



What to Think About When Planning Your Couples or Engagement Session - General Guidelines

As a photographer, of course, I want my couples to look their best in their photos. The biggest question I get regarding an engagement or family session is “What should we wear?” It isn’t as easy to answer as you may think....I have a good idea of what I like but that may not translate well for you. You know you best, you know your closet best, how certain clothes make you feel etc. You *need to be you*, you need to decide what you will wear. HOWEVER, what I can do is provide you with some information that will hopefully assist you in your quest. The following is a little guide to help you on your path to the perfect outfits!

I think the single best suggestion is...DO YOUR RESEARCH! The internet provides a plethora of choices right at your finger tips. Google can become your best friend! Search engagement shoots and if you like how the couple is dressed, if it feels like it could be you and your partner in those photos...then get those outfits! Or, put together the closest thing to it. While not as important as the BIG DAY, your engagement shoot should provide you with images that you can look back on for years to come....remembering the time with a smile and grin...not a confused look of “what was I thinking wearing that hat “ or “that top, that tie, those shoes” you get the idea. There is no need to go all out and spend funds unnecessarily purchasing items that you wouldn’t normally wear however, if you really feel you’d like to emulate a certain look..., first go to your closet if you can’t find it there, go to a friend’s closet, if you can’t find it there, try a thrift store! Value Village and the like just might have that one particular item you were looking for to set off your look *and* for fraction of the price you’d pay at the mall – can’t turn down that opportunity!

The most important thing during your engagement shoot is to be yourself! The whole purpose of the shoot is to capture exactly who you are, and show your personalities. Just because someone else looks good in a certain outfit, doesn’t necessarily mean you will...you need to feel comfortable and your images should reflect who you are, not a couple you tried to be for the day. If you pick an outfit that just isn’t ‘you’, you’ll feel uncomfortable, and trust me, it’ll show in the photos. Think about your body type as well; you know what suits you and what doesn’t, so don’t just pick something you thought looked great in the photo you found on the internet. If you’re worrying about what your arms look like in that strapless dress, it’s going to be harder to capture those beautiful moments of a couple in love.

Dress for the season, especially if your engagement shoot is outdoors. Wearing thin summer clothes in the winter is only going to make you cold and miserable, and you don’t want goose bumps ruining your engagement photos. Similarly, wearing heavy winter clothes in the height of summer is a sure-fire recipe for sweatiness, and I’m sure sweat stains and melting make-up isn’t the look you’re going for! Keep in mind that even though it may be cold during a winter shoot, you’ll want to dress in layers to provide options. You can bring the BIG BULKY goose-filled down parka to keep you warm in between photos but you are definitely going to want to be able to take it off to be photographed in something more flattering, yet still appropriate for the season. Fashion winter coats aren’t in everyone’s closet...think Value Village again – you may only wear it for the session but if you like it, feel comfortable in it and it feels like you...hey, it was a bargain and just might mean the difference of a nice image and a wow image! You’ll want to coordinate with each other, rather than looking like Mr. and Mrs. Identical. Coordinate colours. Think about colours that complement each other, say cherry red and bright blue, or baby pink and turquoise, and make sure your individual outfits are colour coordinated. The same goes for how dressy you’re planning to be; if you’re going for a formal look, then both of you need to be formal – while her in a ball-gown and him in shorts and a t-shirt might seem quirky, is it really the look you’ll want to remember?

Coordinate styles. Guys make sure you match the overall “feel” of your girl’s outfit. If she’s wearing a dress, make yourself look a little nicer. If she’s rockin’ some jeans and fashion boots then funk yourself up a little with a snazzy tie and nice leather shoes.

I like to suggest clean looks that don’t have a lot going on in terms of patterns - certainly no writing or big logos! Wear solids or simple patterns. Solid dark colours are the most flattering. Focus should be on the two of you – not your clothing – it’s meant to compliment the overall feel of the image, not be the central theme. That being said, try layers and accessories. This is all about giving you choice and flexibility, and if it usually takes you a while to feel natural in front of the camera, accessories are perfect for giving you something to do with your hands. Ties, scarves, hats (no brimmed hats please....brim = shadows on your face and we don’t want that). Don’t underestimate how a pop of colour, a small prop or jewelry can add to the look of an image. I definitely suggest bringing a couple of items such as these that we can incorporate into the day.

