

# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



Congratulations! You're engaged. It's the most exciting time of your life so go on, enjoy it!

Choosing a wedding photographer is a massive decision. The photographer you choose has to be able to capture the mood of your day, be able to interact with your guests, be an artist, and give you something that you'll love for the rest of your lives.

This e-book gives you 10 useful tips to help you in your search, and should help you to make a more informed decision that will enhance your day.

We hope you find it useful. Please feel free to pass it along to any of your friends that you think would be interested.

Have a wonderful engagement, and a happy, stress-free wedding day!

  
MNZIPP



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



The very first thing you should do when you start out trying to find the right photographer is to sit down with your fiancé, have a glass of wine, relax, and talk about what you'd like to be presented with by your photographer after your wedding. Think in very general terms at this stage.

- What would you be disappointed not to see in your pictures?
- Do you want an album? If so, what will it look like? Have you seen something you really like before?
- Do you have some spaces on the wall that you'd like to fill with images of the wedding? If so, how will they look? Will they be close ups of the two of you, pictures of little details from the day, family groups, or wide vistas with the two of you featuring in a landscape?
- Do you think your parents will want copy albums?
- Do you want photos for your invitations? Will you be giving out thank you cards to your guests after the wedding? Do they need to have an image or three from the day?

Don't worry if you can't answer all of these questions. Just start the creative juices flowing! Have a look at magazines – not just wedding magazines, but anything that excites you visually. It may be a fashion magazine, a food magazine or a home and garden type magazine. Don't be too restricted at this stage in where you draw your inspiration from.



## Describe YOUR vision



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



## Begin your research with the NZIPP

The New Zealand Institute of Professional Photography (NZIPP) is the only organisation in New Zealand that offers a qualification process for photographers. Similar organisations exist in other countries, so if you're not in New Zealand email me and I'll tell you who you should refer to in your country.

By choosing a qualified member of the NZIPP you are choosing a photographer who's work has been judged by his or her peers as being of a suitably professional standard.

Go to the NZIPP web site ([www.nzipp.org.nz](http://www.nzipp.org.nz)) and click on "Find a Photographer". You can search for photographers in your region who are qualified in wedding photography, and (here's the big tip, so pay attention!), you can search by their level of qualification!

The level of qualifications indicates how successful that photographer has been over the years in submitting work for critique at the annual awards. Put simply, the higher up the qualification scale they are, the more awards they have won.

The scale looks like this:



Of course you'll pay more as you go up the scale but then you'll get better photographs too!



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



**(Notice we still haven't talked about budget?)**

Your search can now start in earnest. You've been on the NZIPP web site, you've probably also talked to friends to get some recommendations, and now you're looking around at photographers' web sites.

At this point remember that websites are fairly static. They tend to get updated by the photographer fairly infrequently, and will only display a photographer's best work.

A photographer's blog is often a better way to get an understanding of a their capabilities and their **personality** (see tip 4). Their blog should be regularly updated with recent images, and possibly some interesting articles.

Also, look on Facebook. This is a great way to see what a photographer is up to, and to see some feedback from recent clients too. Love Images has a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/loveimages](http://www.facebook.com/loveimages)) and it's proving a great way of showing our work as it happens, and getting instant feedback.

If you're really social networking savvy, have a search on Twitter to see if the photographers you're considering are tweeting. This can be another good way to see if you like how the photographer thinks.



Websites are just the start of it!



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer

Tip  
4

Meet, greet and form an instant impression!



www.loveimages.co.nz  
Ph | +64 (0)9 521 7269



Ok, so you've looked at the work of every photographer under the sun, you've decided you like the look of 3 or 4 of them, so now's the time to contact a few and arrange to meet them.

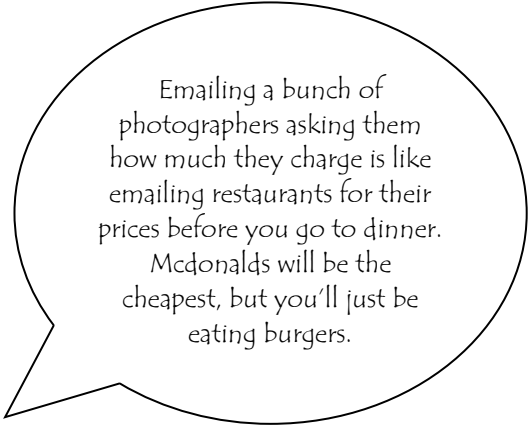
Please, please resist the temptation to price shop at this point! A good photographer will cost anywhere from **NZ\$3,000 UPWARDS** (there, I've given you a snippet of pricing information!). As long as you bear that in mind, generally speaking you'll be in the right ball park and you'll be getting a good standard of work.

The first thing to do when you meet your shortlisted photographers is to not be afraid to trust your first impression. Your initial gut feel is usually right.

Don't forget, your photographer is the only person that's likely to be with you ALL DAY, and they're not even an invited guest! So you need to make sure you can get on with this person. **If you don't like them as people, don't book them**, no matter how beautiful their work, or how qualified they are (see tip 3).

Personality fit is so important. If you like your photographer as a person and there is a mutual trust between you, then you're going to work better together and your pictures will be better. A relaxed bride and groom make the best pictures!

So, ask yourself—"Would I be happy if this person was a guest at my wedding?"



Emailing a bunch of photographers asking them how much they charge is like emailing restaurants for their prices before you go to dinner. McDonalds will be the cheapest, but you'll just be eating burgers.



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



When you meet with your photographers, look through at least three complete albums from recent weddings.

