Your Wedding Photography

A Guide by Jenny Harper

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Introduction

Let me start off by saying that this is NOT a guide for how you should plan your wedding. The last thing I want to do is dictate your choices. This is just a guide for how I usually photograph most weddings, which I hope you find informative.

You should plan your day according to what YOU want and parts of this guide may not apply to your plans. The most important thing to me is documenting the story of your day for the time that I'm with you, whatever you have planned. I try my best to spend the least amount of time interrupting and positioning people so I only do this when necessary.

We'll have ample time before your day to discuss your arrangements so you have plenty of opportunity to let me know the nuances of your plans.

I can't guarantee that I will always take every photograph mentioned in this guide as it depends on what happens on the day and circumstances such as time, weather and guests' co-operation.

Preparations

What happens before your wedding day depends on what you have planned, your location and what you're comfortable with. You'll have a questionnaire from me to be completed with your wedding details so that I can be prepared.

I am happy to meet up with you a few weeks before your day to finalise detailed arrangements, or we can liaise by email or on the phone.

Church weddings tend to have a rehearsal, which I often attend if local as it's a good opportunity to meet your officiant and check any restrictions they have.

Most importantly, just get in touch with me if you have any questions at all, or if you'd like to talk through your timeline to make sure that you have enough time for the photographs that you want taken. Whether it's email, text message, phone call or Facebook message, I'll get back to you as soon as I can. My contact details are at the end of this guide.

Arrival

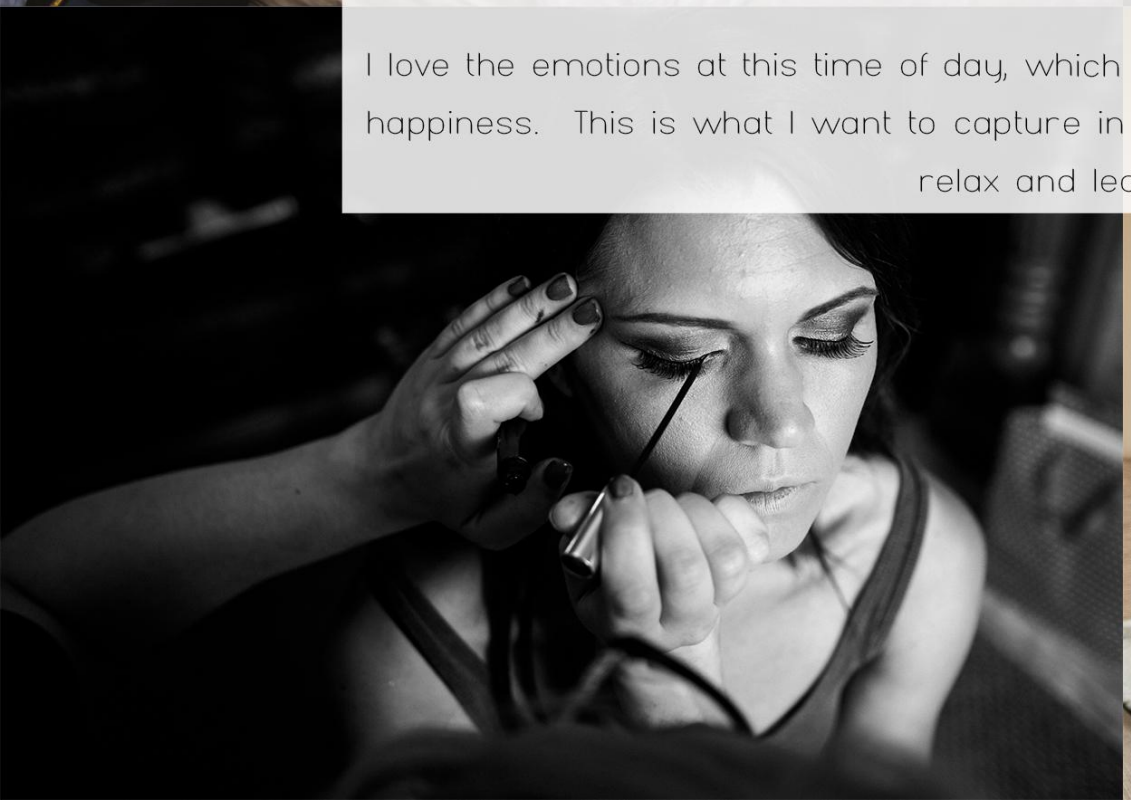
I like to arrive as soon as things are getting started in the morning, so normally when your hairdresser or make-up artist is arriving. This may seem a little early, but it gives me plenty of time to get started, capture the full story of your day and for you to get used to me being around. I know from experience, it can be uncomfortable at first having a camera following you around. By the time things start getting busier later and at your ceremony, you might not even notice me there anymore.

