

Basic Rules for a Second Photographer

1. Plan to show up early. In other words don't be late. You never know what kind of traffic you will encounter on the way to the shoot location, so just plan on getting there 30 minutes early. Once you arrive on location, you are welcome to hangout in your car or even walk the grounds to scout out interesting locations. But don't embarrass the lead photographer by arriving late.

2. Leave your business cards at home. You have absolutely no need for them at the wedding. Instead of having your own cards with you, you should ask the primary shooter for 4 or 5 cards of theirs you can have on hand in case anyone asks for one. I often travel for weddings and hire local second shooters to assist me. On those occasions, if I really like the person I am working with I will introduce them to the local wedding planners with the hope they will be able to do some work together in the future, but don't ever walk up to the planner and introduce yourself and hand them your card.

3. Don't check your phone, update Facebook, or Instagram photos. If you really need to check your phone for whatever reason, it should only be when you are completely out of sight. Bathrooms make great hiding spots. If you are checking your phone in public where people can see you, you're giving off the perception you are not working.

4. Don't add the Bride and Groom or anyone in their Bridal Party as Facebook friends. It's great to have good relationships with these people and of course as lead shooters we want our assistants to be friendly throughout the day. But leave it at that. There really is no need to add them as Facebook friends. If they hunt you down and try to add you, consider ignoring the request or consulting with the lead shooter if it's okay to accept them.

5. Speaking of Facebook, do not post any photos to your page before getting prior approval from the lead shooter. My personal rule is that my second shooters can post to Facebook only after I have delivered all the images to my clients. If they post to Facebook before I do that and someone recognises the bride and groom and tags them in the image then now all the friends and family will believe that photographer was the lead photographer. Some lead shooters will even have rules against ever posting to Facebook. Make sure to ask them ahead of time so you know their rules.

7. Don't be afraid to shoot lots of photos. Occasionally I will get a second shooter that seems to be afraid of giving me too many images at the end of the night. Don't be. Of course this doesn't mean to have your camera on high speed machine gun mode. But be always on the lookout around you. During family formals capture some of the candid moments of people standing around, kids chasing each other and people enjoying their cocktails.

8. Don't delete images from your cards. No matter how bad or embarrassed you are because of an image, don't delete it. It might actually be something I could use and with the dynamic range in our cameras these days an overexposed or underexposed image can often be saved. But even more important is that when you delete images on your card and keep shooting on that card you are doing something called back-filling. In short though it makes it much harder to recover images from your memory card if for some reason it goes corrupt.

9. Don't drink alcohol. Yes most weddings will have free booze. But don't touch it. Practically every job out there does not allow you to drink while working, the same should apply to wedding photographers.

10. Don't cross shoot your lead photographer. Basically what this means is don't be in the background of my shot. If you have a great shot of the bride walking down the aisle as I shoot from

the front of the church that is totally fine. But make yourself small and duck behind the bride so I cannot see you. If you can see me, I can see you. Stay out of the background.

11. Refrain from asking questions about how to use your camera in front of anyone. I will be taking time to advise you in the down-time between shoots. But please do not be asking me questions while I am taking images.

12. Don't pose the bride and groom unless given permission ahead of time. While you might have an amazing idea, others, including the bride and groom will often feel like you are just wasting everyone's time. It's better to let the lead shooter run the day. If you have a great idea mention it to them on the side. If it's an idea that I think will work I'll either run with it or even say something like, "My assistant here has a great idea that will look really cute. S/he is going to tell you guys all about it."

13. When you arrive, first thing, ask your lead if you would like to time sync your cameras. While this is something that is quite easy to do using Lightroom it is always nice when a second shooter arrives on site and remembers to ask to do this. Also no matter how accurate your camera time is, sync it to whatever the lead shooter already has. Often they have already started shooting and if they change their time it will mess things up for later. Even if their camera time is entirely incorrect. The only time I would ask the lead about changing their camera time is if they have not started shooting any photos yet.

14. Pay attention to the small details that will make the photo better. Is the groom's tie crooked? Feel free to help fix it. Does the bride's dress need to be fluffed out? Go fluff it. Both the couple as well as the lead photographer will appreciate you when you see and fix those small details that will later show up in the photos.

15. Dress nicely. It's a wedding. Unless it's Honey Boo Boo's family getting married, don't show up in jeans and tennis shoes. Shoot your lead an email ahead of time and ask what they plan on wearing. That will give you an idea as to what you should wear as well.

16. Have backup kit. Have a backup camera ready, have plenty of memory cards and batteries. If your camera stops working in the middle of the wedding, you need to have a back up ready to go.

17. Make sure you are shooting RAW. This should be an obvious one, but I didn't want to fail to mention it. If you shoot JPEG images then the post processing has to be done entirely different. By shooting RAW files I can adjust all the white balances equally and have more dynamic range to work with.

18. Download your RAW files at the end of the night. Before my second shooters leave I have them download their memory cards of RAW files directly onto my laptop. That then gets backed up to my external hard drive before I travel home.

19. Don't share images from the back of your camera. Even though you might have nailed the most epic photo in the history of weddings, don't share it. Remember you are working for someone. If you step up and share the photo with the bride and groom or even other people at the wedding you are basically saying, "Look at this shot that I got. Not the other photographer. I got this one." It is quite a slap in the face to your primary shooter.

20. Do give the lead photographer updates on time. While shooting I love when the second shooter chimes in quietly every so often, "Hey Andy, it's 6:40pm." By knowing the time I can plan the shoot accordingly and know if we need to speed up a little to get all the shots in.

20.5 Grab a few photos of the lead photographer working. This is just a half tip. Definitely not required but always nice to have. As you are shooting, grab just a handful of shots of the primary working. They will appreciate the shots and be able to use them on their website or social media pages.