



THE  
**WEDDING SCHOOL**  
**SHOOTING YOUR FIRST WEDDING**

**SHOULD I BE  
CHARGING?**

# MAYBE. MAYBE NOT.

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- ▶ I did not charge for my first wedding. Or second. Or third!
- ▶ After that, I charged a minimal amount that covered my costs. I was still basically volunteering my time
- ▶ Regardless, be honest with prospective clients and wedding volunteers about your level of ability and experience
- ▶ Presented correctly, a new photographer at a wedding can be a win for all involved



# ASSESS YOUR ABILITIES

✓ Do I have a backup camera?

✓ Do I have backup lenses?

✓ Do I have an external flash?

✓ Can I work under pressure?

✓ Can I expose an image properly?

✓ Do I understand weddings?

✓ Do I understand post-processing?

✓ ...Do I know how to use it?

✓ Can I be professional?

✓ Do I have insurance?





# NOW YOU CAN CHARGE

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- ▶ Once you have all of those items checked off, you're doing yourself a disservice if you're not charging for your services
- ▶ This might happen after one wedding. Or before you even shoot your first. Or after two years of assisting. Or shooting ten weddings solo. Everyone is different.
- ▶ Don't rush the process. Take your time.
- ▶ Don't quit your day job if you're not ready!



# WEDDING ONE

# A YEAR + BEFORE

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- ▶ Begin by assisting a wedding photographer
- ▶ Really assist, don't just look to get ahead!
- ▶ Second shoot for another wedding photographer
- ▶ Really shoot, don't just look to get ahead!
- ▶ Practice shooting every chance you get
- ▶ Birthday parties, reunions, family occasions
- ▶ Look at light, learn to see the world
- ▶ Join The Wedding School, start learning!



# NINE MONTHS BEFORE

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- ▶ Do you want an assistant?
- ▶ Do you want a second photographer?
- ▶ I recommend yes on the assistant, maybe no on the second photographer - that's a lot to handle for your first wedding!
- ▶ Place an ad or ask around to find your assistant
- ▶ Start talking to your assistant about what you expect he/she to do for you
- ▶ Contract the assistant for the wedding date!





# SIX MONTHS BEFORE

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- ▶ Read your camera manual. Read it again!
- ▶ Practice consistent, natural exposures in manual mode
- ▶ Download, back up, and get comfortable
- ▶ Learn basic exposure and color correction in Lightroom
- ▶ Create a back up method for final files
- ▶ Set up an online gallery of some kind
- ▶ Purchase an off-camera flash. Read that manual!





# THREE MONTHS BEFORE

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- ▶ Practice consistent exposures in multiple lighting scenarios : outside in bright light, inside in dim light, by a window, in the shade
- ▶ Don't try to create, try to adapt to what is there in front of you
- ▶ Put that flash on your camera and practice with it.
- ▶ Practice with your flash on TTL or Auto, and your camera on manual. See what slow shutter speeds do to flash. See what fast shutter speeds do
- ▶ Check in with your assistant