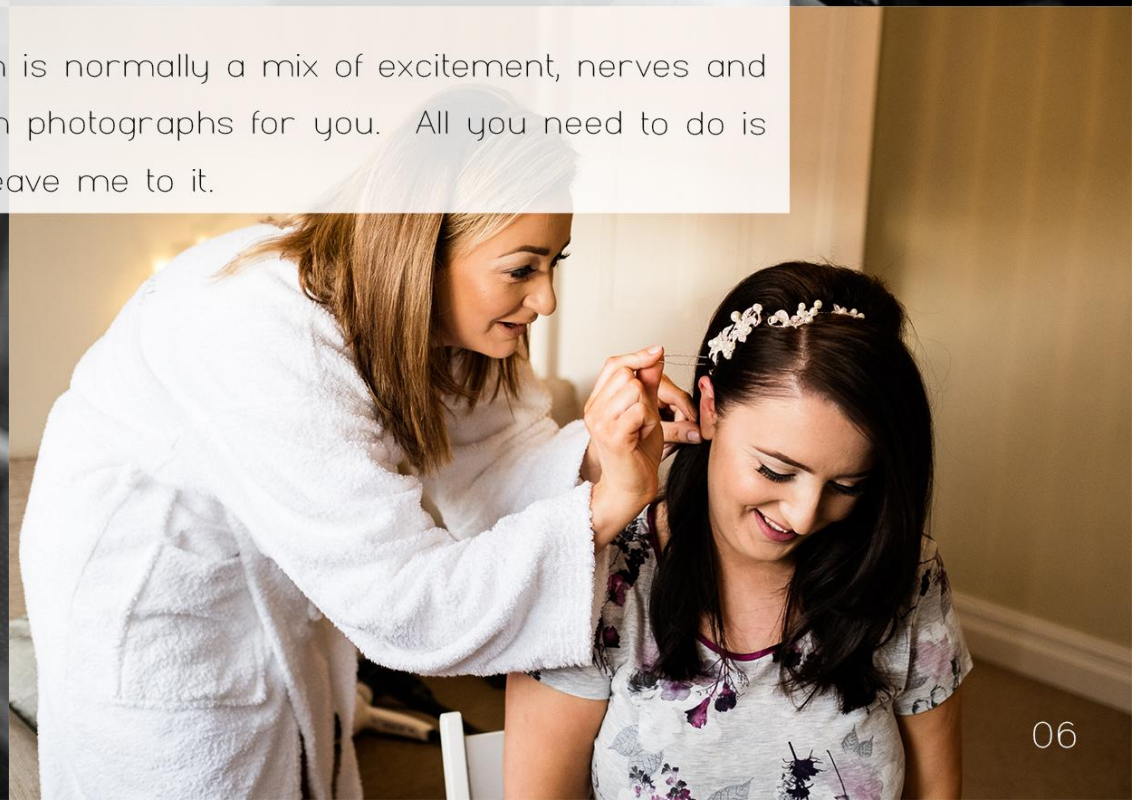
After meeting everyone, I'll have a good look around your home or hotel room to familiarize myself, possibly popping outside for a few photographs in the morning light.

Hair, Make-up and Getting Ready

All of my time photographing people whilst getting ready is candid, documentary photography. I don't pose people, ask people to stand in a specific place, or interrupt what is going on. I don't 'set up' photographs with your hairdresser or make-up artist, I just let them and you do your thing.

I love the emotions at this time of day, which is normally a mix of excitement, nerves and happiness. This is what I want to capture in photographs for you. All you need to do is relax and leave me to it.





Details

In the earlier stages of getting ready in the morning, I have plenty of time to photograph the details that are a part of your day, including your engagement ring, flowers, shoes, dress, bridesmaids' dresses, jewellery, hairpiece, veil, the perfume you'll be wearing and anything else that I spot.

