

Dress Code for Photographers

Recently I attended a lovely wedding ceremony in a beautiful church. The only thing that spoiled it was the photographer who was so conspicuous with his untidy attire parading in front of everyone. I whispered to someone beside me: "How could a professional photographer be so inconsiderate by coming to a formal occasion looking like a run-down vagabond." I was angry.

I have attended far too many weddings, funerals, and formal occasions where the photographers and videographers were inappropriately dressed for the occasion. So now I cannot help but write about it. I don't know if this article will help someone. I hope it does.

Photographers and videographers are not to be sore thumbs at these occasions. They are to blend in and not be disrespectful to the guests by having improper attire: untidy shirts out of the trousers, jeans, wide open unbuttoned shirts, untidy hair, etc. Some female photographers' pants are so tight, they are a distraction and downright distasteful and unhealthy. It is as though they ran in from the jogging track. True, photographers or videographers may not need to come in a necktie or formal coat, but their dress can still tastefully blend in with the occasion.

Also, photographers and videographers must learn how to position themselves so as not to be an obvious distraction or in the way. I could never forget more than forty-three years ago when one of The Bahamas' most outstanding photographers, Stanley Toogood, took the pictures for my sister's wedding. He stood on the side holding his camera as though he was always waiting for something. If you did not keep your eyes on him, you would have thought he never moved. Within a few weeks when we did see the photos we learned he took more photos than anyone else and from angles you did not even know he was in that position. He was not a sore thumb like most photographers are today. He was never in the way.

Sometimes I think photographers and videographers think they run the show at these occasions. They are mistakenly arrogant. Instead, they are to be as unobtrusive as possible. They are invited to record the events and not change or create them. Therefore, they should stand aside and let the show run.

When I started to search on this subject, I wondered if my concerns were also being expressed by other writers around the world. In my search, I did not find many articles. However, I did find enough to let me know that I was not alone and such unprofessional behavior by photographers and videographers were not unique to The Bahamas. I found an article entitled: "A Photographer's Dress Code" by the online site "Landscape and Travel Photography," written in 2011. Here are the important opening sentences from the article. "Considering all types of photography shoots with all types of different clients and settings, a photographer must always be dressed appropriately. Think about it, you must be dressed to impress several groups of people regardless of your event: (1) the client, (2) the guests, (3) any potential future clients in attendance. Dressing inappropriately for your next event will most certainly guarantee you won't be getting any future jobs from this event." I could not say it more clearly. How could a photographer come to a wedding dressed like he or she is on a construction site or casually at home? That is inappropriate. But too many are doing so in The Bahamas.

Here are some further guidelines from the article for photographers to follow:

"(1) **Dress to blend in.** You are not the focus of attention, so wearing loud, colorful, busy clothes is distracting and inappropriate. A good rule is to stick to solid colors, and if you are unsure, default to darker solids.

(2) **Don't overdress.** I would argue that any event you attend, men will not need a tie, unless specifically asked for. Even if you are a photographer at a wedding, you are not expected to dress in a suit; however, you are not expected to show up in a t-shirt and jeans either. A good option is always a dark solid sweater with a collared shirt or a collared shirt with a sport coat.

(3) **Be aware of your needs.** Be comfy. One reason you don't see a lot of photographers wearing a suit at weddings is that they move a lot and need to move quickly. Make sure your pants and shoes are always comfy; but tennis shoes are frowned upon and will quickly alienate you as an amateur photographer.

(4) **Always wear slacks.** Or if you prefer: never wear jeans. Even if you are going out to shoot an informal couple's engagement or a band's promo, you still need to wear your slacks. And never wear tennis shoes. If you need to dress down, add a solid v-neck t-shirt with your slacks, but don't opt for jeans.

(5) **Dress to make your clients feel comfy.** If you are going for an informal mood and want your clients to relax, throw on a designer t-shirt with your slacks. If you are shooting a wedding, dress to make your bride comfortable with you walking around."

I like these guidelines. If you have a friend who is a photographer, let him or her read this article. I want to see a difference at the next wedding, funeral, or banquet I attend.

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