Another one of those “pay attention” moments now:

**Get the photographer to confirm that the albums you are looking at are taken by the person that will be taking your wedding pictures.**

Some photography companies will show you a beautiful album which is good enough to make you decide to book, but it is taken by a different person to the one who will be taking your wedding photographs. You wouldn't accept a different wedding dress to the one you ordered, so you should NOT accept this either.

Ask if you can talk to any of their clients. A personal reference is very powerful, and a good photographer should be able to put you in touch with half a dozen delighted clients.

Ask about some of the more mundane but important issues too:

- Does the photographer have adequate insurances to cover them in the event that the images are lost, or something goes wrong on the day?
- Can you see a copy of a draft contract?
- How do they store and protect your images after your wedding, and for the coming years?



Tip  
5

Delve deep, and don't be afraid to ask difficult questions



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



Ok, now we can start looking at the budget side of it (thank goodness for that, I hear you scream..!).

By this point you should hopefully be gaining a good idea of a couple of final shortlist photographers that you like the look of. You like them as people, and their work is fabulous.

So it's now time to look at how much you're going to spend. Time to pay attention again. Important point this:

**“What you will end up spending will almost NEVER be the same as the price of the package you booked”.**

In fact this is so true that at Love Images we have stopped selling packages—we have an “à la carte” approach to pricing weddings. You order the items you want from a menu.

If you book a traditional package with a photographer, you will almost certainly end up adding to it with extra pages in the album, wall prints and possibly parent albums.

So a far better question for your photographer is to ask them how much a typical client spends. This will give you a far better idea of how much you should be budgeting and will avoid nasty surprises later.

So how much does it all cost? Well, to answer my own question above, a typical Love Images clients spends between \$5,000 and \$6,000, ON AVERAGE.



Ask what a typical client spends, NOT how much the packages are



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



As with any purchasing decision, there are many options to consider with wedding photography when it comes to the quality of the final products.

Not least of these options relates to the wedding album. 95% of Love Images clients choose to order an album from us, and we are proud to be able to provide them with the world's best albums, in the shape of Queensberry Albums (based here in New Zealand).

However, the best does not come cheap, and there are cheaper alternatives available. Ask any photographer that you are considering which manufacturer of albums they use and ask them to explain why they chose that particular manufacturer. If it was on the basis of price, then probe very carefully to ensure that the album will withstand 50 or 100 years of living in a humid environment and being thumbed by hundreds of people.

It is our belief at Love Images that your wedding album should become a family heirloom, and that is why we sell the best. Make sure that the album you are being sold will outlast you!

- Is the printing of the highest standard—is it fade resistant?
- Is the cover material of the highest quality. Will it withstand heavy wear (a wedding album will come in for some heavy use, especially in the first few months).
- Are the pages resistant to humidity. What steps do the manufacturer advise taking to reduce the possibility of the pages curling or decaying through moisture?



Find out some more about the quality of the album or prints you'll receive



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer

Tip  
8

Don't compromise on the quality of the pictures



www.loveimages.co.nz  
Ph | +64 (0)9 521 7269



So now you're probably sitting there wondering what to do. You've shortlisted two photographers, and have all of the pricing information you need, so now it's decision time.

Do you choose the highly qualified photographer who's images were wonderful but is stretching the budget somewhat, or do you go for the cheaper option where you know you can get an album, and a couple of wall prints but who's pictures weren't as nice.

For me the answer is easy, and it's based on the principle that average images will always be average images, no matter how much "rescuing" is done in photoshop..

**You can't make bad images better later on. Get the best photographer you possibly can, even if it means sacrificing the album to start with.**

Some of my clients use their first anniversary, when the dust has settled and the wedding is paid off, to order their album. It's a lovely first anniversary gift to you both.

Just remember that your wedding day is the biggest day of your life, and you will never have an opportunity to recreate your wedding images. So getting the best images, and therefore the best photographer, is very important.



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



Your photographer's job doesn't finish at the end of the wedding day. In fact his or her job is just beginning!

You need to get a clear understand of what the process is after your big day.

- Ask how long it typically takes for the images to be ready for you to view, and how the viewing takes place.
- Find out what the album design process is. Important point here—**ask how much album design time is included.**

Designing an album is probably the biggest task for the photographer (sometimes taking 2 or 3 solid days to produce your design), and you need to understand whether you have a limit on the amount of design time available to you, or whether there will be additional charges once a certain point is reached.

Photographers will often state that you can make a certain number of changes to the basic design before additional charges take effect. This is perfectly reasonable, but make sure you understand it up front.

- Ask how long the production of the album takes from the point the design is agreed.

A realistic timescale for you to expect to have your album is between 4 and 6 months after your wedding.



## Ask what happens after the wedding



# 10 tips for choosing your wedding photographer



Every month, all around the world, there are wedding expos happening. They are great places to look for possible suppliers for your wedding, but they also have a down side...

Your final “pay attention” moment of the day:

**At a typical wedding expo (or “bridal fair” depending upon where you’re from), there are about 5000 couples all competing to book YOUR favourite wedding photographer, usually on one of only 13 Saturdays in the peak summer months!**

So this means that before the main wedding expos you’ll probably find a reasonable amount of capacity for the coming summer (although peak summer Saturday’s get pretty booked up even earlier), but within a week of a major expo your favourite photographer could be completely booked up, and you could miss out.

So my final tip is to beat the crowd and get in early. Find out when the wedding expos are in your city, and get the important bookings made well before those expos take place.

**FINALLY.....Don’t stress. Your wedding day will be beautiful. You’ll look great. Everyone will be happy. Things might not go 100% according to plan on the day, but it doesn’t matter. Enjoy it. Slow down. Take the time to look around and smile. It’s your wedding day after all!**



Tip  
10

## Wedding Expos eat up photographers!

