

HOW TO GET A GREAT VIDEO

The popularity of video documentation of weddings and receptions continues to grow. Wedding programs on cable and satellite TV have increased the demand, but have also created unrealistic expectations among some brides-to-be. These productions feature large crews shooting staged scenes that are sometimes shot in multiple “takes” to get just the right effect. Videographers are often positioned behind the officiant, giving a great view of the bride and groom. But one or more videographers moving around behind the officiant in a real wedding would be an unacceptable distraction for most couples. Television weddings also use lights, boom-mounted microphones and even camera cranes used to get dramatic high angle shots. Few ministers or church wedding coordinators will allow this kind of disturbance during a wedding. After all, a church wedding is a religious ceremony, usually demanding some level of respectful behavior from all in attendance. And, if that weren’t enough, there’s the cost to consider. A wedding video produced like many of those seen on TV may cost \$20,000 to \$100,000.

Typical videos of actual weddings are usually shot by one or two videographers, sometimes with a third camera running unattended on a tripod. Wireless microphones are used rather than boom-mounted ones and, lights and other production equipment are almost never used during the wedding, although lights are commonly used during receptions. The cost usually falls between \$1000 and \$5000.

So what can you get for your \$1000 to \$5000? Actually, a very nice video, assuming your videographer knows what he or she is doing, and even more if you take certain steps yourself.

THE WEDDING – Speak with your minister, priest or rabbi as well as the church wedding coordinator about your plans for a video of your wedding. Ask about restrictions on movement and camera and videographer placement. Be sure you understand these rules clearly. Sometimes an officiant will say “no cameras are allowed behind me during the ceremony.” However, they are really saying “no videographers behind me” and an unattended camera on a tripod may be acceptable. When you clearly understand the rules, share them with your videographer and photographer. Sometimes there are no firm rules. In this case you should discuss how you want your video filmed with your videographer. Don’t wait until you get your video to voice what you wanted.

A typical camera arrangement is one videographer and camera on the right side of the church directed at the bride and bridesmaids and a second videographer and camera on the left side directed at the groom and groomsmen. If the bride and groom are facing each other, this works very well. If, however, the bride and groom are facing the officiant, the best you are likely to get is a profile view. Ask the officiant if you can face each other as much as possible. An exception here is with cameras located in balconies that run along each side of the church. Cameras positioned in such balconies usually provide an unobstructed view of the bride and groom and have the added benefit of the drama inherent in the high angle view.

Also ask your officiant to keep the guests seated as much as possible. They will all rise when the bride enters and walks down the aisle. Most officiants instruct them to be seated at the end of the bride's entrance. The problem with guests standing is that floor level cameras tend to get a view of the backs of people's heads. Moving Memories Productions uses a lightweight tripod on the right side of the church and this tripod is collapsed and elevated during the bride's entrance to get an unobstructed overhead view.

Make sure the groom knows he will be wearing a wireless microphone. The microphone does not broadcast what he says through the church's sound system. It is recorded by one camera. Also, nothing embarrassing will be seen or heard in the finished video.

THE RECEPTION – Your videographer does not know which of your guests are close friends or dear family members. If there are certain individuals you want to appear in the video at the reception, appoint someone to point these individuals out for your videographer.

You should have a schedule of events and approximate times such as the first dance, speeches/toasts, cutting the cake, etc. It is best to provide copies of the schedule to your photographer and videographer. At the least, make sure your DJ or bandleader has the list. Try to stay close to the times in your schedule. If your videographer is taking a break and you decide to cut the cake early, it won't be in the video.

Advise your guests that video lights will be used during the reception. No one likes to have bright lights in their face, but it helps to know that it may happen. Good videographers will try to annoy your guests as little as possible, but a poorly lighted reception video is no fun to watch.

A final tip – If you can afford it, contract for at least two videographers. A wedding shot from one point will be much less interesting to watch than one with changing camera angles. Also, with only one camera, the videographer sometimes has to choose between the bride and groom if both can't be seen clearly at the same time. At the reception, a second camera recording guest reactions during the first dance, speeches, etc. makes for a far more enjoyable video.