I'll fit this around taking your getting ready photographs, keeping an eye on what's going on to try not to miss anything!

Groom Getting Ready

If location allows, I can visit the groom in the morning to capture the final details of their getting ready, including fastening buttons, putting on ties, shoes and cufflinks and attaching buttonholes.

As part of your wedding day story, I'm looking for interaction between the groom and groomsmen or parents, all photographed in a documentary style just like brides, without interruptions.

I tend to be with a groom for between 15 and 30 minutes depending on how ready they are, so it's just a question of logistics on the day to fit around timings. It works best if you're both getting ready in the same location.

I can also arrange for a second photographer to help cover everything that's happening on your day.

If time allows, I'll also take the opportunity to photograph some portraits of the groom, parents and groomsmen as this will save time later on.

Bride Getting Dressed

Depending on the intricacies of your dress, you'll probably have help from your bridesmaids or your mum to get dressed. Again, I document what's happening without interruption. Rest assured, I don't intend to capture anything embarrassing, I'm looking to photograph the process of your dress being buttoned or laced, putting on your shoes, fastening your necklace and all those finishing touches.

Bride Portraits

Depending on how much time you have between getting ready and your ceremony, I often photograph portraits of the bride, bridesmaids and parents now, in the garden, home, hotel room or somewhere else at your venue, as this allows more time with guests later on in the day. It can also give you a few moments to breathe before the big moment of the day.

If time is running late, we can take these photographs after your ceremony.

Pre-Ceremony

If you've got ready at a different location to your ceremony, I'll travel to the ceremony venue as soon as I've photographed your portraits, before you leave. I'll meet up with those already at the ceremony venue and photograph as time allows before you arrive.

If your ceremony is at the same venue and no travel is required, I'll stay with you until just before your ceremony. I'll go into the ceremony venue just before it is due to start, to photograph your arrival. I'm looking for everyone's emotions – nerves, joy, even tears!

Ceremony

The most important part of the day! All my photographs of your ceremony are documentary, it goes without saying that I don't interrupt proceedings in any way.

I never use my flash during the ceremony and I respect any rules requested by your officiant (which may include no photography during certain sections or restrictions on my movement, such as staying at the back). I try my best to be as discreet as possible.

I'll be photographing the moments that happen during your ceremony, from the kiss, to the exchange of rings, to the glances between the two of you and those little expressions of love. Normally some laughter too!

Signing the Register

For data protection, I'm often prohibited from photographing you actually signing the register. I'll move away so that you can sort the legal signatures and I'll photograph (if I can) far enough away that the details on the register can't be seen.

After the register is signed, you're normally given a 'fake' one to pose with and I'll take a few photographs of you. I'll also ask your witnesses to join you. We can save other formal portraits until later on, in better light and with more time.

Post-Ceremony

After your ceremony, I'll photograph you exiting as a newly married couple. Your guests will want to greet and congratulate you and I'll be close, documenting those moments. You might have some confetti thrown (it helps if I know this beforehand so that I can try to gather those throwing confetti for a more effective photograph together, though this isn't always possible!)

Family & Group Portraits

I normally photograph your formal group portraits outdoors (weather permitting), where there is more light. We can do this straight after your ceremony or on arrival at your reception venue. The sooner the better so that people are still around and that their photo duties are done and they can relax.

We will have prepared a list of the formal portraits that you'd like taken before your day and I'll refer to this on the day. It's helpful if someone such as a groomsman or bridesmaid can help me with gathering people as I don't know who everyone is!

This is a good time for a full group photograph of everyone at your ceremony, if that's a photo that you want taken. If you know there might be a good location for this at your venue, where I might need to access a balcony or upstairs room, it helps to know this in advance.

I try to keep your group portraits as natural and quick as possible. Nobody wants to be held up and fussed for a long time. It also helps timing if your list is concise and we can discuss this beforehand.

