



JAX PHOTOGRAPHY'S
“WAIT...HOW DO WE?”

WEDDING PLANNING GUIDE...part one



Congratulations!

THE JAX PHOTOGRAPHY EXPERIENCE

Jax Photography started when two talented shooters came together in the early 2000s to reinvent the wedding photography experience, among other things. We offer some of the finest Italian wedding albums available, a pretty chill seaside showroom, transparent pricing, free design services, and the best hybrid type of wedding photography possible, what some have called the perfect balance of styled classic portraiture and observational photojournalism. We're glad you're here. We're on a mission to make your wedding the best it can possibly be.

THE JAX PHOTOGRAPHY PROMISE

Jax Photography provides peace of mind during one of life's most meaningful moments: YOUR wedding. We are visual artists, fashion lovers, inventive dreamers, and can-doers who love what we do.

Our combined experience can help bring ANY wedding vision to life, from a quick elopement to a traditional church wedding, to a backyard BBQ, to a 300 guest, super fancy big city hotel extravaganza.



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SOME of what we'll cover here in PART ONE...

Engaged! Now What?

How do we make a wedding budget?

How do we pick a venue?

How do we pick a caterer?



Engaged...

NOW WHAT?

You've officially found someone to spend your life with. Guess what... moving your status to "engaged" is a huge step in any relationship and is alone worth celebrating! Take some time following the proposal to just "be" with your future spouse. There will be plenty of time to spend with family, friends and wedding vendors leading up to your wedding, but be sure to set aside time to spend together for just the two of you. Think romantic dates, talk about your life outside of wedding planning, and perhaps finding a quick weekend getaway to relax!

Every engagement length and preference is different, however we've seen that most couples take about a year to plan their nuptials. Depending on how long or short your engagement is, you can adjust your wedding planning timeline and checklist to fit your needs. A guide (like this one!) can help you get a better sense of what to be focusing on in accordance with typical vendor timelines. Keep in mind, when it comes to wedding planning, there are no steadfast rules that you must follow, or even a strict order you necessarily need to abide by.

Our experience in doing this type of work has reinforced the importance of communication between the COUPLE. Before ANY planning, sit down with your partner and hash out your wedding vision. Help yourself and set expectations about what your dream wedding looks like. What type of wedding do you want? How big or small is your wedding? Do you want to go all-out on an extravagant wedding or do something more simple?

We're fans of making a list of "must-haves," "nice-to-haves" and "don't needs." Compare and compromise. Want ownership of your big day? It's as simple as having this conversation with your partner. Although the bride has historically been designated as the primary wedding planner, keep in mind that this day is for the two of you!



How do we make a

WEDDING BUDGET?

Although wedding budgeting SEEMS unglamorous, it's crucial to do it early on. You'll thank yourself later! Build a realistic budget first (along with a tentative guest count) and use this information to find vendors that align to both your vision and price point. Communicate your budget expectations with all of your potential vendors, especially for venues and catering. Most venues will be willing to work with your budget and even provide smart ways to get the cost down. Plus, wedding packages are often more flexible than they first appear online; all you have to do is ask!

But how do you actually put together a budget? There are tons of resources online, to make sure you don't forget anything. Identify a couple of wedding things that you want to spend more on, as well as a few that you can eliminate or do the bare minimum for. Source estimated prices including service fees and tips for every vendor type (venue, catering, decor, etc.) and put them in the spreadsheet list to calculate a total. Every location is different, but you can likely get ballpark estimates for each category by doing some research online. Once you start signing contracts, add in the actual costs. Thankfully, you can always adjust as you go. By continually tracking your budget, you might find that unexpected discounts gave you space down the line to do some extra-special things for your guests, like welcome bags. Have conversations upfront with anyone that'll be involved in paying for your wedding, and make sure you're all aligned on how finances affect their level of involvement in wedding planning. Give them advance notice before you discuss budget so they can assess what they want to contribute. It might be helpful to come prepared with the amount you can add too.



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How do we choose A VENUE?

Next to high quality wedding photography, (granted we're hella biased) Ceremony and reception venues are ONE of the most important things to check off your list. We're here to help you make a choice you're happy with!

START EARLY: Depending on your location, you might need to move fast to ensure that you snatch up the right venue for your wedding date. In bigger cities with more weddings, venues can start to book a year or more in advance.

PRIORITIZE: Make a list of what is most important to you, what's nice to have, and what you can live without. For example, if you've gotta have a venue with indoor and outdoor space, don't waste your time looking at other types of locations.

