

Wedding Posing Guide

Traditional Concepts in Posing

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SOME TIPS ON POSING

There are some concepts you should know that can make you look better in pictures, regardless of whether it's a professional photographer who poses you or it's your uncle whose instruction is limited to "stand over there and smile". For the most part, these tips about how to pose yourself are optical illusions, usually caused by the fact that the camera is monocular (one-eyed) as opposed to binocular (two-eyed).

The tips are easy and might be likened to the world's most painless diet. If someone were to say that you would look ten pounds thinner simply by standing a certain way, I'm sure you would jump at the chance. By knowing these secrets, and even spending some time in front of a mirror practicing them before the big day, you can help look your best on your wedding day.



Avoid placing your feet together while standing flat on the ground (left). A pointed toe lends more shape to your hips.



Avoid slouching (left). You'll look more confident when you stand with a good posture.

Getting the Point

By pointing your toe, you shift your weight to your back foot, which in turn causes your hips to shift.

This hip-shift makes you look more appropriately curvy. You want to end up with one of your hips and one side of your buttock slightly more pronounced than the other. As with everything, a little goes a long way, so just shift your hips a little.

Stand Up Straight

Standing straight can do wonders for your image. Although the groom can also benefit from good posture, it is especially important, and perhaps more difficult, for you. This is because chances are that you have never worn a headpiece and veil for a whole day before. Don't worry about your headpiece falling off; if it does, there will be plenty of willing hands to help fix it.

Relax Your Shoulders

People have a tendency to tighten and raise their shoulders when they get nervous. This causes a few problems. It makes your shoulders appear narrower than they really are, your neck seems shorter, and most importantly, it creates a feeling and look of tenseness. This is quite subtle, and to resist it you have to concentrate on relaxing your shoulders. Let them fall naturally.

Position Your Shoulders to 45°

Because of the camera's monocular view, it is hard to judge depth in a photograph. If you turn your body slightly to the right or left, you can appear thinner.

For example, if you are standing with your shoulders parallel to the camera you might be 24 inches wide when measured from shoulder to shoulder. But, if you turn your body to a 45° angle, the measurement from shoulder-to-shoulder, in the photo, might be reduced to only 18 inches.

With your shoulders square to the camera your body might only be eight inches deep from breastbone to spine. With your shoulders at a 45° angle, the depth of your body, which is now measured shoulder to shoulder, is probably 12 to 15 inches.

In fact, generally speaking, your *entire body* should never be square with the camera; it should always be at some angle, usually 45° or more.



Hunching your shoulders makes your neck look shorter (left).

When you relax your shoulders you will look more natural and less tense.



Turning to a 45° angle will help you look thinner.



Get Your Elbows Away

In a photograph, if you stand with your elbows touching the sides of your body, your body will look as wide as the elbow-to-elbow dimension.

On the other hand, if you move your elbows slightly away from your sides, creating a small separation between your body and your arm, people will notice the cut-in of your waistline in your photographs.

With your arms out, separate from your body, your torso appears slimmer.

In the course of moving your elbows outward, make sure that you don't also lift your shoulders.

This trick requires care in its use. You want to see a slight separation between your body and elbows. If you move your arms too far away it will look like you're doing the chicken dance!

Banish Those Double Chins

In an effort to hide a double chin, many people will tilt their head slightly backward. In actuality, this has an adverse effect. It makes your chin more conspicuous, shows off the insides of your nostrils, and makes your eyes, the most expressive facial feature, look smaller.

Lifting the chin is the right idea because it stretches the folds under your chin more tightly, helping to eliminate this unwanted feature. However, the foundation for this illusion starts much lower in the body, it starts at your waist.

To reduce the look of a potential double chin, lean forward slightly at the waist and then tilt your head slightly backward. This keeps your face in its normal position, and the tilt at the waist cancels the backward tilt of your head.

Lower Your Chin

Now that we've taken care of any double chins, it's time to accentuate the facial feature that expresses the most about you—your eyes.

If you lower your chin by a small fraction of an inch, you will be tilting your face downward and your eyes will therefore be closer to the camera than your chin and mouth. This will make your eyes appear larger.

Just a tiny dose of this little trick is all you need, so use it sparingly.

You will need to practice these two techniques together in front of a mirror. They may feel unnatural, but like all professional posing, the results should be beneficial.



While standing up straight, don't pull your head toward your neck (left).

Rather, lean forward at the waist while slightly tilting your head backward.



It is usually less flattering to lift your head back because your chin becomes more prominent. (left).

Instead, lower your chin to tilt your forehead ever so slightly closer to the camera. This emphasizes your eyes.



Notice how glare hides the eyes (top).

When wearing glasses, a simple and slight nod downward will help cut glare.

