

Shooting Your Wedding Video

Courtesy video shooting plan for your wedding & reception

- **You save thousands by shooting yourself.**
- **You give us your video and we edit to perfection!**
- **Then, we build a custom web site for your wedding & reception video, and also provide you with DVD's.**

Editing & Web fees start at 299.00, but price is subject to content and certain conditions. Special editing requests may be extra and are quoted separately.

Thank you!
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CAPTURING THE CEREMONY

- **IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- Make sure your cameras have built-in microphones.
- Make sure your cameras have plenty of battery life or ac adaptors.
- If you use tape in your cameras bring plenty of tapes.
- Get friends & family to volunteer their video cameras and tripods
- Get friends & family to shoot the wedding & reception for you.
- Get your volunteers camera operators to attend the wedding rehearsal so that they know how to set up.
- Read this carefully, get a copy of this plan to each cameraman and meet with them before the rehearsal to discuss ideas and plans.
- Rule #1 when capturing a wedding focus mostly on the bride. All of the members of the wedding party are important, especially the groom, but the most important person to capture during a wedding is the bride. The cameraman must understand this in order to produce a professional looking wedding video.

#1 CAMERA POSITION

With that in mind, for most weddings, the best spot for the cameraman to shoot, during the ceremony, is in front of and to the right of where the couple will stand during the vows. This is usually on the platform, stage left, and against the front wall. This is the best position to capture the bride's face during the ceremony, and to capture when she enters and exits the room. This will be different if the bride and groom are facing the audience during the ceremony, but for most ceremonies they face away from the audience and towards the minister.

Hopefully the cameraman attended the rehearsal, and knows where the couple and minister will be standing. There are a lot of things that can block the camera from seeing the bride. If the cameraman doesn't get this shot right, the entire video could be ruined. People and things that can get in the way are, the groom, the minister, the best man, flower arrangements, trellises, archways, musical instruments, posts, etc. Also, remember that flower arrangements and other items will probably not be present during the rehearsal. So, ask if the family intends to place objects that could block your view.

I've gone so far as to place a small piece of tape where the bride, groom, and minister will be standing, and make sure they know that is their mark. Also, you can give an instruction to the bride, "If you can't see the lens on my camera, I won't be able to see you." Sometimes the bride can make a small adjustment when she first comes up to the platform, and save the cameraman a lot of problems.

#2 CAMERA POSITION

Generally, for the second camera position, if there is no third camera for a wide angle lock down shot, the best place will be the opposite end of the room as camera #1. But, be sure it is not directly in the line of sight of camera #1. If camera #1 is in the front, you will want to place camera #2 in the back of the room, either on the ground floor, or possibly on a balcony. This camera can be locked down on a wide angle, or a medium shot to capture the entire platform and the wedding party. If you don't have a second camera operator, this shot will be your fall back shot during the edit. When ever you move camera #1, you will be able to cut to camera #2.

If you do have a second camera operator, and a third camera for lock down, you might set camera #2 to capture the groom. Again, make sure camera #2 is not in the direct line of sight of camera #1. Usually, to capture the groom best, you will want camera #2 on the left side of the room, closer to the audience (not on the platform). This will give you a second vantage point of the bride, the groom, and minister (what I call "The Main 3").

If camera #2 has a good shot of the groom, it is a good idea to get a close-up of his reaction as the bride enters. On several edits, I have superimposed the groom's reaction on the screen as the bride appears. This can be a great special effect. I've had several brides request it specifically.

If you have a second camera operator, but no third camera for lock down, you will need to communicate very closely between operator #1 and #2. If both cameras move at the same time, there will be no second source to fall back to. It is best to direct camera #2 to use medium to wide angle shots, and never zoom in or zoom out faster than you are willing to use during the edit, keeping zooms very slow.

#3 CAMERA POSITION

If you are fortunate enough to have a third camera, but not a third operator (which is usually the case), camera #3 will be your lock down shot. Keep it on a wide or medium angle, being sure it can see the entire platform, and the entire wedding party (what I call the "Party Shot"). This will be your fall back shot during any camera moves by camera #1 and #2.

