



HARIEL XAVIER
PHOTOGRAPHY

WEDDING GUIDE

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HELLO, HELLO, HELLO!

Congratulations, you've decided to marry your person! And congratulations to me, too, because you've chosen me to join you for the ride. Words cannot describe how honored I am to be a part of your love story. I can't wait to get to know you, to capture your wedding day, and to join you for a reception boogie.

There's so much to think about between now and then, and I'm sure your heads are already spinning - making decisions about things you didn't even realize existed. So to make it a little easier, I've created this to help guide you through the whole process!



These are all the things that as a photographer I'm thinking about. I've made it as comprehensive as possible so that you spend less time worrying about the details and more time getting excited for your wedding!

Think of this as less of a rule book and more of a guide, aimed at preparing you as much as possible so that when The Big Day rolls around, you can kick back and enjoy the champagne (and the presence of all your nearest and dearest, of course).

ENGAGEMENT

session

If the thought of making lovey eyes at your fiance in front of a camera makes you want to never be out in public again, then it's probably a good idea to book an engagement session. Not only is it an incredible way for us to have a bit of fun together without the pressure of a timeline or all your guests, but spending some time together calms the nerves, inspires confidence in front of the camera, and allows us to create beautiful keepsakes in a chilled atmosphere. Plus who doesn't love a new profile pic! We'll get to know each other better, come away from it having a better sense of how we work together, and be ready to roll for wedding day.

BONUS:

You'll have beautiful images to add to wedding invitations or save-the-date cards!



FANCY DRESS *shoot*

Traditionally dubbed ‘Bridal Shoot,’ this session is perfect for getting beautiful photos of either brides or grooms in their wedding best before (or even after!) the big day. No time pressure, no waiting guests, no stress. Just you, me, my camera, and a creative adventure. Get a good trial run for your makeup or dress or tux or shoes, pick a location you love (remember it doesn’t have to be anywhere near your ceremony venue!), and I’ll meet you there!



WHAT TO *expect*

I believe it's my job to make sure that you feel calm, authentic, and engaged during a shoot with me and I will go above and beyond to ensure this is the case. I will always direct and pose you so you don't feel or look awkward in any of your photographs.



I use an app called Unscripted for posing inspiration, so together we can plan out different poses that feel great for you to do (or, alternatively, we improvise and look at Unscripted when we get stuck). Either way, just know that I've got your back. We will make magic together, I promise!

As a wedding photographer, I've gone to a fair few weddings. I've seen it all - the cold feet, the wardrobe malfunction, the teary grandpa, and at least thirteen pairs of stashed stilettos in a bush. But one thing that I know for sure, is that regardless of how much planning you do, the wedding will always unfold as it's meant to. People seem to swing between being extremely excited and extremely overwhelmed as they're going through the stages of wedding planning--so if you're feeling either of those things, know that this is completely normal!

Want to plan the wedding of your dreams and keep your sanity, too?

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FROM ME TO YOU:



Tune out the noise that says you should invite people based on social obligations! This is your day, you should stay true to how you want to do it.



There is no shame in asking for help. If you need to practice asking for help in small incremental steps, start now so that you're a pro at calling in some big favours in the leadup to the wedding. And, guess what? People who love you will be thrilled to help!



Hold on tight, and enjoy the process. It'll rush by faster than you know it.

TIMELINES

Timelines make your day flow smoothly, giving your guests, staff, and vendors a general idea of when and where everything will pan out. With timelines as with weddings, there is no one-size-fits-all approach so it's super important to make a timeline that works for you. If you have a wedding planner, they'll be able to help you create something that aligns with your vision of the perfect day. But one thing to remember is that things almost always take longer than you think they will. Allow some time in between events so you have a second to breathe, kiss your partner, and drink some water. I always make sure to keep a 30 minute window of time before the ceremony without any photos to give you a chance to tame those flyaways or eat a quick bite!





Try to structure your timeline so that we're shooting the formal couple portraits at golden hour, just before the sun sets, with that beautiful afternoon glow all around you. There's nothing like this time of day to capture the mood and magic of the moment. Planning your wedding day with this in mind is super helpful and makes my job a whole lot easier. Reach out when you're ready to discuss this and I'll talk you through why it's absolutely necessary! Want to just flow with the day and not worry about portraits? No problem. Let's talk about doing your fancy dress shoot on a different day.

GETTING READY

At once calm and chaotic, the getting ready part of the day has all of the feels crammed into a couple of nervous and tender hours. With all of the action buzzing around the bride and groom, it's easy to find yourself in a really chaotic, crowded, and cluttered space that inadvertently adds stress to the situation. Considering the right space for this part of the day is more important than most people think, which is why I recommend thinking about this early.