# TWO MONTHS BEFORE

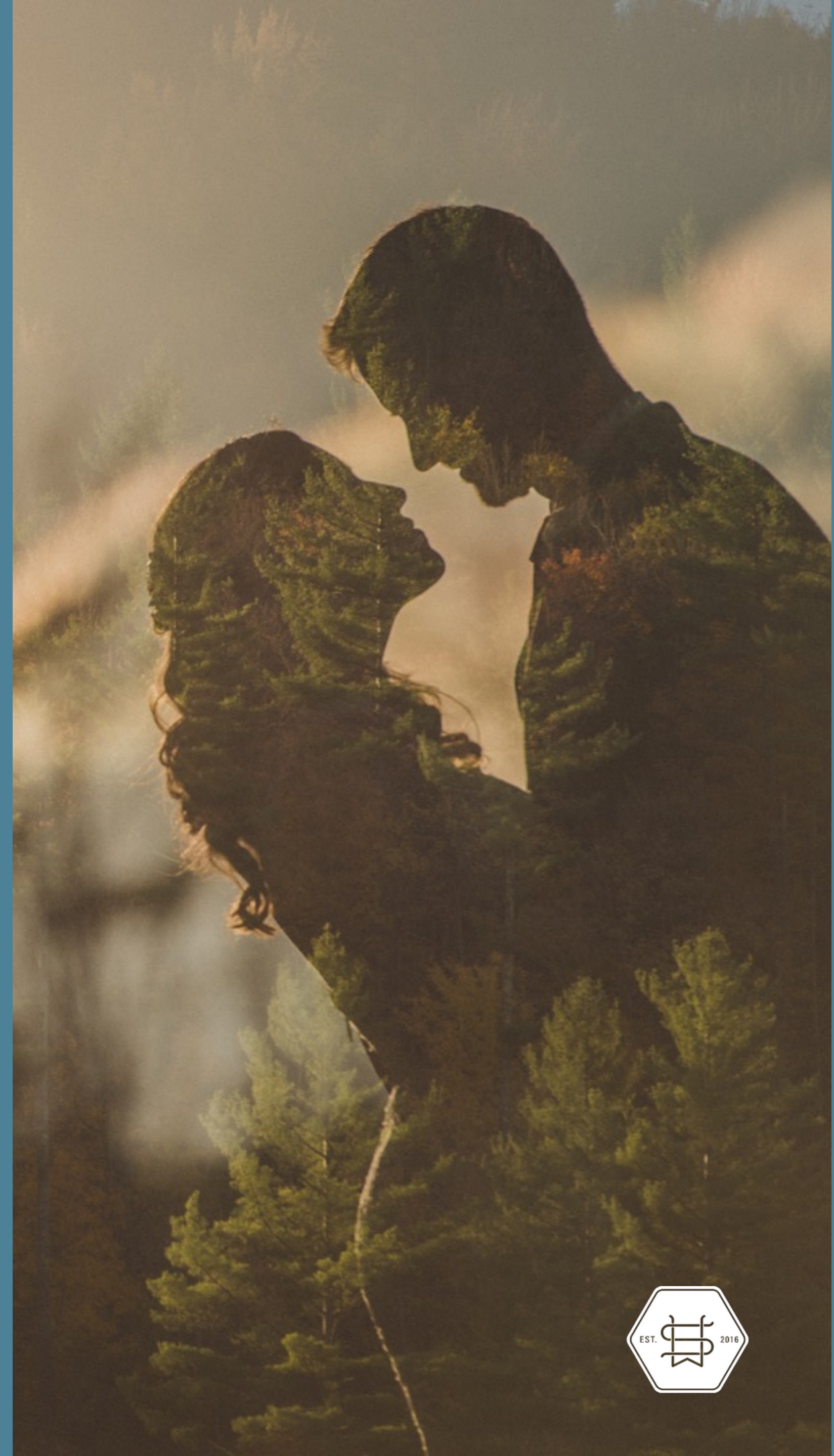
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- ▶ Start to practice with composition. Make sure you're filling the frame with your story, but not too tightly
- ▶ Photograph people. Wait for the decisive moment. Learn not to "spray and pray"
- ▶ Experiment with aperture priority in natural light. Which feels better? AP or Manual?
- ▶ Experiment with your flash. Angle the flash head in different directions. What happens?

# SIX WEEKS BEFORE

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- ▶ Talk to your clients about the timeline of the day. Make sure you have more time than you need for all aspects. Family portraits? Time with the bride and groom together? Getting ready?
- ▶ Go to the venue and look around. Go at the time these events will take place. Look at the light. Make a game plan. Keep it simple.
- ▶ Make a plan to rent a backup camera body if you don't already have one



