

## Finding the Right Professional Wedding Photographer

**Extended Seminar Notes- NZ Bride and Groom Show 15-5-05**

Bruce Gabites, Fine Photography Ltd, ph 09 817 1490 [www.finephotography.co.nz](http://www.finephotography.co.nz)

Qualified  **nz ipp** photographer

### Book and win a romantic vacation in Fiji

Book a participating *\*nzipp* photographer for your wedding photography you'll go in the draw to win a romantic vacation in Fiji valued at \$6,200. See [www.finephotography.co.nz](http://www.finephotography.co.nz) for further details.

### 7 steps to creating your photographer shortlist

1. To locate a professional wedding photographer, referrals from satisfied friends / family are best, backed up by magazine advertising, websites, *The NZ Bride and Groom Show* etc.
2. Make a first-list of a handful of photographers. Maybe somewhere between 2 and 5 names. Phone, email or look on their websites for further information – most photographers will have an information pack they can send you.
3. You'll probably want to ask for a price indication at this stage. You may want to have a chat or just ask them to send you out further information rather than scribbling down the answers to a million questions.
4. Gather your information together and sit down with your partner and sift through the information to make comparisons. Look at the photos on the photographers' websites.

### Bruce's tips

**TIP #1** Book early. Good photographers are booked two years or more in advance.

**TIP #2** It may seem obvious, but at your first contact with a photographer a good first question is "is my date still available?"

**TIPS #3** Photographers have many different ways of structuring packages – a potential source of confusion when you are making comparisons. The best way to approach this comparison is have a look around to see what is on offer, and from that make a decision based on what **you** want. There's no point in paying for three parent albums when you've only got two sets of parents! **See what's on offer, determine what YOU want then find a photographer that can deliver it.** Often photographers can design a specific package for you if you have special requirements.

**TIP #4** A good use of a limited photography budget is to spend your money on a reduced coverage by a good professional photographer. This is usually better than hiring an inferior photographer for a full coverage with all the extras. You can always save up after your wedding until you can afford to buy an album or enlargements or whatever. On your wedding day you only get one chance to get it right. **Get a good photographer!**

7 steps to creating your photographer shortlist continued...

5. Is the photographer a member of the NZ Institute of Professional Photography? The *\*nzipp* has a strict qualification standard for Wedding Photographers. Members are bound by the Institute's code of ethics and you have the additional assurance of a complaints process in the unlikely event that anything goes wrong. See [www.nzipp.org.nz](http://www.nzipp.org.nz) for further information.
6. Trim your list down to a shortlist of photographers to meet. As you've already done quite a bit of research, some couples might be happy just meeting with one photographer. Others may like to compare and may end up meeting with a few photographers. If the latter is you, keep it to 3 or 4 photographers at the most. It can be useful to compare – but don't get carried away – you could spend weeks visiting lots and lots of photographers and all you might get from it in the end is confused.
7. Most photographers offer a free no obligation consultation at their studio - ring them and make an appointment.

### Your photography consultation- 20 key questions to consider:

1. **Can we see a full set of photos from a recent wedding from start to finish?** This will give you some idea of the photographer's **consistency**. Consistency is one of the marks of a true professional photographer.
2. **Do the photos look good?** Good photos will be sharp and clear when enlarged not soft and fuzzy and should have good realistic colours – particularly the skintones.
3. **Do I like the style of photography?** Would you like to see yourself photographed in this way. Is it you? Is it you in your wedding day fantasy?
4. **Do the subjects of the photos look relaxed?** Do the photos look realistic, do the expressions look authentic – not unduly posed. A good photographer can put their subject at ease and that will show through in the photos.
5. **How long have you been photographing weddings for? How many weddings have you photographed?** On your wedding day an experienced photographer is important. They'll be able to keep things on track when the unexpected happens.
6. **What other services are available?** – For example parents' albums, digital slideshows, computerized album planning etc.
7. **What exactly is included in your packages?** For example do you get to keep proofs and what size are they? Which of the albums are included in the package? How much extra is an

album upgrade? Some photographers charge quite a lot extra for customized album design. Can the packages be customized?

8. **When do we get to view our proofs?** How long does the album take to produce? Ask about service times.
9. **How much time do you need?** A good photographer can get all the photos you need in a time span of less than 2 hours between ceremony and reception. Your photo shoot needn't take longer than this. A good photographer should also be able to help you plan a realistic timetable for the day.
10. **Can you show us samples of all the products you're offering or the products we want (such as a particular type of album)?** Beware of vague promises.
11. **Who will be taking our photos on the day?** Will it be the person you are talking to or someone else? Be certain that you know which photographer is going to be there and make sure you see **their** work (and preferably meet them) before booking.
12. **What do we do if it rains?** Does the photographer have a clear contingency plan? Beware of vague promises
13. **Does the photographer have a tidy appearance?** What will they be wearing on the day?
14. **Does the photographer listen to you and take notes?** Or do their eyes glaze over as you discuss your wedding day? Will they remember what was discussed over a year later when you next meet? Good photographers are communicators and should be able to listen to you communicate any ideas you may have, and turn your vision into a reality.
15. **Does the photographer ask you about your plans and ideas?** Or are they more interested in imposing their ideas on you? If they're not listening to you now and hearing what you want, it's unlikely they will ever do and you may end up being disappointed.
16. **Why do you photograph weddings?** There's a huge amount of motivation and enthusiasm necessary to get great photos on a wedding day – it's hard work! The answer to this question will give you an idea if the photographer is willing to give you the 110% necessary on the day to do a fantastic job for you.
17. **Do you feel at ease with the photographer?** Remember you have to spend most of your day with this person. Is their personality going to enhance your day or will it be a drag?
18. **What photo locations will we be using?** You should be able to discuss this with reference to the photographer's work. Once again if you have specific ideas communicate these to the photographer.
19. **Is the photographer a Qualified Member of the \*nzipp?**

20. **Is the photographer within your budget?** If not, are they worth the extra? In many areas of our lives and particularly on this most important day, you may be prepared to exceed your budget to get what you really want.

## Your final choice of photographer

1. Do I like their style of photography?
2. Do I like this person – will they enhance my big day or will they be an irritation?
3. Do I trust this person to come up with the shots on MY day?
4. Can I afford this photographer?
5. Express yourself in your choice of photographer. It's your day, be individual and find a professional photographer who fits in with your photographic vision.
6. Do take care in choosing your photographer . Remember - **"you only get one chance to get it right."**

## More Tips

### Once you've booked your photographer...

**TIP #5** A scrapbook or clippings file may be useful to communicate your ideas to your photographer.

**TIP #6** You might like to visit the suggested locations and get back to the photographer with any thoughts or ideas you may have.

**TIP #7** Prepare a realistic timetable for your day well in advance and do this in liaison with your photographer.

**TIP #8** Speak to and possibly meet with your photographer at least a few weeks before the wedding to confirm details such as timing and a list of family photos needed.

**TIP #9** Have a hair and makeup rehearsal so you'll be happy with how you look on the day.

### On your day...

**TIP #10** Enjoy every moment – everyone says the day just flies past.

**TIP #11** Don't worry if small things don't go quite as planned. It's quite likely that you'll be the only one to notice.

**TIP #12** Trust your photographer (assuming you have taken good advice and booked a good professional photographer). Just relax and work with them Their experience and creative eye is what you're paying for.