The factors that contribute to me getting good photos are also the ones that contribute to a more relaxed day for everyone. Here's what I've learned we need:

- A clutter-free space
- Good natural light and lots of it!

TIP: A big window is ideal when taking portraits of people getting their makeup done. (The makeup artist will love the extra light, too!)
- A space with an interior style that suits your own. If at home, don't forget to get rid of all of the day-to-day clutter like electric fans or socks or dog beds. Fill the space with flowers, your favourite things, and just a couple of your favourite people.
- Enough time (at least one hour for each partner, but longer if you're rolling with a big crew). I'll be sure to show up right as the finishing touches are being placed, then head on over to your fiance to spend some time with them too.

TIP: A great way to maximise my time is to put all of the things aside that I need for the detail shots. The ring, the shoes, the cuff links, the love letters - put it all aside so I can arrange them and swap through quickly.
- While each of you are getting ready, chances are you'll be filled with nerves. As you won't have each other for comfort in these moments, consider writing a love letter for your fiance to read before the ceremony. It'll be a nice little keepsake, make for some incredibly emotion-filled images before the ceremony, and help build the excitement in the leadup to the 'I-do's'.

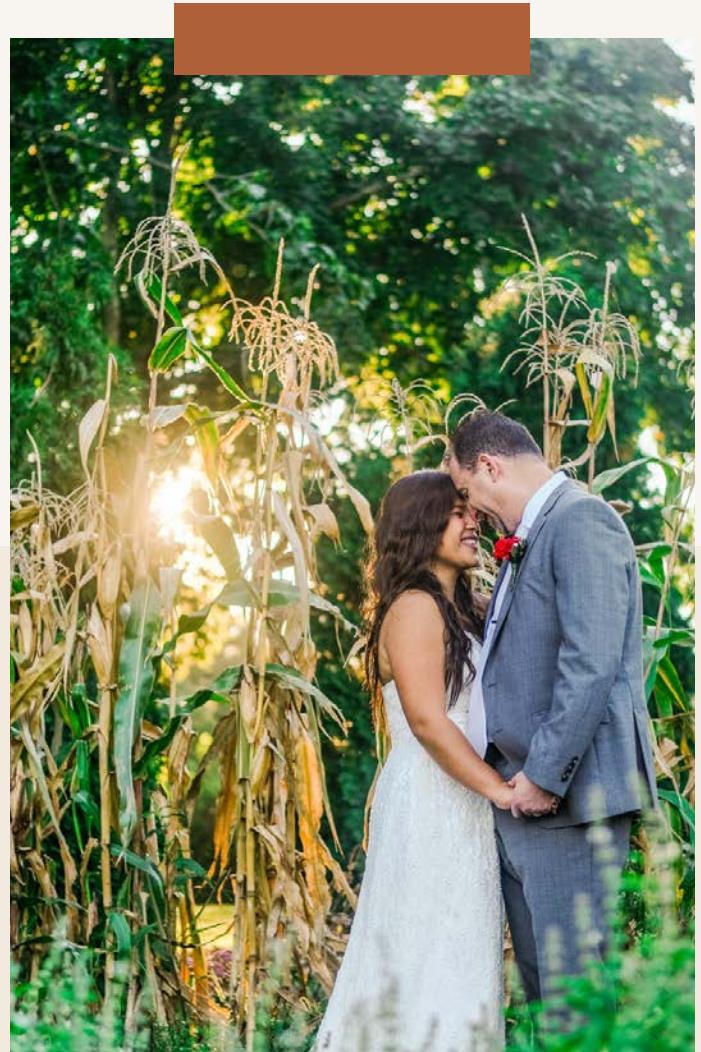
FIRST *look*

First looks are probably hands-down one of the sweetest new wedding traditions, shaking off old school traditions that say you shouldn't see each other until you're on opposite ends of the aisle. They kick up the romance a couple notches, allowing you two to share a private moment without your guests, and allowing me to capture some of the unfolding awe and excitement between you.

They're a really fun opportunity for all of us to put our heads together and get creative, but they're also sooo time sensitive. Planning is key to make sure that the light's right and I can be in the right spot to capture the surprise and wonder of the moment. When you're ready, let's talk about where you'll each stand, where I'll be, and how we can tee everything up so the shot is absolutely perfect.



