

CARMELA JOY



WEDDING GUIDE

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To the moon and back

WELCOME



I'm honored and
excited to be your
photographer!



I'm over the moon you chose me to document your day, and I don't take that lightly. My clients feel more like friends & family, so welcome to the crew! Thank you for placing your trust in me. I want to make sure you have the best day EVER and are as stress free as possible, so I've created this guide with you in mind so you have something to reference throughout the planning process.

Keep in mind that this is not a rulebook, and your day is exactly that - YOURS. These are just some tips & tricks I've accumulated from all of the weddings I've shot over the years, and I hope they're helpful to you as you dive into the planning process!

Always remember that I'm an open book and I'm here for you. I absolutely love being involved and am happy to help! If you have any questions that aren't answered here, or just want to say hey - text, email, or call me anytime.



xo Carmela

LET'S DIVE IN



NEXT STEPS



I.

ENGAGEMENT SESSION

We get to spend a day hanging out and capturing this season of your life together. I'll help with location ideas, what to wear, and guide you through the whole session. You just have to show up and be yourselves!

II.

STAY IN TOUCH

I'm here every step of the way — whether you need advice on bridesmaid dress colors, or just want to chat, don't hesitate to reach out! It makes my day to hear from you! I will check in with you about 5 months after booking to help you with your timeline and just to say hey!





III.

PRE-WEDDING QUESTIONNAIRE

You'll receive an online questionnaire from me to gather other vendor contacts, family group combinations, timeline information, and a few other final details!

IV.

WEDDING DAY

THE DAY IS HERE! We celebrate, we cry, we dance, we have the best day EVER! You'll receive sneak peeks within 48 hours to hold you over while I work hard on editing your full gallery!

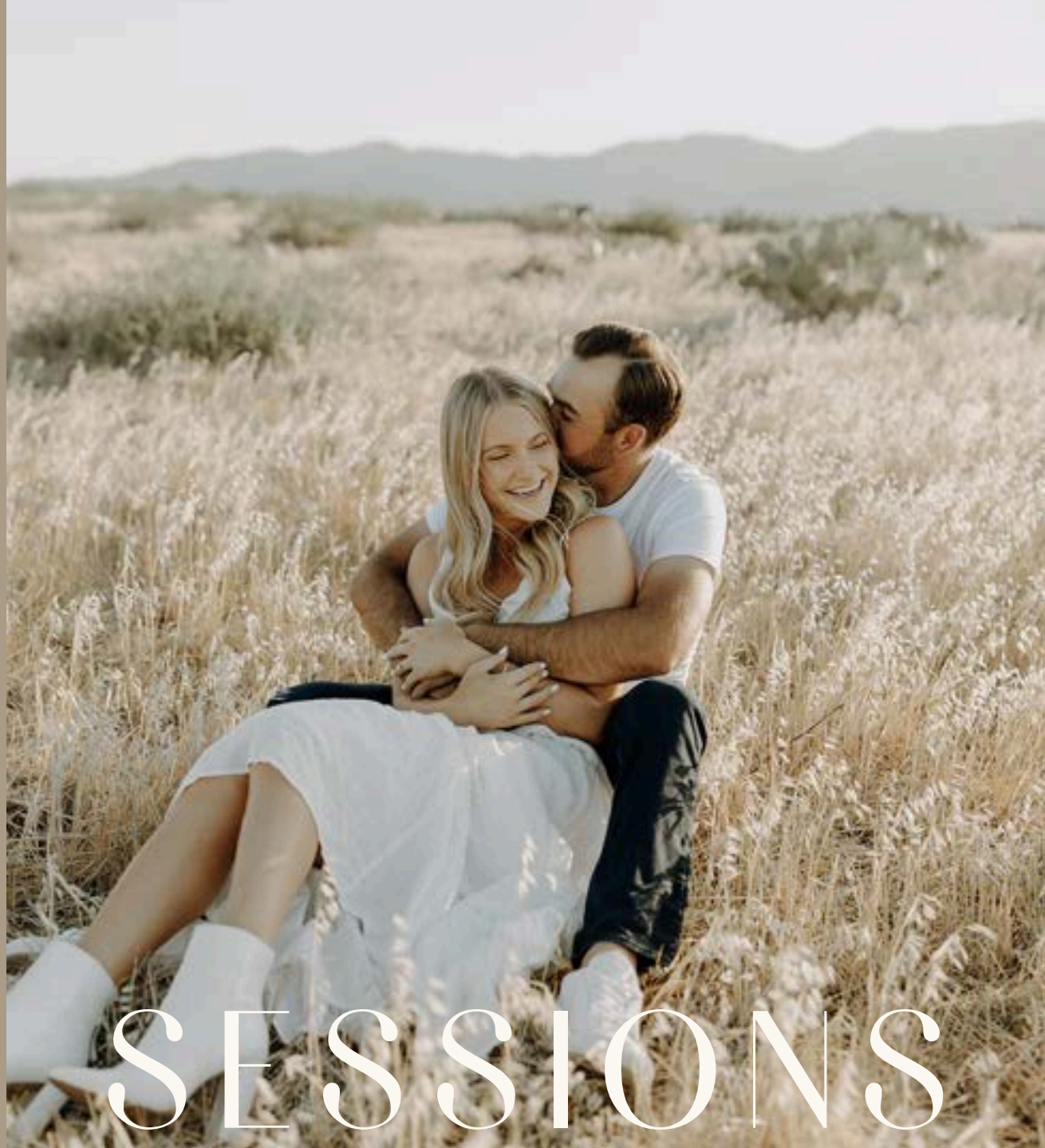
V.