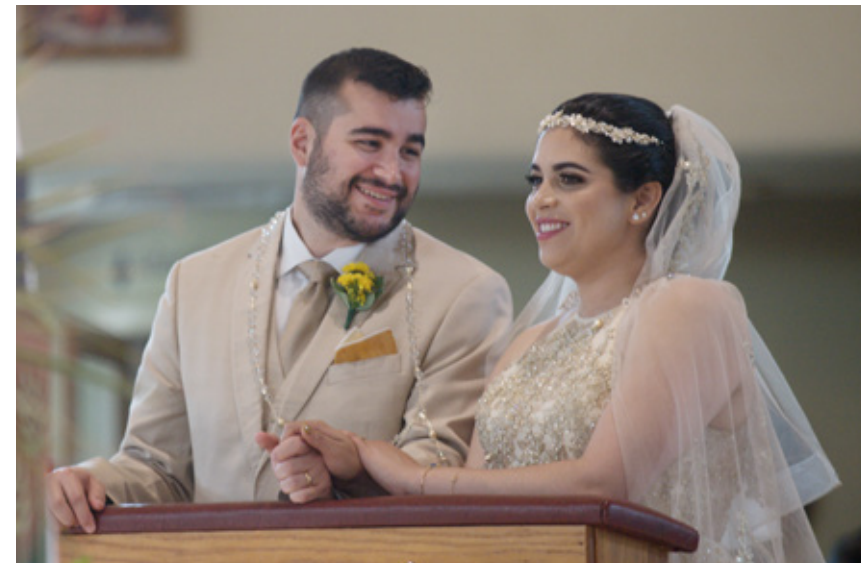
GOOD VIBES ONLY: Consider what style of wedding you want to have. Is it boho, rustic, timeless or glam? Do you want it in a barn or a banquet hall? Knowing your vibe and type of venue can help you home in on your dream spot.

ASK AROUND: Your engaged and newly married friends are your greatest resource. Ask them what venues they liked or didn't like and why! Reading reviews online also helps.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: Consider proximity to ceremony space (if its different), nearby hotels, where to take photos and time of year. All can influence what venue you ultimately choose. If you pick locations that are far from each other, you'll likely have to prepare and budget for transportation between each space. If budget is a concern, think about a more inclusive space (like a hotel).

GET CREATIVE: Don't be afraid to think outside the box, especially if you're having a hard time finding an available venue. Unconventional venues like restaurants, museums, warehouses, wineries/breweries and even private parks can be stunning with the right decor, and sometimes a better deal! Plus, you usually aren't tied to a strict list of vendors.

BE OPEN: Communicate your budget with potential venue partners right away. They can help you find affordable packages and even work with you to modify a package to help get costs down.



How do we choose A CATERER?

Finally, food! A lot of venues will refer or provide their own catering, which can make the booking process a lot easier. However, getting to pick your own catering company comes with its own perks too because you actually have the freedom to choose one that best aligns to your values, food preferences and budget. With any catering option, try to research the company online to see what other couples or guests have said about the quality of their food. Plus, if your catering company runs a restaurant or a bar nearby, grab a bite to eat there to see what the food and service is like. Although the catering menu is certainly different, it can be nice to know more about their food style before you do a formal tasting. Some venues with a full restaurant inside may even provide you a meal on the house to help you make a booking decision.

As always, come prepared with questions. The more you know, the more informed of a decision you can make. Is the menu customizable? Will you serve any outside food? Is there a cutting fee for serving cake? Are there dietary or cultural food accommodations? Where is the food made prior to being served? What do your servers wear? If your caterer is separate from your venue, you'll also have to ensure their availability that day as well.

You'll likely need to determine how you want the food to be served, and this can affect budget. Plated meals require more staffing costs; however, with a buffet option, you'll have to pay for more food because guests are serving themselves. Either way, you can always offset the price by choosing more affordable proteins like chicken or vegetables. Some venues might let you do family-style sharing, but be sure to check on how the food is warmed or cooled if it stays in the middle of each table. Food trucks are another great option if you've got a favorite restaurant and want to introduce a more casual vibe.

Looking for other ways to cut the cost on catering? Opt for a company that lets you bring your own booze so you can avoid the cost of premiums. You also look at eliminating more expensive dishes like seafood and steak or cut the number of passed appetizers at cocktail hour. Another idea: Hand out a simple pre-packaged or local snack instead! Dinner usually isn't far away as it is, and this can be a great way to show some personality. Bonus: It doubles as a party favor. Some venues do have an in-house bakery for wedding cakes. If you're a cake fan, go for it! But other kinds of desserts are totally acceptable too. Want a combination? You can always get a small cake to cut and sheet cake or other desserts for everyone else. There are a lot of great dessert options out there like mini cupcakes, donuts or a cookie spread! Hungry yet?