I'm a big fan of first looks because they ease the pressure of portraits during the ceremony knowing we've got a few good ones in the bag. As soon as the ceremony's over you can loosen the tie, kick off the heels, and get silly with your friends and family.



portraits

YOU LOVERS

It's guaranteed that you'll walk away from your wedding day with so many incredible memories in your pockets. What's not guaranteed is that you'll walk away from your wedding day with a portrait of yourselves that you're both absolutely in love with--unless we set some time aside for it. So let's give ourselves at least an hour (preferably an hour of the blue or golden persuasion), in a beautiful pre-scoped locale to make some magic together. And, for the record, I'm not opposed to sneaking away for portrait time more than once throughout the day.





There'll be plenty of time for us to become friends before your big day, but if you're a little unsure about spending time in front of the camera, let me know. Most people have some reservations about it and I always do my best to get to know you so that I can give you the kind of direction that feels authentic to you. I've got lots of prompts up my sleeve for the shy and the rambunctious alike, so you'll never be left wondering what to do with yourselves.

Portraits like these allow you to create precious keepsakes, step back from the buzz, look into each other's eyes, and take a few grounding moments to yourselves.

FAMILY PORTRAITS

Depending on your own family constellation, there are any number of configurations we can photograph the wedding party in. Some with everyone in them, some with each of your immediate then extended families, and some variations of smaller and larger groups. One thing that's absolutely necessary for this part of the day is that everyone knows it's happening, everyone's on board, and there's someone (Wedding planner? Sibling? Best friend?) who knows who everyone is and can help me herd everyone in the right direction at the right time. Before the wedding we'll sit down and write down a list of every single person we'll need and where they should be at what time so we can fly through these and get everyone back to celebrating as quickly as possible!

An ideal time to do this is immediately after the ceremony, but before the couple portraits. Once the reception starts, it's hard to track everyone down (and likely we might capture hors d'orderves debris between someone's teeth).



WEDDING PARTY

If you have a fleet of bridesmaids or groomsmen (or both), it's worth getting some images of everyone with the flowers and the dresses and the ties and the cute matching outfits. Just make sure people know what's happening, and talk to the wedding planner so that they can put it in the schedule for the day - it'll help everyone know where to be and when.



CEREMONY & *reception*

I'll start by saying this: take things slow. With the kiss, with the walking, with the everything. Tell everyone else to do so, too. Resist the urge to rush through and just savour every moment! This allows me plenty of time to get the shot I need, too.



UNPLUGGED WEDDING

An unplugged wedding is not only an amazing opportunity for your guests to disconnect from their devices and to connect to the present moment but they also help me get unobscured shots of you and the rest of the ceremony. There are so many pivotal moments that happen in the blink of an eye - if someone jumps out in front of me with their iPhone while you and the love of your life have your first kiss as forever partners, chances are you'll have a big iPhone shaped blur in the foreground and I'll miss the shot.



It's hard to ask people to keep their devices in their pockets. And although the people you've invited undoubtedly love and respect you, it can sometimes be hard to disentangle ourselves from our technology. Set out little reminders for your guests to help nudge them in the right direction. Make some cute signs to put up, add a note to the programs, and let your celebrant know so they can remind them before the ceremony begins.

And tell them not to worry - I'm on the job of capturing some great images for everyone to take home.

LIGHTING

Whether your ceremony is indoor or outdoor, there are a few simple but effective things that can be done to make sure that all of the images sparkle as bright as your memories of your wedding day.



If outdoor, let's consider the following:

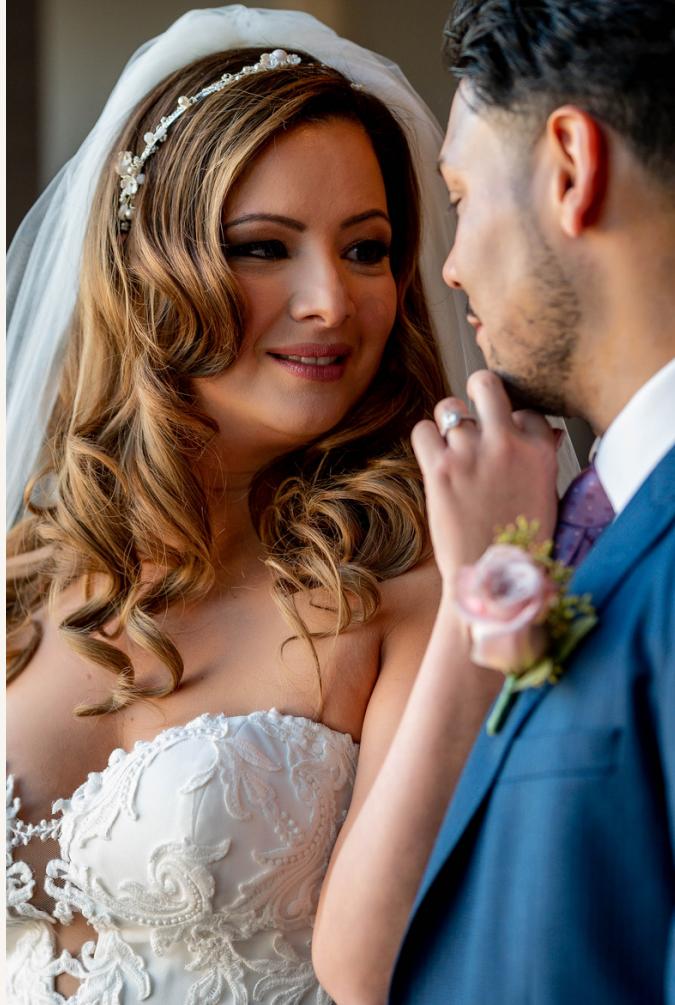
- What time is your wedding, and what will the lighting be like at that time? Can we ensure you're both evenly lit? Will I be shooting into the sun? If we can make it so that I'm not, that'd be amazing.
- What will your background look like? Can we make it pretty? Will there be anything that could cast shadows onto your faces?
- If I have more physical space to play around with I'll be able to get a nice mix of different kinds of shots. Close ups, details, wide-angles, and various candid guests.
- Elevate the composition of your shots by having a symmetrical space. If you say your vows under an arch or between an arbour, your images will have that extra little aesthetic oomph.

If indoor, let's consider the following:

- What kinds of windows does your venue have? Do they use natural or artificial light? Sometimes artificial light can make things look really cold or clinical, but it's possible to warm things up a bit by stringing up some warm festoon lights or candles.
- Are there any rules surrounding your place of worship (if this is where we're having the ceremony) that I should know about? If you're unsure, consult with your religious leader and ask them if they have any rules they'd like me to know about.
- Would you like me to avoid using flash?
- Do you have a preference as to how much I move around during the ceremony/reception? Would you like me to jump in the mosh or hang back?
- Different photographers have such different styles. Chances are, if you've booked me you have a feel for my vibe. I always do my best to be as emotionally aware as possible, but it never hurts to have a chat prior to the ceremony so that I'm across it all.

after THE CEREMONY...

You'll probably get mobbed! Which is great and loving and so so fun, but I want to capture all of the tears and the hugs and the high-fives. So, if you can, try not to get mobbed in a tiny hallway or in front of the bathroom. Angle for a shady spot outside or a well-lit spacious room so I can be sure to capture the many happy moments in all their happy glory. If there's a flower petal throw or bubble parade or an eco-confetti moment, let me know ahead of time so I can capture you guys grinning from ear to ear behind all of the airborne fragments.



RECEPTION + dinner

The more I know about the layout of the venue and the kind of lighting that will be used, the better prepared I'll be to make sure all of the details line up in favour of amazing images.



From the details of where you'll be sitting and what you have in the background, to where you'll be in relation to the person giving speeches, all of this is super helpful for me to get a lay of the land and understand where to get the best shots. Will there be a sit-down dinner or will people be making their way around with snacks all night? Is it formal or more of a relaxed thing? If you're having a DJ, will they be using their own lighting? The more fairy lights and candles and non-directional lighting the better, multi-coloured disco strobes don't look good on guests or their food!

Also, most people don't like to be photographed while they're eating, so this is a good time for me to grab a quick bite too and be well-prepared for the rest of the night! It's great to put in a request with the kitchen that I get my meal first so that I can eat before speeches start!

FIRST DANCE & *sparkler exit*

Whether choreographed and theatrical, or shy and a little clumsy, the first dance is one of the most tear-jerking moments of the day. For me to capture this perfectly, ask everyone to give you two some time before flooding the dance floor - I'd love to get snaps that contrast the quiet and the chaos equally.

Ditch the cool, directional overhead lights in favour of sparklers, candles, and warm atmospheric lighting. A warm beam of light backlighting the two of you is a great addition as well.



If you're planning a sparkler exit, make sure I get the memo about this! It works best if there's a designated sparkler hander outer so that everyone's sparklers are burning bright together! If you've booked a venue that doesn't allow for a sparkler exit, you could opt for bubbles or eco confetti -- just let me know so I can ensure there's enough light available for the shot.

This is usually where my job ends, and I'll leave everyone to party on into the wee hours while I head home super excited about all of the incredible moments I've witnessed throughout the day.

