

When you do not have a Rich Uncle

[By Robert London](#)

There are many techniques to keeping your budget in check while still having wonderful pictures taken at your wedding. First on the list is, do not assume that the more you pay the better the wedding vendor. I have seen the work of many expensive photographers that turn out average work. It would be helpful to read my article [“Choosing a photographer.”](#) While looking at different photographers, do not categorize them by price, find the one you want and with a little planning you may be able to entice the photographer who once seemed out of reach. But remember, if a price seems to good to be true – it is. Make sure you understand exactly what is included in your package. That once inexpensive photographer may actually be more expensive than the one you really wanted. For instance, I do not charge extra for high-resolution files, many photographers charge \$1500 or more for this disc!

A popular photographer will be booked every Saturday during the busy wedding season, working on a budget will be difficult if you have your wedding during this time. One way to get the photographer (and all your other wedding vendors) you cannot afford is to have a morning wedding and only book the professional photographer for the ceremony. Then use one or more friends, or perhaps a student, to help photograph the reception. That way the professional photographer can still book a full day wedding in the afternoon. Be careful about hiring students or non-wedding photographers to work during the ceremony. The photographer needs to work in real time at the ceremony, there is no asking someone to move to the right, slow down, or lets do that again. Experience in handling those extreme conditions is worth a few extra dollars. If you hire an experienced wedding photographer, they will know to get the basic wedding imagery like the cake and first dance etc... so there will be no need to make a list of every picture you want from the wedding. However, if you hire someone with little or no wedding experience or an amateur, a complete list may be appropriate. I heard one story where a college photographer shot loads of film of a few pretty women at the wedding but forgot the flowers and cake! A complete list would mediate this “problem.” For help in creating a list of pictures read my article [A Guide to Great Wedding Pictures](#).

If you want a full day in season, try to plan your wedding on a Friday or Sunday I will give brides a 10 – 20% discount even in the high season. You can also realize savings across all your vendors. If you are very flexible on dates you can have the wedding off-season on a Saturday, even near season can put you in a more negotiable position. Here in NYC August is not a popular month, nor is early May.

The photographer’s time is a sizable expense, but albums can be significantly more expensive than one may imagine. The easiest saving method is to not include an album in the package. My experience has been that virtually all couples do not return to the studio to have their album made for about a year’s time or more. This is a significant amount of time to save money for the album. It is better to use the most funds you have available to obtain the best pictures. An album can be made at any time in the future with no lose in quality, however you cannot go back and recreate better wedding photos.

You could also opt to create the album yourself, although most binding companies will only work directly with a photographer. There are many other album choices out there, and improving each year (read my article [“Creating Today’s Wedding album”](#)) just make sure to use acid free materials throughout the process. If you have the rights to the files or negatives you could even make the prints yourself. Print quality at local labs or online has improved tremendously in the past 5 years. You may not notice the difference anymore in what the photographer will provide you and what you can have done yourself. Today the proofs I provide

my bride & grooms are virtually of the same quality as that which I print for albums. That was not the case even three years ago. One client of mine had only two enlargements made, the rest of her album she put together herself with the proofs I provided. When comparing photographers make sure that you will be provided with usable proofs. Many photographers watermark the proofs making them unusable so that you have to order more prints. Or new in today's digital world are proof books, thumbnail size images mounted in an album. They are a fun way to see a large number of images from your wedding, and a great organizing method, but they give you no usable prints. This all needs to be known when comparing one photographer's price to another, also you will have more negotiating power for these additional purchases before you sign any contract.

If you do order albums from the photographer, make sure that you order all the albums you need at the same time. Any duplicate services will be discounted, such as prints of the same image. If possible have all the albums exactly the same and then ask for an additional discount. Another little trick that can help is; present your parent's albums, or framed wedding prints as gifts on holidays, you then forgo having to buy them an additional gift. Most importantly, ask the photographer, if you are a nice couple often the photographer is very willing to work within your budget.

Choosing the right photographer for your wedding is one of the most important decisions you will make, besides your memories the wedding photographs will be all you have at the end of your wedding day. I end with words of wisdom from a bride of mine: "Because cost is something that can usually be negotiated, quality cannot."