



YOUR ENGAGEMENT SESSION:
WHAT EVERY COUPLE NEEDS TO KNOW

The engagement session is one of our favorite parts of our time together because it gives you both a chance to be in front of our cameras before you get married. This is going to make your wedding day experience run as seamlessly and as comfortable as possible. It also gives us a chance to hang out and get to know you both better! You're going to be married for a very long time, but you only get to be engaged for this short period. We are so excited to capture the only time in your life when you get to be each other's fiancés!

CHOOSING TIME & DATE

I shoot in a primarily natural light style. Because of this I begin all engagement sessions about two hours before the scheduled sunset during "the golden hour," when the light is the dreamiest. Remember, the sun sets much earlier during the colder months of the year and much later during the warmer months, so make sure to factor that in when choosing your engagement session date, especially if you're taking off work or have evening plans afterward. To get the most out of your session, please plan to arrive a few minutes early to be ready to start on time.

SELECTING THE RIGHT LOCATION

I like to leave the location of your engagement session up to you! The images you see throughout my website, have locations mainly chosen by the couple. I encourage you to think of places that have meaning to you. A favorite park, neighborhood or any place you two have an affinity for. However, if you don't have anything specific in mind, I am happy to help you choose the location. For most of our sessions, outdoor, open-air environments are always our first choice. There are so many great options all around Western PA, and we're always up for exploring a new spot together!

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

I encourage you to brainstorm unique locations that you might have special access to that most people don't. For example, maybe you, or someone in your personal or professional network, can secure permission to a location that would otherwise be off-limits, like a beautiful private estate, country club or resort.

Maybe it's a family ranch, upscale hotel or even an airplane hangar. The sky is literally the limit! Spend a few minutes thinking about it and checking around. You might be surprised with what you can come up with.

Plus, if something seems out of reach, just remember: you never know until you ask! Just remember though, some locations might charge a fee to be able to use their property, so check ahead of time!

DESTINATION ENGAGEMENT

Your engagement session includes our travel time up to one hour from the Pittsburgh area. If you'd like to go somewhere outside of this travel zone, we're up for the adventure! The travel fee for two-hour drives to places like Cooks Forest, West Virginia, Deep Creek, Maryland, or Erie is \$250. We love traveling! If we happen to already be in or near an area you've always dreamed of doing your photos, and we can coordinate our schedules, let's set it up. We'd love to make it work! If you'd like us to meet you in a destination outside of Pittsburgh for your engagement session where we don't already have plans to visit, just let me know and I can get you a custom quote.

PRO TIP:

Our weekends fill up fast and far in advance and Saturdays are reserved for weddings only. Schedule your shoot today to reserve your ideal date!

STYLING YOUR SESSION

STYLE TIPS: FOR HER... BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING YOUR WHOLE LIFE FOR THIS!

DRESS IT UP

Have you ever thought about rocking a sequined gown or tulle skirt but just never had an occasion for it? This is your chance to do it up! Remember: There is no such thing as "too dressed up" when it comes to your engagement session, so don't be afraid to have some fun!

If you don't want to add a new permanent piece to your collection, a lot of brides love Rent the Runway for their engagement photos because you don't have to spend a lot to feel like a million bucks. Plus, you can send the outfits back when the session is over.

Long, flowy dresses and skirts look amazing on camera because they bring extra movement to the photos. Cute, shorter-length dresses photograph beautifully as well. Dresses and skirts tend to look most stunning on camera because they really flatter the female body! I recommend avoiding wearing just pants for your session, and saying yes to a dress for at least one of your outfits!

ONE OR TWO? IT'S UP TO YOU!

Most of our brides who choose two outfits will bring one "wow" dress, and then another shorter sun dress, cocktail dress or pants with blouse for a more casual "us on a date" feel. Remember, though, you don't have to bring two looks if it's too stressful or you'd rather just stick to one fabulous look. One outfit that you love will be so much better than one outfit you love and another you're not very excited about. If you plan on wearing two outfits, save your most favorite one for the second half.

