

Printing Information

When deciding the size of the print, look at the size of the image first

This means for any print greater than about 5X7, you should look at the pixel count of the original image first to make sure it can handle the size increase. The Cameras we use are professional DSLR's, with a minimum 10 MP sensor. Natively (without digital surgery) it should be capable of printing a 12X18 inch print with few image quality issues. However, some of the images might have been cropped significantly, and are no longer able to hold to that size, without serious image quality degradation. For example, an image 600 X 900 pixels will accurately make a print between (2 inches X 3 inches) and (2.5 inches X 3.75 inches). If you have an image that is incapable of printing properly at the size you want, you have to "up-res" the image first. Some printing labs will offer this service, but I don't recommend it, unless they specify HOW they do it. Simply using "scale to fit media" is about the worst possible way to accomplish this.

When choosing a print lab...

Every lab uses different machines, different types of printers and different software to make prints. A rule of thumb when doing something this important is to never rely on someone else's eye to determine what looks right to you. I suggest you take up to 10 identical images to 3 or more printing labs to be printed as 4X6, and compare the results, side by side. Which renders the colour more accurately; is one always too dark, or too light, or are the colours from one lab all washed out compared to the others. This is at most a 20 dollar venture that will save a lot of frustration down the line. Also, when you do this, ask them if colour rendition is constant throughout print size. The problem being, they often use an automated system for 4X6 prints, and a completely different system for larger sizes. Make sure that colour rendition is going to be constant, regardless of print size (this is usually true if they calibrate and profile their equipment regularly).

But it doesn't fit in the frame!

Because some images are cropped rather tight to the subject, this might cause a problem. When deciding which pictures to print, and how they are going to be displayed, keep in mind that any framed images will require "dead space" around the edge (unless it's a borderless frame of course). The image may not allow for this, without taking some of the image with it. You will need to do the following: in image editing software, create a blank (white) image at 300 ppi, to the size of the final print (5X7 for example). Open the wedding image and resize it to be ½ inch smaller on both sides than the intended final print (4.5 X 6.5). Center the wedding image over the blank document and you should now have a 5X7 digital image with a ¼ inch border, that hopefully won't show in the frame (go a little tighter if the frame doesn't hide much of the image). If you save the final image, make sure to give it a unique name (don't overwrite anything).

But it still doesn't fit in the frame!

Digital cameras typically shoot with an aspect ratio of 3:2, but only assuming you don't do any cropping. However, if the crop doesn't allow for this (6 X 8 for example), you might end up with a bunch of white dead space on two sides of the print that will likely look horrible if it's framed in a frame not specific to the size. Some print labs will adjust this for you, some won't. The solution is to re-crop the image using an appropriate aspect ratio (3:2, or 4:5 – for an 8X10), but this may encroach on the image too much.

Every album is not created equal

When deciding how to create a photo album, understand that you can spend \$50 for an album (not including prints), or up to \$ 10 000 for some custom albums. I would recommend, when you send test prints to the labs for comparison, ask them what they have available for albums. Some will be ready to go, just insert the pictures, and some will be more labour intensive “create your own art” style. Hopefully there are a variety of options from the labs. You can also have a professional, custom bound book produced for about \$200 at a book binding company (not including prints, which would run another \$500 or so, depending on how many). There are also several websites that offer this service, simply upload the images, and choose what kind of layout, etc., and they ship the finished product to you. But again, these can run in the many hundreds of dollars range (for professional prints). A \$700 album might be nice, but it might not be you. People will generally pay more attention to a bundle of pictures they flip through, than a poorly organized album (of any sort – not just wedding). I would recommend spending some time on this and wait to find something you really like, rather than picking up an album for \$30 that will “do for now”. Often these types of things become permanent, and can give way to frustration and regret later on (as strange as that seems – it’s just an album after all). It is entirely subjective, and maybe you’ll find that perfect album right away or maybe that “do for now” album will grow on you to become the perfect album. If you decide to use a non-professional on-line album system, I would recommend going to 2 or 3 places and do a test print of a small album of 4X6’s or smaller, and compare them to each other just the same as the prints. This might cost \$50 or more, but it’s still better than spending \$200-300 or more on an album where the prints come out poorly.

The dreaded ghosting effect, and motion blur

Actually, this effect isn’t usually dreaded; it can add an interesting effect to an image. Ghosting is where a slow shutter speed is used, and someone moved during the picture. The result is, part of the background is imprinted on the sensor, and then whatever moved in front of that background is imprinted on the sensor. This causes peoples arms, legs or sometimes head (or parts thereof) to appear translucent. Ghosting doesn’t usually detract from an image, and most people don’t even notice it. This typically only becomes an issue during the reception, when the lights are turned down. The only solutions to this are a) use an extremely high ISO, which leads to more noise, and generally poor image quality, or b) use a vast number of flash units around the area to ensure a fast shutter speed (I prefer not to use this option, as it creates a distraction that people tend not to appreciate). For the same reason (slow shutter), motion blur is present in a few images, but more often than not, this actually adds to the image, not detracts.

Editing Information

This is assuming that you're going to be doing some editing of the pictures in the future.

Basics of photo effects

There is a difference between processing a picture, and trying to process art. When applying an effect to a picture, the difference between a picture and art, is that in art, the effect doesn't detract from the subject of the picture, it enhances the subject. An effect such as "watercolor", which turns the image into a vague representation of a water colour painting for example, makes the effect as much a part of the image, as whatever it was you took a picture of in the first place. When applying effects to art however, the effect generally becomes secondary, and the original subject remains the primary focus of interest to the viewer.

Black & White

The effect this has on some images is quite stunning when compared to a colour version of the same image. There is a rule of thumb when deciding whether to choose black and white, or colour – If colour doesn't add anything to the image, it will probably look better as black and white. Also, black and white tends to do well in images with high levels of contrast between highlights and shadows.

Colour Popping

Colour popping is where most of the image is black and white, except for one object, or area. If you decide to use this effect, a tip to help keep it from being distracting, is to desaturate the original colour image (or background layer), about 50% or more. This helps to limit the contrast between the black and white portion and the colour portion, making a much more "easy on the eyes" image.