# ONE MONTH BEFORE

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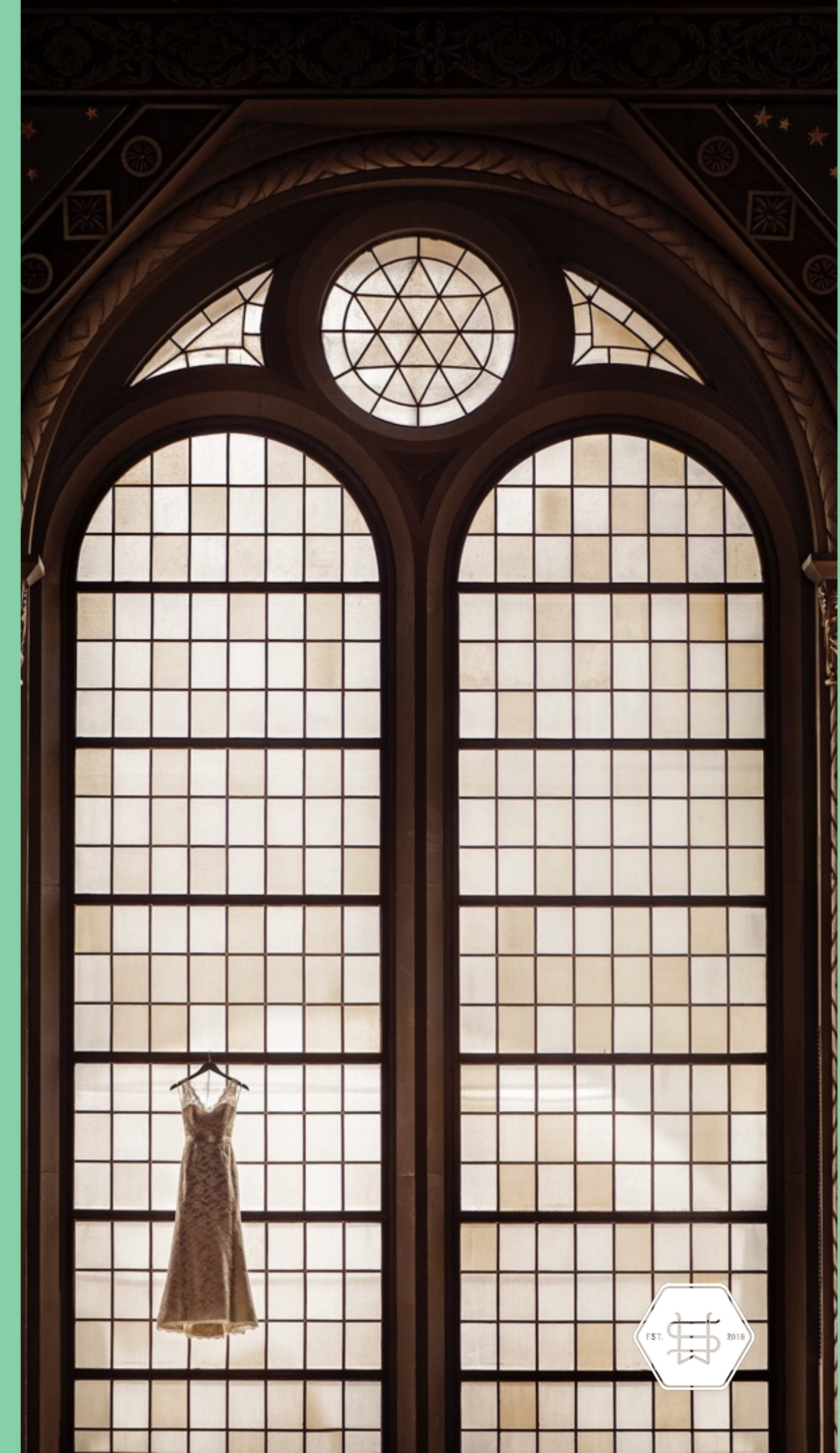
- ▶ Make sure you have enough batteries
- ▶ Make sure you have enough memory cards
- ▶ Make sure you have space on your computer
- ▶ Go over the timeline again with the clients
- ▶ Introduce yourself to the other vendors
- ▶ Make sure all of your gear is in good working order
- ▶ Shoot for fun, as much as you can