PRO-TIP:

Bring a little extra something with you, if you want your engagement images to look more polished. A freshly-picked bouquet for you to hold is a fun way to bring a little extra romance. Whether it's larger items like classic cars, or smaller ones like blankets or hats, even incorporating just one extra styled item, could be a fun way to make your session more unique.

CHOOSING COLORS

When choosing colors for your outfits, we recommend selecting lighter tones and more muted shades. By avoiding ultra-bright, bold colors, it will help bring all the attention to your faces and let the eye focus on the way you feel about each other. Shades of soft pink and muted blues, mixed with sophisticated light neutrals like gray, creams, brown and black photograph well together. A softer color palette fits beautifully into almost all natural outdoor environments.

COORDINATING THE LOOKS

As you're coordinating your outfit with your fiancè's, keep in mind that your outfits will look the most cohesive on camera when the color palettes coordinate, but don't necessarily "match." You should each aim to wear a different dominant color, but stay within a similar color palette family.

So if you're wearing a blush pink dress, soft blue earrings and nude heels (blush being your dominant color), then he could wear a navy coat with gray pants, paired with brown shoes and maybe even a blush pocket square. Now he has his own dominant color (navy) while still incorporating a few touches of your color palette. Most of our brides choose their dress first, and then put together their fiancè's outfit based on that. That's why I have a section for each of you.

PRO TIP:

Bring a pair of flats or walking shoes to wear when moving from place to place. Your feet will thank you later and we will be able to get you in settings that might be difficult to initially navigate in heels.

FLATTERING YOUR FEATURES

In our experience, every woman, regardless of her shape has an area of her body that she's self-conscious about, so recognizing what that is in advance is key. Choosing flattering silhouettes and colors that complement your natural features is the best way to ensure you'll love the way you look in your photos.

Three-quarter length sleeves create an awesome slimming effect on all arms, so be on the lookout for an option with a longer length sleeve. You could also bring a cute jacket, blazer or cardigan along, too. Skinny straps or strapless dresses have the opposite effect on arms on camera, so we recommend avoiding those whenever possible if your goal is a set of slimmer-looking arms.

Heels elongate women's legs, making them look toned and elegant. Closed-toes heels in particular look great on camera because they carry out the line of your leg all the way down to your toe. If your toes are showing in a peep-toe heel, consider scheduling a pedicure before your session so you don't regret letting your feet show. These little tricks make all the difference!

MAKE A STATEMENT

Pairing an accessory or two with your outfit can really help bring some extra dimension to your images. Big statement necklaces bring a lot of pop to the photos, while the smaller, delicate ones are not be as noticeable on camera.

Belts, bracelets and earrings bring great visual interest; so choose one or two that don't compete for attention. Fresh florals in a crown or bouquet can be a really romantic touch as well.

GO PRO: HAIR & MAKEUP

Professional hair and makeup is on the top of most of our brides' checklists because it looks amazing in photographs and removes the stress of getting ready on your own.

Whether it's lash extensions or blown-out hair, professional hair and makeup will give you an extra boost of confidence in front of the camera, and it always photographs like a dream. If you're working with a makeup artist, have her apply your makeup in natural light, if possible, so that it looks fresh and not too heavy. Plus, that's the type of light we'll be shooting in, so it'll give you the best expectation of how it will translate on camera.

Most of our brides feel like their makeup is "too much" at first, since it's more than you would wear on a normal day. But good makeup artists know how to get it just right for the camera — and our brides always love the final result in the images. If you need a recommendation for hair and makeup, I can send a few ladies that I know you'll LOVE! Just let me know and I'll send you their information.

PRO TIP:

A Little Extra Polish: Don't forget, your ring will be center stage, so give yourself permission to get it cleaned and your nails done, too!

SKIP THE SPRAY TAN

Although it might seem counter-intuitive, we recommend that you do not get a spray tan before your session, even a few days prior, because it tends to photograph orange even when it's applied subtly and by a professional. Your actual skin tone will photograph the most beautifully.