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED

Time to relive your day!! You'll receive a link to your full online gallery within 5-10 weeks of your wedding day. I aim to deliver your gallery as soon as I possibly can, so if your photos are ready before the deadline of course I'll send them your way!



ENGAGEMENT



SESSIONS

Engagement sessions are a chance to connect with each other, explore a beautiful place, and create memories. Think of it as a fun date night that just happens to be third-wheeled by a friend with a camera!

Engagement sessions are one of my favorite types of shoots! Want to know why? It's one of my favorite ways to get to know my couples better while sharing lots of laughs and moments together! Not only do I get to know them better, but they get to know me too and experience my shooting style and personality before their actual wedding day. Most of my couples have never been professionally photographed so I wanted to make this engagement session cheat sheet to answer my most frequently asked questions.



I. WHAT TO WEAR

One of the most common questions that I have been asked is what outfit to wear to an engagement session. My advice is to stick to neutral colors! I would avoid bright colored clothing, heavily patterned clothing, or clothing with large graphics/logos which can be distracting in photos. Also, instead of matching your outfits - COORDINATE your looks! Make sure the colors you are both wearing work well together and complement each other. Because my engagement sessions include two outfits, most of my couples like to choose one fancier outfit and one more casual outfit. Choose outfits that you are comfortable in and that feel like YOU. I want you two to feel confident, feel excited and be comfortable during your session!



II. WHAT LOCATION

When choosing a location, think of a place that either has meaning to you two or a place that you two would normally go. If you can't think of a specific place, think about the dates you love to go on together. Do you tend to go to the beach? Picnic on a cliffside? Grab drinks at a dive bar? Your photos will feel so much more like you if we explore a location that is similar to somewhere you normally would go together. Of course, you can always choose a location that you've never explored together — but have been wanting to! I always like to encourage my couples to include some type of activity too. I've had couples feed each other pizza on the beach, bring a motorcycle to their session, pop champagne at a picnic and push each other around in a shopping cart in Ikea. Engagement sessions are all about YOU so why not make it unique to you and do something that will help tell your story. The options are endless!



what speaks to you?



3. WHEN TO SCHEDULE YOUR SESSION

I always say the sooner the better! The closer it gets to your wedding date, it's more likely that you will get busier and busier with wedding planning, vendor meetings, last minute DIYing, tracking your invitations, etc. You may also want to use these photos for announcements, save the dates, your website, etc. so scheduling your engagement session sooner will give you more time to design your save the dates and actually enjoy your engagement.