# TWO WEEKS BEFORE

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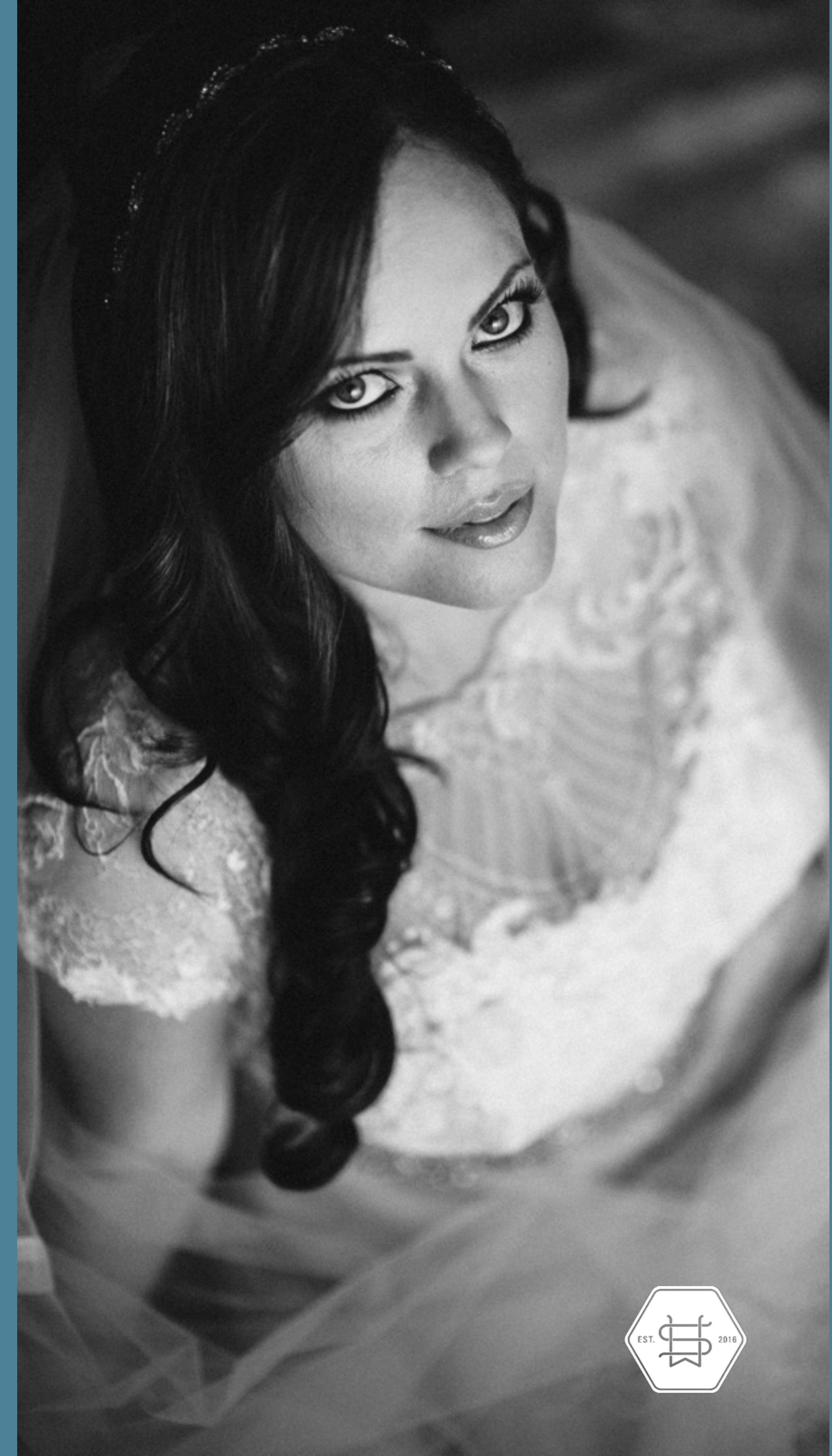
- ▶ Don't think about it
- ▶ Take a break. Watch movies. Read books. Go take a walk and look at light
- ▶ Read through your manuals again
- ▶ Make sure you have backups for everything
- ▶ Confirm timing with your assistant
- ▶ Relax and enjoy, because shooting your first wedding should not be something you dread!



# ONE WEEK BEFORE

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- ▶ If you've rented backup gear, get it at this point and test it out
- ▶ Check all of your gear and make sure it's ready to go, working fully, and in top shape
- ▶ Check with the couple to make sure nothing has changed with their timeline
- ▶ Start looking at the weather for the day of the event
- ▶ Confirm with your assistant one more time!



# TWO DAYS BEFORE

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- ▶ Charge all of your batteries
- ▶ Check and double-check to make sure everything is packed and ready to go
- ▶ Put gas in your car, buy some granola bars, print out maps and timelines, figure out parking
- ▶ Program your GPS and make sure you have accurate travel time to get to ALL locations : prep, ceremony, portraits, reception
- ▶ Make sure you have memory cards ready to go





# THE NIGHT BEFORE

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- ▶ Double check everything one more time
- ▶ Drink a lot of water, eat well, go to sleep
- ▶ Seriously, go to sleep
- ▶ Stop stressing
- ▶ DO NOT TRY TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW
- ▶ Don't research, read, or second guess yourself
- ▶ Plan to leave early, just in case. Now go to bed!



**HOW DID IT  
GO?**

# GOOD OR BAD, BE PROUD

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- ▶ You did it!
- ▶ You survived!
- ▶ Make a list of what worked, and what didn't
- ▶ Make a list of where you need to improve
- ▶ Take time to celebrate your success
- ▶ The first wedding is the hardest
- ▶ Be proud of yourself!



**WELCOME TO  
WEDDING  
PHOTOGRAPHY!**



THE  
**WEDDING SCHOOL**