Scripture Readers

Special Singers

Candle Lighting Ceremony

Communion Ceremony

Exchanging of Rings

Exchanging of Vows

Exchanging of Gifts

Gift to Mary

Greeting Parents

Giving Away Bride

Special Prayers

Musical Specials

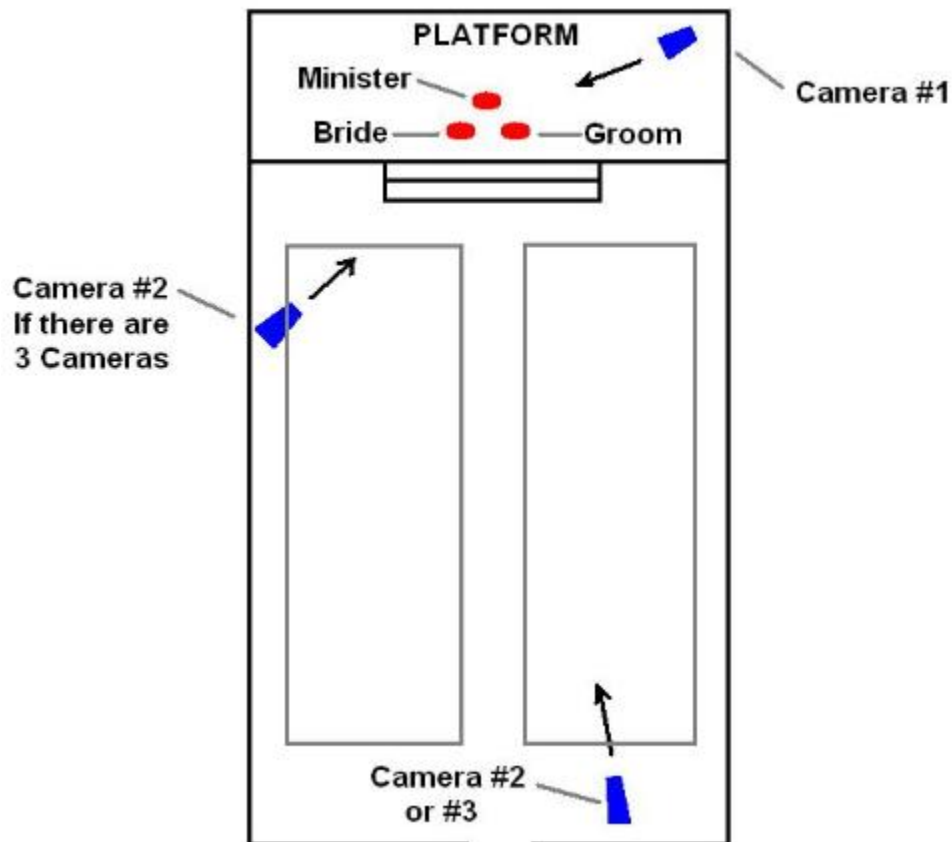
Mothers lighting candles

Photo Montage

Processional

Recessional

Family Blessings
Different Cultural Items



CAPTURING AUDIO

The Audio during the ceremony is as important as the video. Everyone viewing the video will expect to hear the vows clearly, both from the bride and groom. And, since most ceremonies are between 20 and 40 minutes long, it would be very difficult to watch if you could not hear the minister well. The best solution is to use a professional wireless lapel mic, placed on the groom or minister, and connect the receiver directly into camera #1, since it will be closest to the mic.

Normally I place the mic on the groom, because the audio captured on the wireless mic before and after the ceremony can be a priceless keepsake for the bride and groom. But, if the groom is not wearing a dark color, you can place it on the minister to hide the mic better.

If you don't have access to a wireless lapel mic, you can use an MP3 recorder and place it in the groom's or minister's "outside" pocket. MP3 recorders don't generally record audio as well as a professional wireless mic, but they are less expensive, and somewhat easily concealed.

Remember, you may need a mic to pick up readers, singers, or even musicians, so be prepared with several mics. This is another important reason for the cameraman to attend the rehearsal, to see all of the things that will happen during the ceremony, and get a feel for the schedule of events.

Some venues, such as churches, have their own sound system and will have their own mic for the minister. They also have the ability to capture audio onto a CD or hard drive. I've had several weddings where the church provided me a copy of the entire service on CD. And, it is a good idea to keep a 1G USB drive on you, in case they offer the audio from a hard drive. Be sure and make friends with the sound man.

"PICK UP" AND "DROP OFF"

Assuming you have 3 cameras, 2 operators, and the ideal setup described above - one thing I always communicate to operator #2, is how to capture the recessional and processional. Camera #1 "picks up" the bridesmaids as they enter the room, and camera #2 "drops them off". In other words, #1 will be focused on the entry point as each bridesmaid enters, but then pull away to catch the next bridesmaid as she enters. By then, camera #2 should have picked up the bridesmaid during her procession (or recession) and will follow her until she stands in her final position. Then camera #2 will move to pick up the next bridesmaid, who has already entered the room. Again, #1 "picks up", and #2 "drops off".

