

# SMILE! The lowdown on wedding photography

**A**FTER many months and, sometimes years, of preparation, your actual wedding day lasts just a few hours. But the memories last a lifetime. So, for most couples, getting photographs of the proceedings is one of the first things they plan into their budget.

But just how do you ensure you get fantastic images that sum up the happiest day of your life – and not 1,000 snapshots of the standard you could expect from a point-and-click camera you've picked up from a petrol station on the way to the church?

The answer to this is simple. Do your homework and employ a photographer who has experience of weddings and knows one end of a camera from the other.

Graham Copland-Cale (*above centre*) is a qualified member of both the British Institute of Professional Photographers and the MPA and holds valid certificates of public liability and professional indemnity insurance – both



a prerequisite for any couple when making their choice.

“The market at the moment is being flooded by people who have bought a digital camera and are calling themselves wedding photographers,” says Graham.

“The trouble is, with many of these photographers, what you get are what they call ‘reportage’ shots. Basically, this means snapshots. And anyone can take those.

“You are then given a DVD of images which have not been properly presented in terms of having been colour calibrated and finished.”

Having been a wedding photographer for nearly a decade, Graham has built up a strong portfolio of images and offers a wide-ranging service, both on the day itself and afterwards, in the presentation stage.

He says: “A wedding photographer is more than a person with a camera. They are



a director. Shots which look natural are actually staged by the photographer to get the best possible results. That way there are no cars in the background spoiling the shot, no electrical sockets on the wall behind the happy couple, and the lighting is worked out so as to make the best possible image.

“Professional wedding photographers understand all these different elements and will produce a selection of photographs which a bride and groom will truly want to keep forever.”

With the average wedding costing around £18,000, budget is a huge consideration for any couple, but Graham says you should expect to pay at least £700 for a basic package and anything up to £2,500 for premium packages.

“A third of the money you are spending on your photos is for the actual day, a third for the work that goes in to working on the photographs themselves in the lab, and a third on putting the album together,” he adds.

“Your photographs are one of the few things which you have to keep once the day is over, so do your homework and choose your photographer wisely.

“The initial consultation is always an integral part of our service and we arrange a time before the wedding to discuss all the details of the ceremony and the reception, giving the client peace of mind and ensuring they can enjoy their day knowing they will have a photographic record to cherish.”



## Graham's top tips

- Don't be fooled by photographers offering 'reportage only' coverage. These may be cheap, but they are merely snapshots and the photographers often have no understanding of lighting, composition or art direction. Most of the best photographers incorporate all these to make pictures look natural instead of quick snapshots or staged images
- Don't accept just a CD or DVD of hundreds of images from your wedding as this is often a sign the photographer does not care about the final presentation or quality of the photos
- When choosing a photographer ask how many images he will take. It is about quality, not quantity
- Beware of a cheap deal. More and more people are trying to become photographers and they could be practising on your wedding!
- Make sure your photographer is fully

qualified with the BIPP and the MPA

- Make sure the photographer has public liability and professional indemnity insurance
- Make sure they carry back-up equipment and that it is regularly serviced. Things can go wrong
- Make sure the photographer is a full-time professional and has at least a few years' experience of photographing weddings
- Ask to see examples of their work. Make sure you see at least two complete weddings to show the photographer's competence and skill in lighting and composition
- Ask for details of any clients you can contact for references
- A good professional photographer will offer additional services like quality albums, reprints on photographic paper (not inkjet) and fully-designed storybook albums

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