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Fine Art Wedding Photography & Portraiture

Typical Wedding Day Timeline

Bride's hair: One hour. This gives enough time to get it right and make any tweaks or changes from the trial run. If you aren't doing a trial run, add 30 minutes. I recommend a trial run.

Bride's makeup: 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the makeup style the bride selects. Again, a trial run helps shorten this process.

Bridesmaids' hair: 30 minutes per person.

Bridesmaids' makeup: 45 minutes per person.

The order: When your hairstylist arrives, have her start on your bridesmaids first. I prefer to have the bride go last so that when her photographer arrives, they catch those last-minute 'getting ready' shots, and the bride looks the freshest. Plus this lets the bride visit with her girls and answer any last minute issues from other vendors.

Some folks prefer the bride start with makeup to give more time and attention to the bride. This depends on the bride's preferences as well hair & make up. Don't wait to discuss this. Work this out at the trial run.

If you're traveling to a salon, double the travel time you anticipate — better to have too much time than not enough

When should the photographer arrive? One and half hours before the bride is ready to go gives time to capture some preparation moments as well as the grounds, rings, flowers, dress, etc. It's generally best to start shooting during the bride's hair and makeup. The latter portion of the hair and makeup styling, when the bride is closer to being finished, makes for more flattering photos.

Put on your veil after the dress. Consider asking your stylist to stick around until then to make sure your veil is secure.

Pre-ceremony photos of the bride with her family and attendants, as well as the groom with his family and attendants should take 30-45 minutes unless the groups are large. You must also consider how punctual the groups tend to be and possibly cushion the schedule to allow for unexpected delays.

First look: 15-30 minutes. Even if you don't see each other, I recommend a few minutes for you to hold hands around a corner or stand with a door between you. Those few intimate moments alone may be all you get all day.

Groom and groomsmen dressed and ready: Two hours before the ceremony.

Bride and bridesmaids dressed and ready: One hour before the ceremony.

Ideal ceremony length: 30 minutes. This is enough time to have meaningful readings and music to make your ceremony unique and memorable.





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Maximum gap between ceremony and reception: One and half hours. After an hour your guests will get antsy. You must provide snacks, drinks and entertainment for your guests. This is the perfect time for guests to have fun with a photobooth – this is the latest “must have” for your guests.

Formal Bridal and Family Photos: This is during the gap between ceremony and reception. Be prepared. Know the shot list and make sure your photographer knows your wishes. If the bridal party and families are large, add another 15-30 minutes.

Reception: Six hours. "This allows time for cocktails, dinner, dancing and all the “wedding events.”

Order of events (these can vary on your preferences):

First dance: Immediately after the bride and groom enter the reception.

Father/daughter dance: Immediately following the first dance.

Mother/son dance: Immediately following the father/daughter dance. Or, sometimes, this dance is shared with the father/daughter dance.

Welcome toast: Given by the father of the bride or by the bride and groom.

First course (salad/appetizer) served

Toasts: Ladies first! Start with the maid of honor, followed by the best man.

Second course (main course) served

Toasts: The bride and groom can give a toast here, if desired.

Guests invited to dance: Open up the dance floor, and get the party started!

Cake cutting: Two hours before the reception ends. A great DJ often adds a little game or distraction for the guests while the cake is being cut and plated. If your DJ doesn't offer this, then help him weave into his work.

Bouquet and garter tosses: Right after the cake cutting, or about one and half hours before the end of the reception.

ALL DANCE: This is when and where your guests get to let it all hang out and sweat out the drinks and work off the sugar.

Farewell: This should start about 30 minutes before the end of the reception. If you're doing a sparkler farewell, for example, have guests start lining up about 15 minutes before you plan to exit. Once you leave, don't come back for at least an hour. Many couples stage a fake sendoff. But if you come back, your guests won't leave. Once they know you're coming back, they'll head home.

Reminder: Many venues have fees for running over. And some vendors have ending times in their contracts. Know the consequences of running over.