4. WHAT TO EXPECT

To begin, my sessions are usually about 60 minutes long. You can expect lots of giggles, kisses, and snuggles with your fiancé! I will guide you through some posing and prompts throughout the session with the goal of capturing your love and affection towards each other. I will ask you questions, ask you to interact with each other, and be yourselves. The session will be relaxed and lighthearted! About halfway through your session, you can expect to be changing in a bathroom, in your car, or sometimes behind a tree (if we are in the middle of nowhere and there is no one in sight - haha) depending on the location. Every engagement session is completely different but one thing they all have in common is that they are always FUN!

As you are preparing for your engagement session, remember that your engagement session should be flat out FUN! You are engaged to the love of your life and announcing it to the world. It's such an exciting time of your life! I don't expect you to be a pro at this so don't be nervous and don't be stressed. Enjoy, relax, trust me as your photographer, have fun, and we'll have an AMAZING time together!

TIMELINES





Being rushed on your wedding day is the last thing we want! My photography style is documentary, and I love to capture real moments as they unfold, but if everyone's rushed & in a panic, those real moments aren't going to happen as easily. In order for us to have a relaxed day, you should be ready to go about 2.5 hours before your ceremony time. However, there are lots of factors that affect this! Whether or not you do a first look, the size of the wedding party and families, and travel time between locations will all be factored in when I suggest timing for portraits. I will work directly with you to make your timeline!



WHAT IS A FIRST LOOK



& SHOULD YOU DO ONE?

First looks are one of my favorite modern day wedding trends — for a few reasons! A first look allows you to spend more time with your partner on the morning of your wedding day, instead of waiting until the ceremony to see them. You can take this time to read letters to each other, or simply just breathe, embrace, and take a quiet moment to yourselves. From a photography perspective, doing a first look allows us to take photos before the ceremony, leaving you to enjoy most of your cocktail hour instead of having to cram ALL of our photos (wedding party, family, & you two) into a single hour. A common fear I hear from couples is that if they do a first look, their partner won't be emotional when they walk down the aisle later on — and I've found this to be the total opposite! Nothing can take away from seeing your person walk down the aisle to a beautiful song, with all of your friends & family surrounding you. I've seen many brides/grooms still tear up walking down the aisle even after doing a first look earlier in the day! With that said — I never want you to feel pressured into making a decision for your wedding day that doesn't feel right to you. I've photographed weddings with and without first looks, and at the end of the day, all that really matters is that you're happy with whatever you decide!

HOW MUCH TIME DO WE NEED?



I. GETTING READY

If possible, I like to arrive at the prep location just as hair/makeup is being finished—that way, we can get a few photographs of the final touches. I'll also photograph some of your details (stationery, flowers, heirlooms, jewelry etc) so please remember to gather everything so that they're ready for me to photograph when I get there! Either myself or my second shooter will photograph your partner's prep.

II. CEREMONY

Ceremony length totally depends! A short and sweet ceremony might last 15 minutes; something more in depth (like a church service) could be more like 30-45 minutes.



III. FAMILY & WEDDING PARTY

The amount of time these take depends on size and family/group combinations. I recommend keeping the different combinations to a minimum—any more than 15 can start to eat into cocktail hour and/or the time we have set aside for couple portraits. If you do a first look, we can do the majority of wedding and family party photos prior to the ceremony!



VI. COUPLE PORTRAITS

I'll take as much time as I can get with you two! But, I typically recommend setting aside at least 30 minutes on your wedding day for couples portraits. I always like to steal you away at sunset for a few extra portraits if the light is right!

VII. RECEPTION

I typically only need to photograph about 30-60 minutes of open dancing in order to get a good amount of variety of people dancing & having a good time! If you're doing a big exit at the end, consider doing a smaller "faux" exit I can photograph, so you're not paying for extra photography time that you don't really need!



SAMPLE

1:30pm — Detail Photos (Photography coverage begins)
2pm — Bride Getting Ready Photos
2:30pm — Groom Getting Ready Photos
3pm — Bride put on dress
3:30pm — First Look
3:45pm — Bridal party photos
4:30pm — Family photos
5:00pm — Hide couple, Guest arrival, Line up for ceremony
5:30pm — Ceremony
6:00pm — Cocktail hour
6:05pm — Sign Marriage License
6:30pm — Bride & Groom sunset photos (Sunset @ 7pm)
7:05pm — Reception begins
7:10pm — First Dance
7:20pm — Dinner
8:30pm — Toasts
9:30pm — Photography coverage ends
11:00pm — Reception finishes

TIMELINE

BASED ON 8 HOURS OF PHOTOGRAPHY COVERAGE

GETTING



READY

LOCATION & light

Some of my favorite moments on a wedding day happen before the ceremony! Getting ready spaces are filled with the anticipation + excitement of the day to come.