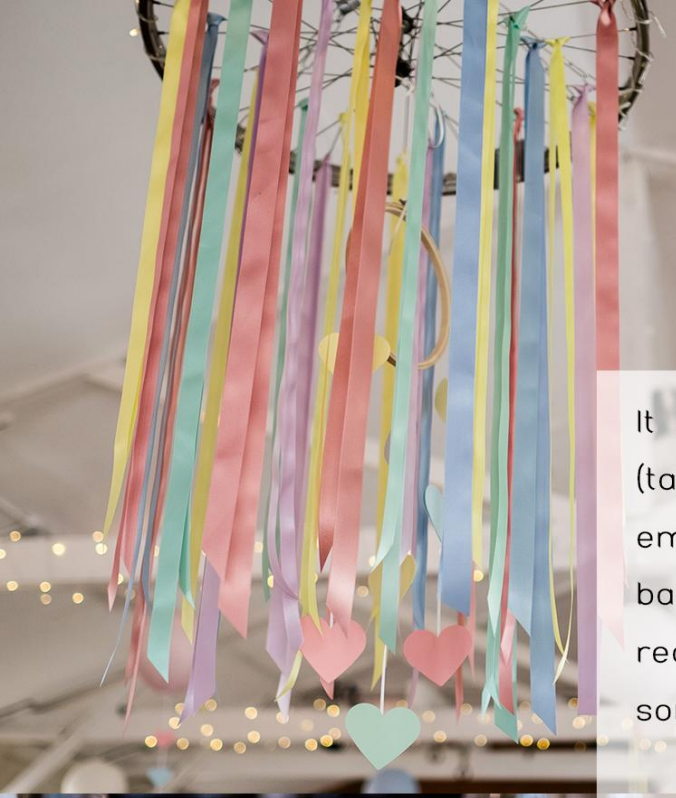
Couple Portraits

Your couple portraits can be taken straight after group portraits, or can be at another time of the day depending on timings, weather, plans, light, etc. Again, this is something we can discuss before your day and then be prepared to move on the day if necessary.

I normally spend around 20-30 minutes with you at or around your venue. I try to keep things as natural as possible. I'll give you some direction on where to stand, sit, or walk, but I'm looking for natural moments between the two of you and how you are together. Whether that's fun, giggling, romantic or whatever, I want your photographs to represent you as a couple rather than me dictating how you should look.

So just relax and be yourselves.

Reception Room



It helps to capture the details of your reception room (tables, decor, centrepieces, cake, table plan, etc) if it is empty or nearly empty of people. This gives a clean background for the prettiest pictures. If you are getting ready at your venue, I'm sometimes able to photograph some of your reception room earlier on before your ceremony, if it's dressed and ready.

Alternatively, I'll go straight in there after your group and couple portraits as I'm often running short for time at this stage of the day before your venue is ready to invite guests in and serve your food. If you don't have this structure to your day and people are already in the room, it's not the end of the world. I'll just work around everyone as best I can.

Reception

As soon as I've photographed your portraits and details of your venue room, I'm back to capturing your reception. I'm looking for interaction between you and your guests and the moments I see happening. I'll just be wandering, watching and documenting.

When your food is served, that's the best time for me to take a break and eat something myself.

Speeches

If you are having speeches, they normally take place either just before your reception meal or just after. I need to know which you have planned so that I can prepare my camera with suitable lens.

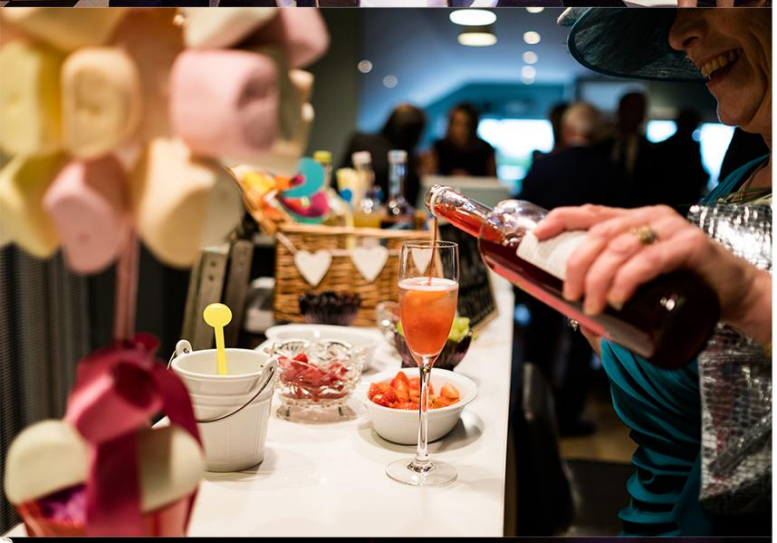
As usual, I'll be watching and documenting the speakers, you and your guests' reactions, looking for emotional moments of tears, laughter and anything inbetween.

