

Should We See Each Other before the Ceremony?

I always ask a bride and groom whether they wish to see each other prior to their wedding ceremony. In my experience, many couples have heard that it's bad luck for a groom to see the bride. Therefore, when I started photographing weddings, I was curious to know the reasons behind why many couples are superstitious about seeing each other prior to the ceremony.

I quickly discovered that although there's no clear consensus as to how the tradition started, most folks agree that the origins of this practice revolve around the history of arranged marriages. The tradition was founded based on the idea that in some situations, if a groom saw the bride prior to the ceremony, the groom might cancel of the wedding if he felt the bride was unattractive. This tradition was further reinforced by the families of the groom. Since a dowry was often involved, if a groom withdrew from the arranged marriage, his actions could prove financially devastating to the groom's family. The bride's family was also often concerned because failing to marry the bride after a marriage was arranged could result in feuds lasting many generations.

Since most marriages in the United States are not arranged, and assuming that you have seen your fiancé at least few times prior to your wedding day, I'd like to encourage you to consider seeing each other prior to your ceremony. As your photographer, there are many reasons why I prefer this arrangement.

One of the most important benefits to seeing each other before the ceremony is that you'll have more time to spend with your guests on your wedding day. To help put this in perspective, if you see each other before the ceremony, when I'm done photographing you and your family members post-ceremony, you can immediately join your reception and celebrate with your friends, family, and guests.

An additional consideration, without lending too much importance to aesthetic perfection, is if we take your photos early in the day, when the bride's hairstyle and makeup are fresh, those photographs are more likely to showcase the bride in the best possible light. Additionally, by shooting a bit earlier on the wedding day, the bride and bridesmaid's bouquets and the groom and groomsmen's boutonnieres will not have had time to wilt or deteriorate.

Weddings are also often affected by uncontrollable factors that significantly impact your wedding day schedule. Based on my experience, it's highly likely that something unexpected will happen that will affect your schedule—sometimes dramatically. If we take these photographs early in your day, if the schedule starts to move, your photography won't be as severely affected. For example, since the start time for your meal service can't be easily moved, if your ceremony begins later than expected, you may be forced to reduce or even eliminate some of your post-ceremony. However, if we capture your creative photographs prior to the ceremony, you're going to be afforded more scheduling flexibility if the unexpected does occur.

As a final consideration, you may be thinking about the emotional impact of seeing each other for the first time. With that in mind, if you decide to see each other prior to the ceremony, I'll arrange a suspenseful and special encounter where you see each other for the first time--typically

surrounded by your wedding party (and sometimes your immediate family). In the photographs I capture during this initial meeting, you'll be thrilled the emotion these "first meeting" images convey. And as most couples share with me after the wedding, this initial meeting doesn't lessen the impact of seeing each as the bride walks down the aisle. Couples often tell me that they experience a great rush of excitement when they see their fiancé at the end of the aisle--even if they've already spent time with them earlier in the day.

As you've probably already surmised, I prefer a situation where bride and groom see each other prior to the ceremony. However, if you aren't comfortable seeing each other before the ceremony, I'll warmly embrace your wishes; I'll still create amazing photographs on your wedding day. In the end, I realize that this is your wedding and whatever you think is best for you and your fiancé is what is right and proper—and in the end, that's all that really matters anyway!