However you want to spend your morning before you get married, make sure it's in a clean, bright space. Lots of window light makes my job easier & your photos a whole lot dreamier - so if your venue doesn't have a great bridal suite, look for an Airbnb with open space, lots of windows, and neutral walls. I encourage you to think about your getting ready space now, instead of leaving it until the last minute - because where you choose to spend this part of your day will have a big impact on the way your morning feels.



Cramming 8 bridesmaids, hair & makeup artists, a photographer, videographer, and family members into a single room filled with ALL your stuff can feel chaotic, as well as make your photos feel cluttered. If you're getting ready in a hotel room - consider getting an extra room or using a family member or friend's room as designated clean space. That way, we have a clean room for photos and a quiet space for you to hang out in if you need a moment to yourself.

ALL IN



THE DETAILS

Capturing the little details of your wedding day is how I like to begin my photography time! Typically, this includes flat lays of your invitations, heirlooms, shoes, rings - really anything that is important to you two and telling the story of your day! This time also helps me center myself and gives me a chance to get the creative juices flowing. I ask that you have these items ready to go, so I can just grab them and get started when I arrive.



CHECKLIST:

- ☐ FLOWERS (FROM YOUR FLORIST)
- ☐ SHOES
- ☐ HANDWRITTEN VOWS OR LETTERS
- ☐ RINGS (& A RING BOX)
- ☐ JEWELRY
- ☐ SENTIMENTAL ITEMS (FAMILY HEIRLOOMS)
- ☐ INVITATION SUITE
- ☐ PERFUME
- ☐ ANYTHING ELSE THAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU!

*feel free to get creative! this list is just a guideline of the most common items typically included in detail photos



WEDDING



PARTY



LET'S HAVE SOME FUN.

Wedding party photos don't have to be boring! In fact, these can be such a fun part of the day. I'll direct your crew in ways that incorporate movement. I typically will direct some walking, telling the person next to you something funny, cheers-ing, etc! Movement adds so much life to a photo. I'll take a few classic smiling at the camera shots though, too! I always start by grabbing a few big group shots with your parties on their respective sides, and then all mixed up! Then I'll photograph each side individually, plus individual shots of you with each member of your bridal party. Then we get creative with whatever time is left! If you have a specific photo request or want certain groups of people photographed together (such as college friends, friends from home, etc) please make sure to let me know on your questionnaire ahead of time!

FAMILY



PHOTOS

MAKE A LIST.