**FASHION TIPS: FOR HIM...
BECAUSE DAPPER AND REFINED NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE.**

Men look most striking in a well-tailored suit! If he doesn't have one, now's the perfect time to invest in something he'll wear for the rest of his life! The best part? It's a lot less expensive than you might think! Most well-known brands have off-the-rack suits in department stores. Solid shades of gray or navy are a strong complement to most women's outfits, whereas pinstripes or plaid patterns tend to distract the eye.

PRO TIP:
There's no substitute for a well-tailored suit.

LAYERED LOOKS

Next time you walk by a store like J. Crew, notice the male mannequins and models are always wearing several layers at once. Layers on men look great on camera, so even when it's hot outside, trust me when I say that it's worth an hour or two of discomfort for photos that will last you both a lifetime.

Adding another layer will bring extra dimension and visual interest to your photos. Blazers, vests and coats up the level of any look. If the temperature permits, he could even consider adding a v-neck sweater with a pop of color from a long-sleeved collared shirt and tie underneath. Don't be afraid to get a little creative!

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Long properly fitted pants and closed-toed shoes are a sophisticated look for men. They draw attention away from his legs and feet and place it where you want it: on the face you fell in love with. So, for your session, it's best to leave the shorts, sandals and baggy jeans at home.

Suit pants, dress pants or colored pants work best. Brown or black dress shoes complement almost every look, whether he's wearing a full suit or a blazer and pants.

Ties, bowties, pocket squares, colored socks, belts, tie clips, suspenders, vests and watches are sharp complements to any suit. If you bring two outfits to the session, he can start with a traditional necktie and belt, then switch to suspenders and a bow tie for your second look.

If two suits are too stressful, no problem! One look will do the trick! You can still mix and match accessories to complement both of your looks without doing a full change during the session.

HOW TO PREP YOUR MAN

Most men aren't overly excited to take photos for two hours, because they don't have an expectation of what's to come and why it's so important to you. Take fifteen minutes to educate and empower your guy. Tell him why you chose us and our style of photography.

Show him your images that we've done, explain why you love them and express to him how much it means to you. Trust me, he'll light up the camera for you!

The most common thing we hear from guys before engagement sessions is this: because of a bad experience in the past, they don't like taking photos or don't think they'll be good at it. By the time we're done, though, they can't believe how fast it went and just how much fun they had!

A FEW SIMPLE DON'TS FOR YOUR OUTFIT PLANNING:

DON'T wear logos or distracting patterns. Avoid horizontal stripes, odd plaid prints and anything with logos. Solid colors are always best.

DON'T wear hats... mainly don't wear baseball caps. Also, leave the sunglasses in the car...and not on top of your head (guys, I'm looking at you).

DON'T do the matchy-matchy thing. This trend was possibly in style in the 90's but now matching from head to toe will make your images look dated...and cheesy.

DON'T do tight unflattering clothing.

Don't try to be an entirely different couple in your photos. DO be true to your style. Be sure to wear something that compliments your body type AND personal style.

AFTER THE SESSION, DON'T FORGET TO PLAN A DINNER DATE!

You're already going to be all dressed up! Why not take advantage of it? We know the wedding planning process can feel all-consuming, so take some time after the session just for the two of you to relax and have some fun together.

PHOTO DELIVERY TIMELINE

Your final edited high-resolution images will be delivered about two weeks out from your session in online gallery.

HELPFUL ENGAGEMENT SESSION CHECKLIST:

1. Set date, time and location with Liz
2. Review guide for style tips
3. Schedule hair and makeup appointments
4. Choose your outfits
5. Get your nails done and clean your ring
6. Pack a bag with:
 - Flats or walking/hiking shoes for walking between photo spots
 - Outfit two (including shoes and accessories)
 - Touch-up makeup
 - Water bottle (for warmer sessions)
 - Coat or cover-up (for colder sessions)
7. Pick a fun post-session date-night spot

OUR FINAL NOTE

I know I just gave you a lot to think about. I share this guide to help make your engagement session experience something you'll look back fondly on for years and years to come. At the end of the day, though, the location you choose and the outfits you select won't matter nearly as much as the memories you make together.

We want your engagement session to be a time for you to just be yourselves and enjoy it. Have fun together. Laugh a lot. And we'll take care of the rest!