Consider your undergarments. Now this may go without saying but you need to consider your “intimates” when putting together your outfits. Ladies, make sure you wear a properly fitting bra and an appropriate style for your outfits so your bra strap isn’t showing and it isn’t pulling at your skin. Make sure you take a look at yourself with the whole look put together so there aren’t any sneaking straps or lines that bother you. Make sure your outfit is finished to perfection by starting with your base.

Use your location. Depending on whether your shoot is outdoors or indoors, think about what looks will best set off the backdrop of your photos. If your setting is a grand hall in a stately home, a dress and a suit will look great, but the same outfits won’t translate as well to a woodland grove. It doesn’t hurt to look at shoots from similar locations and see what other people wore. It’s a great way to see what you like. Are you going for a soft natural/rustic feel? Then sticking to soft neutral colours may be a great option. Are you going to be shooting in a city or urban area? Then brighter colours or a more “dressed up” approach may work with the setting better - but still stick with neutrals. The layered look is always a winner for downtown settings. For example: Guys: Nice dark jeans, hip shoes, collared shirt and a loose tie. A jacket to finish it off. Girls: Nice jeans, paired with a dressy top, splashes of colour or patterns, funky jewelry and high heels (or cute dress).

Give yourselves options on the day. Variety is the spice of life! It is always best to bring a few different outfits so that you can change for your specific location. My couples typically bring 2 outfits depending on the locations and how much time we have. They almost always end up doing at least 1 wardrobe change. Even if you’re certain you know what look you’re going for, bring at least one other option to mix it up. And, thinking about our timeline, know what you are going to put together for the mix – please don’t bring several options and think that the decision will be any easier on location...trust me, it won’t. If it’s a winter shoot hopefully we will have the opportunity to also shoot indoors. When outside think simple coat, scarf, perhaps a hat that sits across your forehead but only if you feel comfortable putting it on for some photos and taking it off without it ruining your hair. Tights, tall boots, thin gloves. Guys, the same minus the tights and tall boots.....

Another one just for the ladies – you know we’re going to get some amazing shots of your engagement ring, right? So make sure that the ring is sparkingly clean, and your nails are done. And, I don’t want to leave the guys out so if you have a watch, wear it. It’s a nice accent to your wrist if we come in for a nice tight shot of the couple in love holding hands.

In Summary.....The Do's and Don'ts for Engagement Shoot Outfits

Do

- Professional hair and makeup – or make sure you've calculated the right amount of time that you'll need to ensure you'll be able to pull off the look you are going for yourself (nothing wrong with practicing ahead of time)
- Research looks that you like and that fit your personality
- Embrace bold colours if you think you'll be comfortable but also bring a second option
- Jazz up your outfit with a cute pair of heels or a funky necklace (or cute purse!).
(note: if you're going to be wearing high heels, also bring some more comfortable flip-flops or slip-ons with you for walking).
- Launder and iron your clothes (even photoshop can't help those wrinkles)
- Bring props (it's great including items that are especially meaningful to you; your pet, an instrument, a hobby, sport or whatever suits you the most)
- Be comfortable and have fun with it! You will have a much better time which will make for better photos.

Don't

- Wear white unless it goes with your skin complexion
- Wear anything with big logos or lots of writing (it detracts from the two of you)
- Wear exactly matching outfits (unless you're going for heavy irony!)
- Wear clothes that are too tight or too baggy (if it fits perfectly, you'll feel perfect; if it doesn't. . .)
Stick to more fitted clothing. Anything hanging off your body (baggy) will make you look bigger than you are and look messy.
- Wear white socks that peek out of your pants please guys!
- Tan right before your shoot (tanning disasters can happen at any time, but right before your engagement shoot? Disaster!)
- This one is for the GUYS....don't wear shorts unless we are planning a beach outing. Have you ever taken a good look at guys in shorts? I mean a really good look....it's always a bit off looking to see partial legs poking out from the shorts or "half pants". If shorts are a must, let me know and I will give some more tips on how to work around the awkward look of them :)