ONE CAMERA SHOOT

If you will only have one camera, it is important to capture cutaways, or what is called "B Roll". This refers to generic (extraneous) footage that you can cut to, during the edit, if a camera move occurs, or if you need to cover up something on the final video. Cutaways might be footage of the audience, an organ player, or members of the wedding party. Cutaways should be of someone who will be in that same position during most of the ceremony, so if you cut to the footage they won't look out of place.

Since you only have one camera, you must choose the right time to capture "B Roll". If there is a long communion, or a break during the processional, you can turn the camera on a portion of the audience, or a member of the wedding party, and capture 10-20 seconds. As a general rule, never capture anything for less than 10 seconds. Between the fade-in and fade-out during editing, and camera movements, you will only have about 5 usable seconds, which is a minimum clip length for any video segment. Anything shorter feels abrupt during viewing.

VENUE RULES

The cameraman will need to understand the rules setup by the venue where the ceremony will be held. That is, the church or wedding location may have particular rules about where a cameraman can setup, and the activities they allow during the ceremony. Usually these guidelines are written down, and presented by the church (or venue) planner.

Most churches have some minor rules about movement during the wedding, but some go so far as to limit anyone from standing on the platform at all. They may allow a lock down camera, but that will eliminate the ability to change what the camera is focused on - unless you have a remote control system with a rotating head for your camera - you will most likely miss a close-up of the vows, a close-up of the bride entering, and all of the other activities that are normally captured with the forward camera. Hopefully this won't be a problem at your venue, but you will want to check before the day of the wedding so you can make alternate plans.

THINGS TO CAPTURE DURING A CEREMONY

There is an extensive list of things that can be a part of a wedding ceremony.

Each one will require a different focus for the cameras and possibly require a separate audio source. (This is only a partial list)

FILM TO EDIT

One of the most important parts of shooting the ceremony is thinking ahead to what it will be like to edit. Since the ceremony is one of the few segments that will involve multiple cameras, and the only one that might involve 3 cameras, you should think about what it will be like to synchronize the video sources later on.

To make it easier, you should start all 3 cameras 5-10 minutes before the ceremony starts, and not stop them until several minutes after the ceremony ends. If you stop one of the cameras during the shoot, you will have to re-synchronize the footage to the rest of the cameras during the edit. This can be very time consuming, and in some cases nearly impossible if you can't find the right visual cues.

You should also start the cameras early to make sure you don't miss part of the processional. Most edited ceremony segments begin with the seating of the mothers, but every ceremony is different. You don't know what might be considered the beginning of the ceremony..

More ideas

Before the ceremony:

- **Bride and bridesmaids dressing** (keep it G rated!) While you're there, you may be able to get the following:
 - A shot of the bouquets and boutonnieres prior to being put on. One way is doing this as a steady motion shot, moving the camera slowly along an arrangement of the flowers. Another way is a slow zoom out, or reveal shot.
 - Groom getting ready, horse playing with groomsmen. You can try some staged shots here, such as the best man checking his watch in response to the groom's question, or the best man proving he's still got the ring in his pocket.
- **Groom getting boutonniere** placed by his mother
- **Detail shots** (*For example: At a recent wedding, on the table was the marriage certificate, the two ring boxes and a pair of sunglasses. I opened the ring boxes and placed them in front of the marriage certificate, which I stood up. Then, I took the sunglasses, closed one ear piece, and placed it so it "wrapped" around the boxes. Then, I set the camera on the table and set up a depth of field shot allowing the rings to be in focus, the certificate out, and adjusted the focus so the certificate came into focus, the rings out*)
- **Additional detail shot ideas:** Bride's shoes, wedding gown on a hanger, bride's earrings, and other jewelry, the details of the gown and bouquets, ring bearer pillow, flower girl basket.
- **Exterior church.** A nice shot might start at the top of the church steeple, then pan down to reveal the entire building. Try to take architectural shots at an angle, not standing flat in front of one wall. If the church has a pretty tree or flowers in the right position, here's another chance for a depth of field shot, focusing on the foliage, then changing focus to the building.
- **Wedding party arriving at church.** If the limo takes them, try to get a shot of the limo departing the bride's house, and another of the limo arriving at the church.