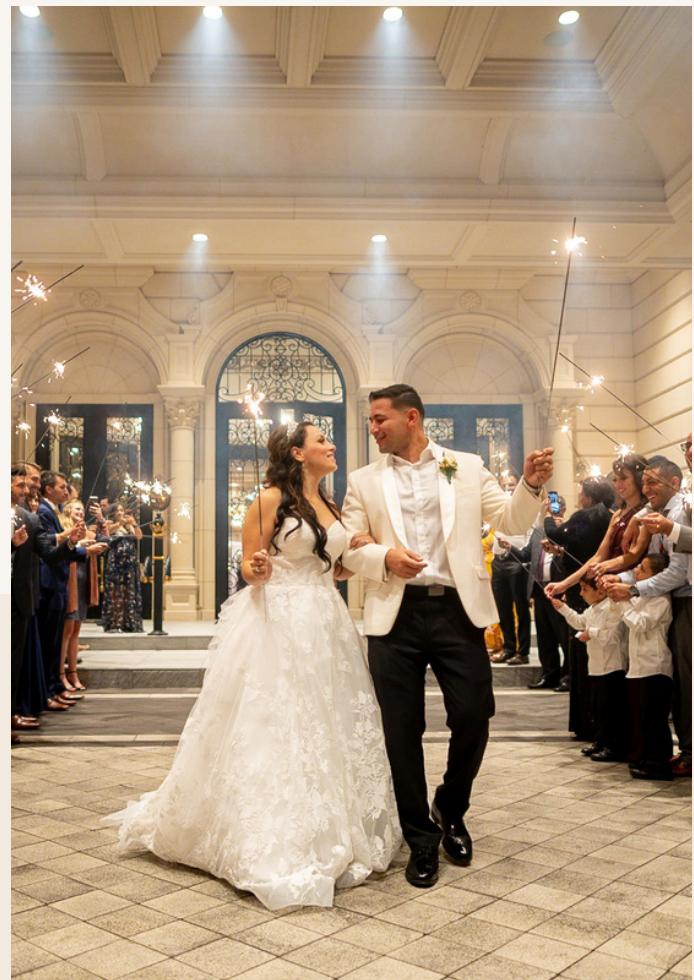


PHOTO DELIVERY

It takes me six weeks to select, edit, and deliver your gallery of photos after the wedding but I'll be sure to sneak you a couple of previews within 48 hours so you can share them with family and friends while everyone's still buzzing from the big day.

When I eventually do hand over all of the images, it's always such a special moment for everyone! A few of my couples have invited friends and family over for a special viewing event--it's always amazing getting to relive that day with your nearest and dearest. Plus, any excuse to make a batch of popcorn is always welcome.

Feel free to share your images with your guests so they can share them on their own social media. But please don't forget to tag me! Not only does it help others find their way to my page, but it's always so fun for me to see which snaps everyone loves most.

Please refrain from adding filters when reposting (it goes against the rules laid out in my contract). If you want editing tweaks, please reach out.

If vendors want to use any of my images for their business pages, refer them to me and I can provide them with the gallery and photo rights.

WEDDING ALBUMS

and prints

How often do you flick back through the photos on your phone just to reminisce? If you're anything like me, it doesn't happen all that often. This is why I'm a firm believer in the photo album. A physical object, an heirloom, and a beautiful way to memorialise your special day.

I can create a selection of photos or take your lead, but I'd love to work with you in creating an album that holds a special place in your home. I've taken the time to cultivate relationships with top-notch printers who render images faithfully and never compromise on quality.

I'll design it over the course of a couple of weeks, send it to you for approval, and get it back from the printers within three weeks.

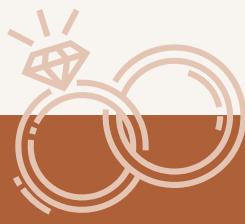




THANK YOU

I know that this has been a lot of information to digest, but please know that not all of it applies to every wedding. Sit down and have a discussion with your partner about what feels right for both of you, and don't hesitate to get me on the line if you feel like you just need a human being to talk you through all of the text.

I'm so grateful you chose me and I can't wait for your big day to roll around so we can start capturing some beautiful memories together!



LET'S RECAP

- I will always direct and pose you so you don't feel or look awkward in any of your photographs.
- Write love letters to one another to read while getting ready if you can.
- Give me the DL on lighting at the ceremony and reception.
- Don't forget to talk to your celebrant or religious leader about their preferences and my role as a photographer during the ceremony.
- Slow down, don't forget to breathe, take it all in, and have a good time.
- Provide snacks and water wherever possible.

talk soon