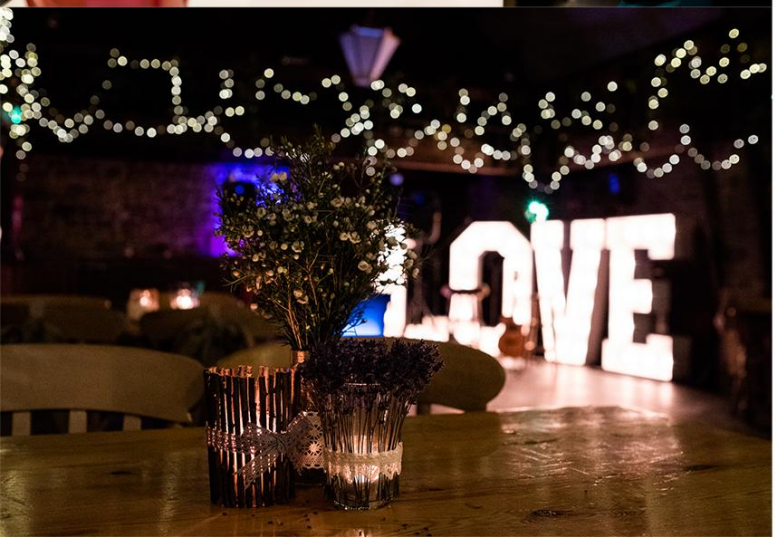
Post-Reception

If you are having a traditional wedding breakfast, there will usually be time between the reception and evening arrangements. I'll continue to take documentary photos of you and your guests and there may also be opportunity to catch up any group portraits or couple portraits that were missed earlier.

Depending on the time of year and timing on day, this can be an ideal time for lovely light – just before sunset. If there's a particular shot that could look awesome with beautiful light, I might ask you for another portrait.

At this time, I'll also probably ask to borrow your rings for a few minutes, if that's OK with you, so that I can photograph them all together as I may not have chance to do this before the ceremony.





Evening Reception

During the early part of the evening reception I'll continue documenting photographs of additional guests as well as any evening entertainment that you have planned.

If you are cutting the cake, throwing the bouquet or having a first dance, it really helps to know when things are due to happen so that I can make sure I have the appropriate lens/lighting ready. It'll just take me a few moments to prepare. I'm often kept informed by the venue staff/co-ordinator so that things run smoothly.

Dancing

The evening can be an awesome time with a packed dance floor and I'll be on there in the midst of things. The best way for me to capture the fun and energy of the dancefloor is up close. Everything will be candid unless guests stop and pose for me. Most are used to me being around by then!

Night Portraits

Your venue may have a spot that looks particularly good in the dark for a different kind of portrait. Depending on what else is happening at the time, the photos that we have already made that day and what you wanted when we discussed your plans before your day, I might suggest just one or two more portraits of you before I leave.