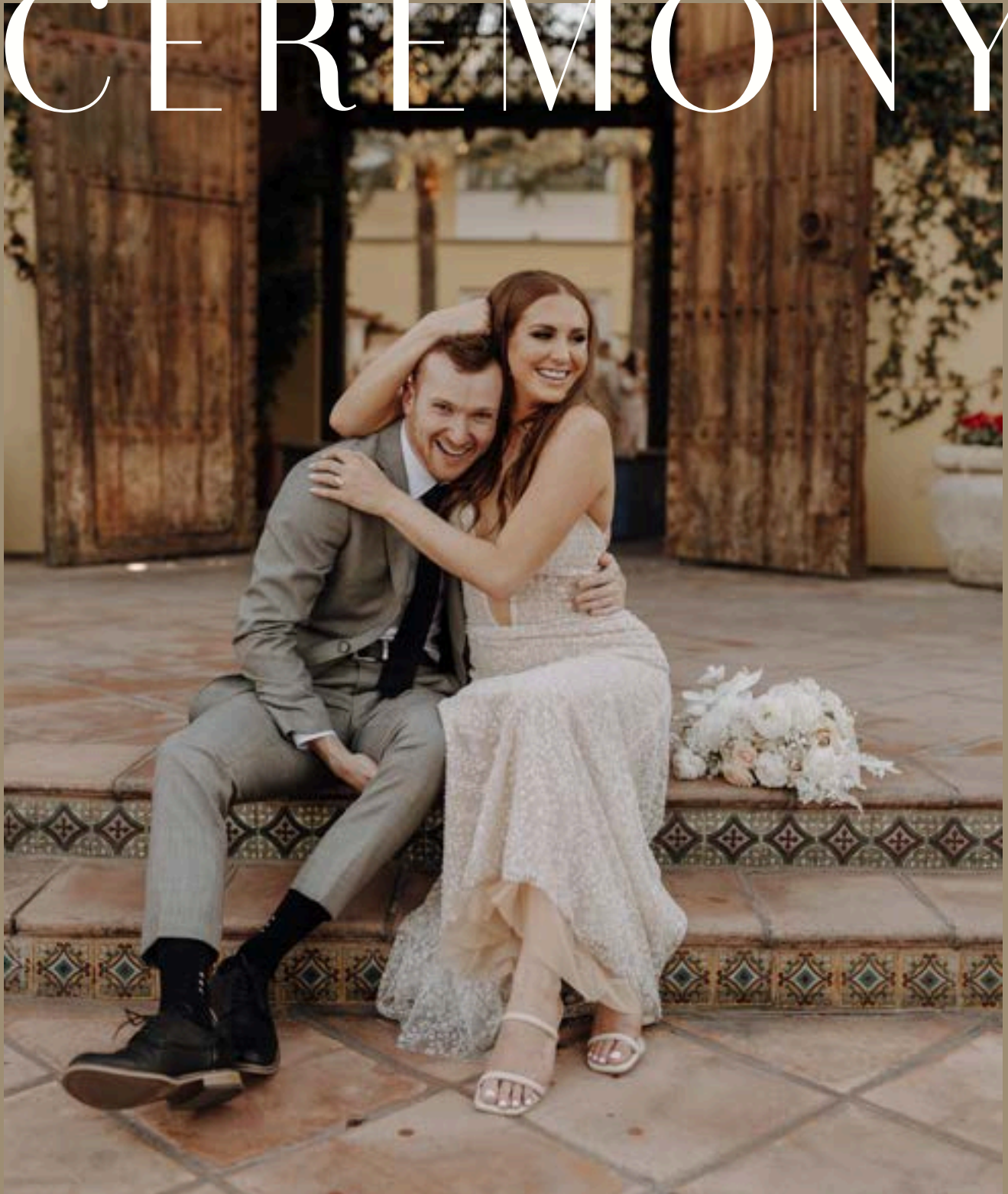
Family photos can be a little bit stressful to navigate if you have a big, rowdy group — so making a list is the best way to keep us organized, and to make sure we don't miss a photo that's important to you. I recommend keeping this list to about 15-18 different combinations. Each photo takes about 1-2 minutes, so the more combinations — the more time we need to take these. Remember that I can always grab family photos more informally during the reception! Please assign two people who will be gathering family members for family photos. It helps things go along much more smoothly and quickly if you can designate a friend/bridesmaid etc (or 2!) to help gather your family members for the above photo groupings. Ideally someone in the bride/grooms party who knows most of the key people and someone happy to shout and gather people! I will be asking for the two names as well as this list on your questionnaire!



Feel free to work off of the following sample list:

- ☐ GROUP 1: COUPLE WITH BRIDE'S PARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 2: ADD BRIDE'S SIBLINGS
- ☐ GROUP 3: ADD GRANDPARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 4: ADD EXTENDED FAMILY (UNCLES, COUSINS, ETC)
- ☐ GROUP 5: COUPLE WITH BRIDE'S SIBLINGS
- ☐ GROUP 6: COUPLE WITH GRANDPARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 7: COUPLE WITH GROOM'S PARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 8: ADD GROOM'S SIBLINGS
- ☐ GROUP 9: ADD GRANDPARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 10: ADD EXTENDED FAMILY (UNCLES, COUSINS, ETC)
- ☐ GROUP 11: COUPLE WITH GROOM'S SIBLINGS
- ☐ GROUP 12: COUPLE WITH GRANDPARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 13: COUPLE WITH BOTH SETS OF PARENTS
- ☐ GROUP 14: ADD SIBLINGS FROM BOTH SIDES

CEREMONY



THINGS TO CONSIDER



when planning your ceremony

LOCATION

If outdoors, is there shade or will you be in direct sun? Ideally, shade is preferred. Standing up there in the middle of July, blazing sun, sweating from both nerves AND heat isn't fun! Space is also important to think about. Is there enough space in the aisle for you & your wedding party to walk down? Can your photo/video team move freely around the perimeter of the ceremony space to get different angles, and capture guest reactions?

