



This is Your Love Story!

Why take engagement photos? (Besides just to document what a good looking couple you are.) Well, how about to submit a shot to your local paper with your engagement announcement, or use them creatively in your wedding day decor, or give framed prints as gifts to your families? Need an ultrapractical reason to schedule an engagement photo shoot? It's a great opportunity to test-drive your wedding photographer. Read on for the basics to help you make the most of your engagement session.

Who Calls the Shots?

Many photographers include an engagement photo session as part of the overall package, which presents a good opportunity to see your photographer in action. It also gives him the chance to experiment with flattering angles, poses, and lighting levels before the wedding day. If you haven't booked your wedding photographer yet, look at their engagement photos as a chance to audition your top choice.

Take Aim

Before you call a single photographer, have a heart-to-heart with your fiancé about what kinds of engagement photos you'd like -- posed or candid, formal or casual. Again, let your decisions be guided by how you plan to use the pics: Will they be hanging on grandma's wall, reproduced in black-and-white newsprint, or shrunk down to the size of a quarter for personalized favor stickers? Advance planning will help you make the most of your pictures. Some photo-friendly options to consider for your engagement shoot:

Bring it outside

There's no need to spend a day cooped up in a photographer's studio if you don't want to. Visit to a nearby arboretum or botanical garden, or hit your favorite downtown landmark. Your photographer may be able to suggest local sites that make great backdrops for pictures too. Talk about locations you like when you make your appointment.

Make yourself at home

Your home is your comfort zone, and when you're comfortable, you look better on camera. Choose a more scenic area like your living room or front stoop or your favorite room in the house.

Memories of us

Create a meaningful backdrop for your engagement photos by revisiting nearby sites that are significant to the two of you: the restaurant where you had your first date, the ice cream shop that you frequent on Sundays, the bus stop where you shared an umbrella -- you get the idea. While the camera's snapping, retell your best couple stories and relive a few of the moments that brought you together. It's a great recipe for a series of romantic, fun candids.

Get close

You probably don't need to be persuaded to get close to your fiancée, but do plan to get a few affectionate close-up pictures; hug, hold hands, and sling your arm around his shoulders. You're in love, show it off! Besides, if you're planning to submit a photo to a newspaper with your announcement, many publications specifically request close-up couple shots. The New York Times, for instance, asks that couples position themselves with their heads close together and (no joke), their eyebrows on exactly the same level.

Ready, Dressed, Go

An engagement photo does not require you to shop for matching outfits -- you're getting married, not becoming the Bobbsey Twins. But clashing plaids and flashing bling do not make a pretty picture. Below are some of our basic guidelines for dressing the part:

What to wear?

Whether you're going formal or casual, solid colors are a must. Try to avoid plaids, florals, patterns, and head-to-toe black or white clothing -- and keep the silhouettes streamlined. Some couples coordinate their clothing palettes to the point of looking a bit matchy, but there's no need to go overboard. If you're worried about color, pick a neutral and a few coordinating color tones you both like (gray with blue and violet for instance, or brown with pink and blue), and stick to those hues.

The details: Keep your jewelry ultrasimple to avoid flashy distractions in your pics. For men, that means leave your watch and your pinky ring on the dresser. Women should stick to unfussy earrings with a simple necklace or bracelet (or one statement piece), and your engagement ring.

Resource: The Knot.com