
HOW TO GET THE BEST PHOTOS OF COUPLES

Quick Guide
Written by Ľudmila Borošová



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Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

As a photographer who focuses on people and their stories, photographing a couple is always exciting. You can reflect their love in so many phases - dating, engagement, weddings, or even when starting a new family.

To master all of the stages, you need to be comfortable with the first one: dating photos. Compared to solo portraits, there's a lot more going on when you add that extra person. If you're used to taking portraits of a single person, you are probably focusing on their looks. With couples, the focus shifts to the energy that they're radiating. But how do you highlight that energy and work with two people at once to get the best results?

Today, we'll cover the following:

- How couple photography is different from solo photography
- How to prepare for a photo shoot with a couple
- How to ask the right questions to break the ice

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There are different approaches and levels to posing a couple. Couple photography is challenging; you're basically working with two people at once and making sure they're comfortable, they look excellent, and they're full of energy. Yes, this field has lots of specifications, but if you know them, you can use them to your advantage! Here are the steps that I use to get the best photos of couples.

MAKE IT EFFORTLESS

Keep in mind that your clients aren't taking photos like this very often. It's going to be a big day for them, and they will be a little bit tense. Your job is to make them forget about the photoshoot and just be in the moment. From my experience, many times one of the partners isn't very keen on taking the photos and their main motivation is to make their significant other happy. That's completely okay because it's your chance to show them that photoshoots can be effortless and fun!

Discuss the outfits - Find a compromise between comfy and beautiful. The most important is that they're feeling good in their clothes. Second, it's good to color-match them. It doesn't mean that they both need to be wearing the same color, but rather that they should look nice together. You can never go wrong with a white-brown-beige combo or something a little more colorful. Just make sure that it goes well together with style and colors and matches the location, too. Outfits are a huge percentage of success, so ask for pictures and help them decide what to wear!

Discuss the location - What place feels the most like "them"? Is there a place they have fond memories of? Or what kind of setup do they prefer? If they leave the decision completely up to you, choose a place which isn't too crowded for a start. You want them to be able to relax without other people looking. It doesn't mean that you need to stick to the same spot for the rest of the shoot, you can move around! Just remember one thing: it should make sense with the outfit. If your couple is wearing city clothes, don't go to the forest. If it's baggier, don't choose a historical museum.

Ask for preferences - This is very optional, but some people (especially girls) have a very specific vision for the aesthetics or poses they want to get. Ask your couple if anyone has any preferences, or, even better, inspirational photos! Don't forget to ask if there are any angles you should avoid, or what they usually like or dislike about the photos they have together.



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MAKE IT PERSONAL

You can only start building something with a proper foundation. The better you know your couple, the more likely you are to get amazing results.

Learn their names - This might seem obvious, but for many photographers, it isn't. It is best to ask for the names of the couple before the photoshoot, during your e-mail communication. If you don't want to make it too obvious, you can send them a small questionnaire with a handful of questions. Your couple will be so much more comfortable if you'll be addressing them by their names. It will also cause less confusion. So, instead of: "Eh, can you put your hand a little bit higher? Yes, you." You will be able to say: "Nathan, could you please put your right hand on Sarah's cheek?"

Find out their story - I love involving a little small talk during our photoshoot! It's a great chance to get to know the couple a little bit more. You can start by asking these simple questions: How did you meet? Where are you from? Where have you traveled together? It's not only what

they answer that will help you get the best results. It's more about how they answer: are they more conservative and quiet? Are they private and don't share many details? Are they super excited about their story? Chances are, that's the same as how they want their photos to feel.

Get on the same wavelength - This is related to the previous question. As you will be spending the next hour or two together, you should make sure that you are on the same wavelength with as much as you can, from their expectations about the atmosphere and timing to their sense of humor. Every little thing counts, and the more aligned you are, the more relaxed they will seem in the photos.

Ask about the previous experience - When was the last time they had their professional photos taken? This is a legit question because it will help you determine which poses are going to be the best. If someone is quite used to taking photos, you can take a little longer time, you can experiment with them, and even try more complicated poses. If it's someone's first time in front of the camera, you should make the experience as comfortable as possible and only go for techniques you feel confident in.



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IT'S ALL ABOUT POSES

What's going to make your couple the star of the show? It's 100% poses. To get the right mix, your couple can't be awkwardly standing next to each other, but at the same time, your photos can't be overly posed.

Start easy - Everyone is quite scared of how they will look in pictures. Give your couple a few minutes for a warm-up. No difficult poses, just smiling to the camera, looking at each other, a hug, or some kisses on the cheek. Make sure that you're showing them how it looks on camera to see if they're happy with how they look, and ask if they want to change something. From their reaction, you will find out what could be something they're sensitive about or what they enjoy.