At the Ceremony:

- **Continuous roll of ceremony**, from prior to the bride's entrance to the couple's walk down the aisle at the end. Ideally, use two cameras. Place one in the back third of the church, near the aisle. Start the other handheld, positioned on the bridesmaids' side of the aisle at the altar steps. Shoot the procession, letting the bridesmaids walk past your position. After the bride arrives on her father's arm, move to a tripod placed behind the officiant and on the groom's side. This gives the best shot of the bride during the vows. This movement **MUST** be coordinated and cleared with the officiant, which is why it's necessary to attend the rehearsal. If the officiant won't allow this, just place the front camera on the tripod from the beginning.

(I try to shoot with three cameras, the procession camera moving to the back, around and

then back up front to get set up for the Groom's shot, readers, guests, etc... I stand at about the 3rd to 5th pew from the front, allowing the other two cameras to shoot around me... That's to say, the Bride's camera can have a tight shot of the Bride and her Father, without this third camera being in the frame, and the back camera can adjust their shot to also frame out this procession camera, allowing them to move without being noticed later on the video. In a 2 camera shoot, I'll move when the bride and her father are about 3/4 of the way to me, then set up in the Bride's camera position as described. At a recent shoot, I was afforded carte blanche, and I stood to the right, and behind the officiant.)

- **Another tip on the processional:** Don't make every shot a pan, or at least not a full pan. You really don't need shots of people's backs as they walk past the back camera and on up the aisle. Pan a little to keep them in frame, but as they get to the back camera, stop the pan and let them walk out of frame.
- **Any special touches in the ceremony**, like a solo song, unity candle lighting, etc.
- **Reaction shots** of bride and groom's families, especially during the vows.
- **Try a depth of field shot** - For example, the soloist in focus with the Bride and Groom in the background out of focus, then gently shift focus to Bride and Groom... things like that.
- *(At the rehearsal, I tell the Bride and Groom to stop a few feet in front of the back camera as they come down the aisle at the recessional, and kiss. This is a nice touch.)*

After the Ceremony:

- **If you can, stage a reenactment of the ring ceremony.** Get a good close-up of rings being slipped onto fingers, as well as a shot of the groom looking into the bride's eyes. *(One thing I like to do is to shoot through the netting of the Bride's veil, over her shoulder, and then truck slightly to the right, causing the foreground (the veil) to move out of frame, resulting in a Reveal shot. Obviously, this depends on the bride's veil, and if there's enough to accomplish this.)*
- In addition to staging the rings, also **reenact the unity candle...** These reenactments can make a 2 camera shoot look like a 3, 4 or 5 camera shoot.
- Take video during the photographer's formal posed shots. *(NOTE: Some photographers object to this. Don't get in a big fight about it).* Later, in post, you can liven up these poses by ending each one with a cut to white simulating a camera flash, followed by a still image of the last frame of the clip.
- While most of your shots during the ceremony will be taken from a tripod, and a good steady tripod shot will always look more professional than a shaky handheld one, you should also be prepared to take handheld footage before and after the ceremony, and at the reception. Your video will have much more interest if you can learn to do smooth handheld camera moves, as well as steady handheld non-moving shots. David recommends the use of a monopod. With a small camera, a monopod can serve as sort of a makeshift steadycam for tracking shots. Hold the monopod loosely

just below the camera. Here's an example of a moving shot taken when the Bride and Groom are about to enter the limo: Start low, walk from the back to the front, pan up and over the hood, come down the drivers side to the open door and see the Bride and Groom entering the limo from the other side...

- **Wedding party leaving church.**
- **Limo leaving church.**
- **Limo on road** (*this one might be hard to get, given time constraints.*)

At The Reception: (Remember to shoot these shots with a camera on the tripod)