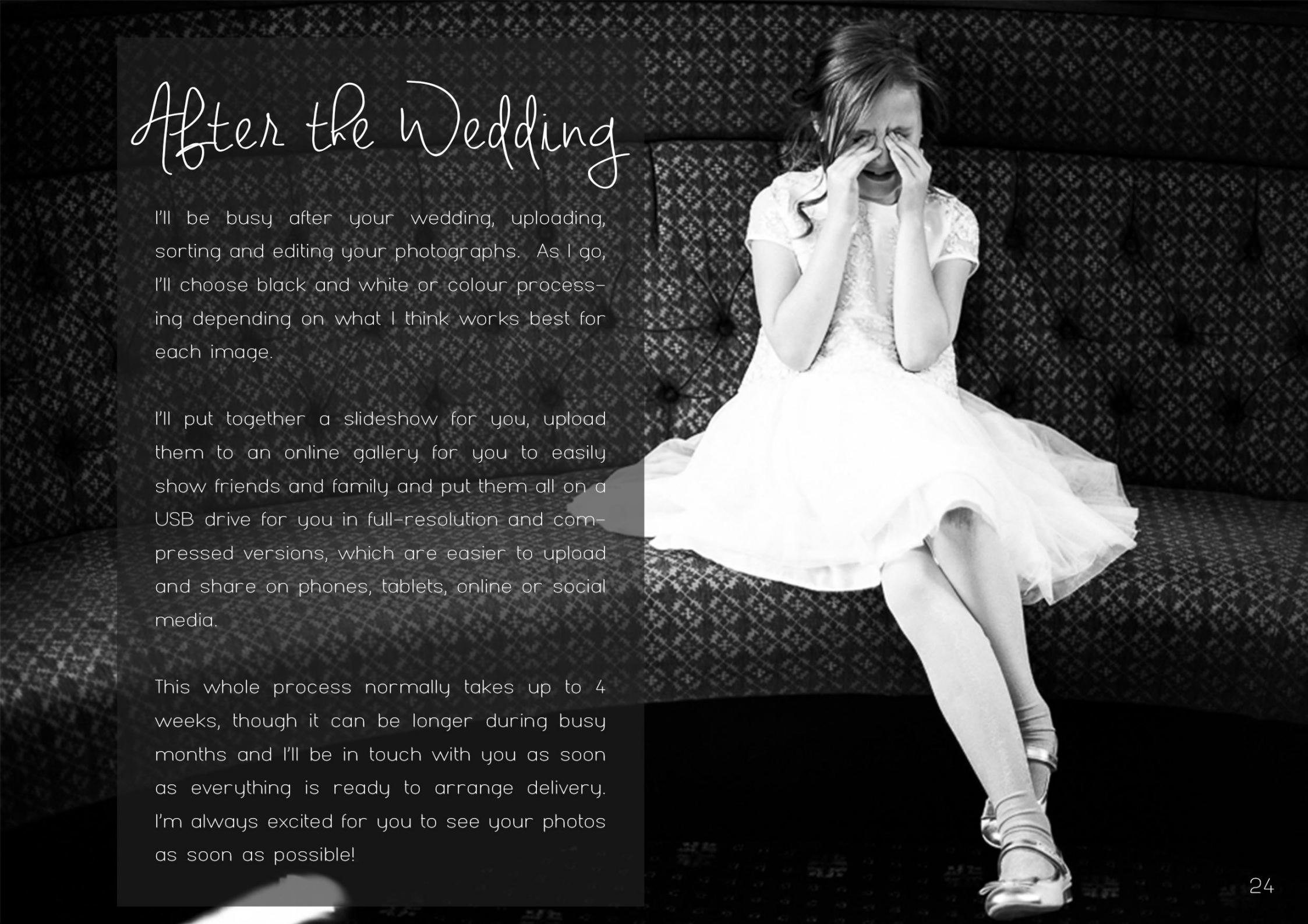
This normally relies on me setting up some equipment, such as tripod or flash and I'll do as much as possible before asking you to join me so that I'm not keeping you for too long.

After the Wedding

I'll be busy after your wedding, uploading, sorting and editing your photographs. As I go, I'll choose black and white or colour processing depending on what I think works best for each image.

I'll put together a slideshow for you, upload them to an online gallery for you to easily show friends and family and put them all on a USB drive for you in full-resolution and compressed versions, which are easier to upload and share on phones, tablets, online or social media.

This whole process normally takes up to 4 weeks, though it can be longer during busy months and I'll be in touch with you as soon as everything is ready to arrange delivery. I'm always excited for you to see your photos as soon as possible!



Albums and Prints

Depending on your package, you may have an album or prints included. Or you can order these separately afterwards if you'd like. My standard albums have thick, rigid pages which lay flat for photographs that cover the double spread and a thick cover, with lustre finish which is protective and easy to clean. If pre-ordered, I'll do an initial album design for you straight away and then you can review (online) and change anything at all, from the photos included, to the text, layout, or colour. I'll order your album once you're happy with the design.

I provide either individual prints for framing yourself, or smart oak or matt black finish framed prints which are ready to hang.

I can also accommodate specific requests as there are numerous options available on the market and I love trying something different. So if, for example, you're interested in a more traditional, tactile album with photograph prints secured to pages with photo corners and glassine interleaves, let me know!

Get in Touch

I hope you've found this guide helpful and informative in planning your day and understanding what will be happening with your photography.

I am passionate about telling your wedding day story. Every single wedding is different and special and it really is an honour to share it with you and your family and friends. I'm very excited to photograph your day!

If you have any questions at all, you can contact me by any of the following methods.

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