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Continue natural - The best poses are the ones that you don't need a lot of explanation for. And they're my favorite, too! Coming up with them might be hard, but once you have a few ideas up your sleeve, it will elevate your posing game. Why? When you give the couple a natural task to perform, they will completely forget that they're taking photos and they'll focus on the main task.

Here are a few of my favorites:

- **Whispering.** Catch an intimate moment between them, such as whispering something. You can make them tell each other one thing they love the most about the other person, to make them emotional. If you want good laughs, make them tell their favorite awkward story.



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- **Walking.** Have the partners hold hands and walk towards you naturally, as if you were their paparazzi. Make them look around and act natural. Tell them to admire the surroundings or to talk about their day. This is so natural and fun!



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- **Hug from the back.** Hugging is such an intimate moment, and for many people it's even more personal than a kiss. If you specifically tell your couple to hug from the back, it will give you more opportunities like kissing on the head, kissing on the forehead, laughing, or even tickling.



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Have some fun - If you feel like your couple is ready to level up the posing game and isn't tense anymore, then you can introduce some of the sillier poses.

- **Dancing.** Who doesn't like the cliché twirl? I love it. Another great idea is to ask them for their favorite song to dance to, play it, and just catch a few natural moments. They will not expect this!
- **Tipsy walk.** Remember the walking photo? While that's cute and natural, you can spice it up by letting them pretend they're walking home from a night out. This especially works when one of the partners isn't very comfortable in orchestrated romantic poses - it's 100% fun and 0% staged! They will most likely be walking side to side, hysterically laughing and having a great time.



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- **Teeth kissing.** Anytime I tell my clients: “And now, imagine that you’re about to kiss. With your teeth.” They start laughing! Actually, it’s one of the most popular techniques to get beautiful images of the moment before the kiss. Just a little smile can boost the atmosphere and create more intimacy!



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Have a folder on hand - No amount of words can describe something better than a picture. Create a folder on your phone full of your favorite poses! This way, you can always have something impressive on hand and there will be no miscommunication. This is ideal for more advanced poses, which include a lot of different hand placements, looks, and angles.

In the end, your goal is to be the director of someone else's story. There is a story in each couple; you just need to ask the right questions and give the right directions. This will come naturally to you with practice! The tips above are so easy to implement and tweak, so they're a great start for getting the storytelling just right.

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Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) In photographing couples, what is the most important thing that you're trying to capture between the two people?
- 2) How should outfits and location work together?
- 3) What kind of preferences should you be aware of?
- 4) What's the number one thing you should know about the couple?
- 5) What does it mean to be on the same wavelength as the couple?
- 6) Why is it vital to know the previous photoshoot experience?
- 7) What are some examples of easy warm-up poses?
- 8) Name a few tasks that you can give as a natural-looking pose.
- 9) Name a few tasks that you can give as a fun pose.
- 10) How can you make the explanation process with poses simpler?

Assignment:

- Start downloading every couple picture that you like and saving them to a folder. What kind of poses are there? Do they look staged or natural? Imagine that you're giving someone directions to do something similar.
- Organize your first couple photoshoot with someone you know, like friends or family members. It will be a great experience for you and you'll feel less shy giving directions!
- Use this folder on the next photoshoot and learn how people are reacting to the poses. Do they find them too easy? Too difficult? Too awkward? Are the instructions clear to them?



Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute... Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way! Here are 3 of our most useful (*and FREE!*) photography resources:



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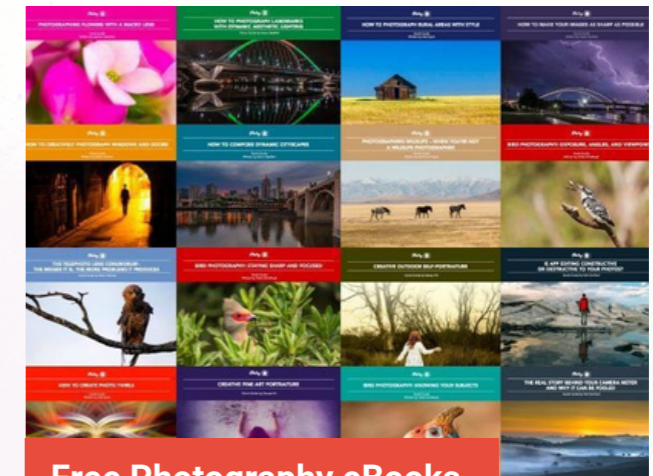
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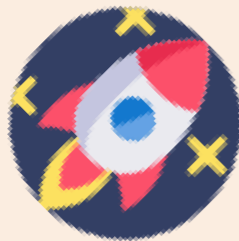
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ludmila is a Slovak photographer focusing on portraiture. She does photography while finishing her Master's degree in Business Administration, specializing in Entrepreneurship. She is based in Prague, Czech Republic but loves to travel around the world and share her stories, as well as her photoshoots, on her blog.

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