- **Exterior shots of the reception venue**, if it is at all photogenic. Cutaway shots of flowers, fountains, statues, etc.
- **Limo arriving at reception**, and wedding party getting out. This one's important. While you are setting up your gear at the reception, you or your assistant should keep a sharp lookout for the arrival of the bridal party!
- **Wedding party entering reception.** (*This, and sometimes the best man's toast, are about the only shots at the reception that I'll use a tripod for.*)
- **First dance.** This is the most important dance to shoot, and here are some tips for getting good dance footage: Using a monopod, do the following during the first dance once, maybe twice, never thrice. Start out at 90 degrees from your 2nd (tripod camera). Via radio communication, have the 2nd camera get a head and shoulders close-up, then move. With your camera on full wide, and focus set about 4 feet, walk towards the couple dancing, keep the lens pointed at them and walk around them in a circle to their right. You will complete a full circle, around them, maintaining a head and shoulders shot, and you will find yourself backing out of it and ending up across the dance floor, almost exactly 180 degree from where you started. Then, when editing, use a slow motion cut of this shot. (*This assumes that they are dancing in a typical fashion, turning clockwise as they do - your circle should be counter clockwise. Obviously, you reverse directions if they are backwards.*) Repeat this shot for the mother-groom, and father daughter dances. During the wedding party dance, it might be too crowded, but you can compensate and get something close.
- Using the monopod, get over the head "crane" shots. Stand behind the lights of the band or DJ and use them as foreground objects for some of these shots. If you are shooting with a shoulder mounted camera, you can get overhead shots by standing on a chair. Have an assistant steady you.
- **Mom's dance with the groom.**
- **Dad's dance with the bride.** This one can be a real tear-jerker, if you take a close-up with one camera, and a full shot with a second camera. In post, apply slow motion to the close-up and dissolve it in about 30% over the full shot.
- **Best man's toast.** This is best shot with two cameras, one on the best man, the other getting a reaction shot from the bride and groom.
- **Cake cutting.**

- **Garter removal and toss.**
- **Guest book signings.** *(Again, a shot that starts closeup on the guest book and the signing hand, then pulls out to reveal the guest.)*
- **Any other special dances and ceremonies at the reception.** You'll see stuff like the Chicken Dance, Electric Slide, conga line, Hokey Pokey, etc. at many receptions.
- **Interviews with guests.**
- **Interview with the bride and groom.** *(This may be easier to do if you can arrange a separate interview shoot, rather than trying to squeeze it into the reception when there are so many other demands on the Bride and Groom's time and attention).*
- **Cutaways and detail shots** - cake, presents, decorations, flower arrangements, the DJ or band, etc. Get a copy of the wedding announcement, and anything like souvenir napkins, etc. for later copy stand work. If the bar has a lot of glasses set up, shoot a detail shot through the glasses. Get a shot of a dinner plate being served. If buffet style, truck or zoom-reveal the buffet. Detail shots of the Bride and Groom champagne glasses. Centerpieces on the tables, and anything unique. *(At the last reception we did, the tables were not numbered but named for tropical islands... This is unique.)*
- **Romantic Moments.** If you can, get a shot of the Bride and Groom kissing against a sunset. Shoot this twice; once exposed to put them in silhouette, and once with your on-camera light to give them a romantic orange glow as they kiss.
- **Children:** Want to get a response from a child? Flip the LCD screen around so they can see themselves... A photographer may not be able to get a fussy child to sit still long enough but you can... Shots of the bride with a little boy or girl can be very touching.
- **Guests saying goodbye.**
- **Bride and Groom exiting the building** and getting showered with confetti.
- **Bride and Groom getting into the limo;** limo driving away.

DON'T shoot: People eating. Too many backs of heads. People backlit by windows. Drunks. *(This becomes harder later in the day. If necessary, shoot the drunk and edit him or her out later).*

DO take every shot you can three times, changing something about the shot each time. Make the first one a clean, solid shot and then a reverse or close-up and then a funky, creative shot... you'll appreciate this when you see our edits.

Interviews at a wedding are a real art. One way is to just have the guests pass around the mike and ask them to "say a few words to the happy couple". If you remember 'em, some good leading questions to ask might be:

- What can you tell me about how Bill and Sue met?
- What did you feel when you learned they were engaged?
- What do you think Bill should do to keep Sue happy?
- Where do think Bill and Sue will be ten years from now?
- What do you think Sue loves most about Bill?

Or you can take a different tack. For example, have your assistant take the mike and become a cheerleader. "Who's the prettiest girl at the party?!" Table response, lifting glasses in salute: "TIFFANY!" It all depends on your own judgment of what's good material, and what the client will like.

Interview the bride and groom individually, rather than together. Ask each of them the same questions, such as:

- How did you meet?
- Tell me how the relationship deepened and grew.
- When did you first know Tim was the "one"?
- Tell me about how you (he) proposed?
- What are your plans for the future?

Then we can cut the responses together. The juxtaposition of the two viewpoints can be funny, touching, or poignant.

When interviewing, remind your on-camera folks to answer any questions in a complete sentence. For example, if you ask "What's your name?" you don't want "Joe". You want "My name is Joe". That way, you can edit out your questions and the response is complete in itself.

Finally: SMILES! LAUGHTER! FUN! Practice some witty one-liners to just toss off to people to get them to relax, and then shoot 'em! It works better than just sticking a camera in someone's face.