will you be notified if they are no longer keeping the masters. Will you be able to purchase them?

Once You've Decided

When you've made your final decision on a videographer, notify them as soon as possible to lock in your wedding date. Meet with them and be sure to get all of the details in writing. The contract should contain important information as listed on page 31.

Details

Let your videographer know the details of your wedding and of any special circumstances such as:

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- number in wedding party
- children in wedding party
- restrictions at the ceremony or reception
- lists of special moments not to be missed
- will they start at the house or church

Decide if you want the videographer to go ahead to the reception even if you are having photographs taken after the ceremony. They can be filming all of the fun you are missing! Video is the only moving record you will have of your wedding. Be sure to hire a professional to keep that memory alive.

Videography Studio _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Fax _____ Emergency No. _____
 Consultant _____ Business Hours _____
 Email _____ Web Site _____

Videography Details

Number of Cameras Videographers _____
 Arrival Time for Set-up at House _____ at Ceremony _____
 Arrival Time for Set-up at Reception _____
 Editing Hours Required (approximate) _____ Price _____
 Special Effects (list) _____

 _____ Price _____
 Price of Finished Tape _____ No. Needed _____ Total _____
 Price of Highlights Tape _____ No. Needed _____ Total _____
 Other _____ Price _____
 Tapes can be Picked Up on (date) _____ at _____
 Make Checks Payable to: _____
 Cancellation Policies and Notes: _____

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