LIGHT

Lighting is EVERYTHING. Whether your ceremony is indoors or outdoors, think about the available lighting. If indoor, is there any natural light from windows or skylights? Natural light is best, but if there isn't any available — you can add lots of string lights, hanging lights, lanterns, or candles to improve the lighting and your photos. If your ceremony is outdoors, what time of day will it be? Try to visit your venue around the time of day you'd like to get married so you can see what the lighting situation is like. Later in the day is typically better lighting than midday bright sun. Let's chat if you need help with this!



Don't be afraid to think outside the box when planning your ceremony. Often, couples will ask someone close to them to officiate which can make the ceremony feel even more special. You can keep classic traditions, and add your own. There are no rules!



MAKE IT YOUR OWN



During their ceremony, I've seen couples plant trees, perform songs, create a wine box time capsule to open on their anniversary, invite a friend to share stories, honor family members by gifting flowers, and the list goes on. You can write your own personalized vows, or stick to the traditional ones. Whatever feels true to you! My personal favorites are when my couple has their guests throw confetti or petals after the kiss as they are walking down the aisle and when they write their own vows!!

PRO TIP:

Ask your officiant to move out of the way when you kiss! That way, they aren't awkwardly behind you in your photos.



LET'S



PARTY

LIGHTING:

The lighting for receptions can often be overlooked, but play a big role in how your evening looks and feels! There are tons of options, from hanging lights to lanterns to candles. These can really impact the mood & vibe of the environment as well as photos because they change the white balance of photos (basically the temperature - warm vs cool tones!) Candlelight and hanging lights usually allow for warmer, softer photos, which are personally what I prefer. Sometimes venues offer colorful uplighting but I recommend keeping those set to white only, because blues/purples/reds can really affect skin tones and make people look a bit off in photos!

SPEECHES:

Okay, my best tip for speeches: limiting the time per speech — there's nothing worse than a speaker going on a 10 minute tangent while everyone just wants to get up and start dancing! 3-5 minutes per speech is typically a good sweet spot. I also prefer when your speakers are standing near you, vs in the center of the room so I can get your reactions to their speeches while I'm capturing them giving the speech!



TIPS &

TRICKS



01

WEDDING PLANNERS & COORDINATORS

In my opinion, a wedding planner is the BEST vendor you can spend money on if budget allows! Peace of mind is priceless. I'm not saying you need a full service planner by any means - even a partial or month-of planner would be great! If your wedding is larger than 50 people, a day-of coordinator at the very least is a must. Sometimes venues provide them, but make sure you ask how involved they'll be on your day! Venues have different levels of coordinators, so make sure that you know ahead of time if they'll be taking care of you on the day of. A good coordinator will be able to take care of any questions or issues that arise throughout the day. The last thing you want to have to worry about on your big day is being asked a million logistical questions like why 4 chairs are missing, where the DJ can plug in his speakers, or what time salads are served at dinner. In my experience, I've had couples ask a friend or relative to be their coordinator and it NEVER ends well. They want to drink and have fun, too! Hire someone who does coordinating or planning for a living and has experience, trust me! It's worth it.



02

UNPLUGGED WEDDINGS



An unplugged ceremony encourages your guests to put away their cell phones, Ipads, and cameras and be present with you during your ceremony. I've taken so many photos, only to notice a bunch of iphones or big cameras being held up in the aisle, effectively ruining a beautiful moment. Phones can be a big distraction that take away from the experience of your guests being present with you. The rest of the day, they can take as many photos as they want (and I'd encourage it!), but the ceremony is the one time of the day that I think is best cell-phone free. You'll be able to share the full gallery with them after your wedding, so you can assure them that they can download any photos that they want later on! You can ask your officiant or DJ to make an announcement right before the ceremony and/or display a sign.