About Eyeglasses

I've seen brides with a tired eye who don't wear their glasses and then are unhappy with their photos because their eye is wandering in every picture. Other brides go to the trouble and expense of getting contacts, but don't spend enough time getting used to them before the wedding. Their eyes then get bloodshot, or they find the flash annoying.

These brides often end up with a stack of proofs in which they blink a lot of the time.

If You Wear Glasses

1. Photo-gray lenses are just no good. They darken when outdoors, and even when you are inside, they appear dark in photos.
2. There are non-glare lenses that you can put in your existing frames for relatively little cost. While not 100% effective, they help reduce reflections.
3. Have your frames professionally adjusted before the wedding. Make sure the lenses do not tilt upward because this will amplify the reflection from the camera's flash.
4. If possible, the lenses should tilt slightly downward so the flash will be reflected harmlessly towards the ground. This trick can also be accomplished by lowering your chin slightly.

Relax Your Forehead

Many times, in an effort to accentuate their eyes, brides will try to open them as widely as possible. You've probably heard some family photographer say, "Don't squint." Yet all too often in the process of 'not squinting' people raise their eyebrows.

This only creates unwanted wrinkles on their forehead. While it is important to avoid squinting, you want to avoid raised brows or a furrowed forehead.

It helps greatly to practice your facial poses in front of a mirror. This is true of all of the posing mentioned; take the time to practice until you are familiar with the movements.



Important Words to the Wise

All the suggestions and little tips and tricks about posing should be used sparingly. Your application of these ideas should be measured in fractions of an inch.

As a test case, stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself. Now lower your chin 1/4 of an inch (such a tiny distance). Then, try it again, but this time lower your chin a full inch. In the first case you'll hardly notice the difference in the mirror, but in photos, your eyes will look larger. In the second instance the photo may result in double chins.

No one trick is going to magically transform you into a super-model. However, by using all of them, each one improving your presented image a little bit, the end result should add up to a noticeable change in your photographs.

Bouquets

There are three basic types of bouquets; arm, cascade, and snowball.

The arm bouquet is made from long-stem flowers and doesn't have a handle in the traditional sense. It most often looks best running along one of your forearms with the blossoms nestled into the crook of your arm. Place your free hand on your waist or wrap your fingers (with your hand palm-down) around the lower part of the stems.

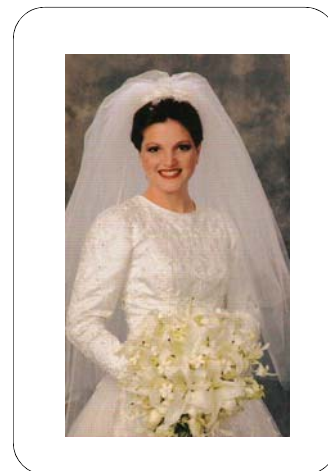
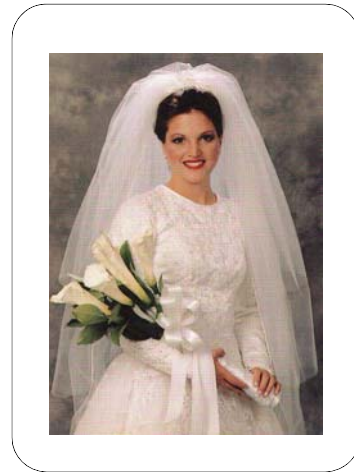
Hints for the Arm Bouquet

1. Never cup your second hand under the end of the stems. It appears very uncomfortable and your hand will look like a closed fist.
2. You should flip the bouquet to either arm depending upon how you are standing so that the blossoms and not the stem-ends are more prominent.
3. Never hold an arm bouquet vertically.

Snowball and cascade bouquets are similar, but the snowball is round while the cascade is elongated with the flowers flowing out and down. Both have a handle.

As with the arm bouquet, you should never cup your free hand under the base of the handle. Instead, keep your wrists near your hips, with the rear hand holding the handle and the other palm-up, supporting the blossoms.

Finally, when holding either a snowball or cascade bouquet, you should not be able to see the flowery top of it when you look down. Tilting the bouquet slightly forward, you should be able to see a bit of your hands and the handle next to your belly. This way it will be set appropriately for the camera.



A Final Word on Flowers

All too often the flower sizes chosen do not fit the bride that they were made for. An overly large bouquet for a petite bride, or a very small bouquet for a full-figured bride, can create an imbalanced look.

Also, whichever bouquet you happen to choose, the question, "How should I hold my bouquet?" can be answered with just two words, "Lower it."

If you are unsure how low to hold your flowers, just remember to point your palms inward and let your wrists rest on your hipbones.



Don't hide yourself or your dress behind the flowers (top).

Hold your bouquet low, with your wrists on your hipbones.

* These pages were adapted from Steve Sint's book 'The Bride's Guide to Wedding Photography', Lark Books, 2004, pp. 20-25, 32-33,35.

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