03

RAIN & WEATHER

Do not panic about the weather or obsessively refresh the weather app leading up to your day! Forecasts change SO quickly and we can't change the weather — so let's embrace it! Check in with your venue to go over rain plans. Target sells some cute clear umbrellas we can pick up in a pinch, and I'll scout for locations that are beautiful & covered, whether that's indoors or under awnings/trees/etc. Some of my favorite weddings ever have been rainy ones, so no stress! I promise it will still be the best day ever!

04

HAIR & MAKEUP

This is the ONE part of the wedding day that consistently runs off schedule. Tell your makeup/hair stylists that you need to be ready 30 minutes earlier than you actually do. Then we'll be on time! Also, it's a great idea to use your hair and makeup trial for your engagement session. That way, you can see how the makeup looks on camera to make sure you love it for your wedding day!



05

ALONE TIME



Set aside some alone time on your day!! This is SO IMPORTANT. With everyone you love in one room, and a lot of friends and family you may not have seen in awhile, it's really easy for the day to fly by. I'm sure you've heard that a thousand times already, but it's so true. Set aside some time in your day to be alone, just the two of you. Even if it's just 10 minutes! Be together, take some deep breaths, and soak it alllllll in.

06

THE SEND OFF

Sparklers are the most popular choice when it comes to the send off. For good reason - they make for some pretty epic photos! If you do decide on a sparkler exit, make sure you get the extra long sparklers so that when they are lit, we have enough time to get all the pretty photos! Some other options that I love for a send off are: confetti cannons, bubbles, and streamers but again, feel free to think outside the box!!

07

VENDOR RECS

I know what the wedding planning process is like. I've been there and I am happy to help take some of the pressure off finding your wedding professionals and give you some vendor recommendations. I've had the privilege of working with the best and most talented "friendors" over the years. My recommendations change year to year so please let me know if you'd like a list of my current preferred vendors!

08

IGNORE THE RULES AND KEEP YOUR DAY PERSONAL

There are no rules to weddings. Please don't ever feel obligated to follow the traditions! If you don't want to do a bouquet toss, don't! If you don't like a wedding cake, do a dessert station instead! Some couples get so wrapped up in what they are and are not supposed to do, that they completely forget this is the one day they can do whatever they want. **THERE ARE NO RULES.** I'm totally game for exploring all kinds of non-traditional and crazy ideas! I think that a wedding should be unique and personal to the couple! It should reflect their story and not be something based on recycled ideas from other weddings. I encourage my couples to get inspiration from the stories of how they met, their favorite dates, and their favorite memories together. This helps them find a few details from those memories that naturally translate into fun and unique elements on the wedding day.

09

MAKE THE MARRIAGE YOUR PRIORITY

I've seen couples get so caught up in the wedding planning that they lose sight of the big picture. I believe that nothing about a wedding is as important as the marriage that will follow. Your wedding is just the beginning of your new life together as a married couple! Remember that sometimes everything won't go according to plan on your wedding day and that's okay! Your marriage is all that matters! Soak in every detail because the wedding day will go by quicker than you can possibly imagine.



PHOTOS AREN'T MEANT TO LIVE ON A SCREEN.

When your photos are ready, you'll receive a link to your personalized online gallery. It will be sent to you via email, and you'll receive a password upon viewing for the first time. You'll be able to share a link with family & friends, so they can easily view and download their favorites as well! From your gallery, you'll be able to access my online store full of prints & products so you can display your photos throughout your home. I firmly believe that photos aren't meant to live on a screen, and should be printed, enjoyed, and passed on for generations. Fine art prints or a beautiful album are amazing ways to preserve your memories — and I'm happy to help you decide the best way to display your images. If you'd prefer to print your photos with another vendor, that is totally fine!

Whether you order through me or elsewhere, I recommend ordering prints or an album soon after you receive your gallery, before the excitement wears off and life gets crazy because before you know it, you'll be three years down the road and forget all about getting those photos printed!



Wedding planning can be a lot of work, but it's all worth it when you're surrounded by the people you love most. It's the freaking best, and I can't wait to document all the moments for you!

Please use me as a resource throughout your planning process if you need anything at all! I'm here for whatever you need. I can't wait to be beside you not only on your wedding day, but all the days leading up to it as well. We're in this together!!

xo Carmela



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