

# Helpful tips for Shooting Events



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## **Helpful tips for event photography**

### **.Arrive Early**

Being punctual is the mark of a true professional. But beyond just being on time, go a little further and get there early. Having a few minutes to walk around the venue will help you set up your shots later. You'll be able to find spots that work for you, and maybe even be able to perfect your flash setup and camera settings.

You can also take setup and pre-event shots that may be invaluable to the event organizers. Take shots of the place settings, decorations, and anything else that the team has done to make the event special.

### **Dress for the Event**

Most corporate events are work-formal occasions, but there are some fancier black-tie events too. Your goal is to look professional and blend in as best you can. Know ahead of time what the attire requirements are going to be. Often, photographers who shoot events have a special outfit or two that they designate as their event photography formal wear. You want to be able to mingle in the crowd while not standing out like a sore thumb.

### **.Mingle**

you don't want to stat in one spot. You've got to roam around with your camera and look for special moments. Chat with the participants and ask them politely if you can take their pictures. Just like with portrait clients, make the guests comfortable and feel at ease. Have fun with them.

Never spend too much time with one group. Try to spend 30 seconds to minute taking a group shot, and then move on.

You are hired to shoot the event, not be a part of it. It is inappropriate for you to eat or drink with the guests.

You aren't there to socialize.

### **Plan Your Shots**

Working from a shot list has the advantage that you can see things coming and work to set up your shots with the right people in advance. This is especially helpful with VIPs and speakers who are generally at a special table with a reserved seat. Set up the shot, and then wait for the perfect facial expression and pose.

When shooting special guests, scope out where they'll be in advance and have a rough idea of the shot you want. Then wait for it to happen. You can mingle and take group shots while you are waiting. But keep an eye on the VIP and wait for the shot you're after. In short, set up the shot and then wait for them to make it for you.

## **Be a Low-Light Ninja**

Special events are nearly always held indoors at night. There might even be some colored lights in the venue for ambiance. None of that bodes well for the photographer. You've got to make sure you're up to snuff with low-light shooting. Practice in advance if you're a little rusty or new to it. Master your camera's manual shooting mode, because the colored lights and flash can make the camera's automatic modes operate unpredictably.

With all of these limitations, you have to keep an eye on some standards for the shoot. You can't deliver blurry photos that result from the shutter speed being too slow. You can't provide dim or dark images. And you can't deliver images that are unusable due to color errors or graininess. In short, you must get your shot right the first time despite the difficult conditions you are sure to face.

## **Do Not Fear Using High ISO Settings**

If you've got a good low-light camera, chances are it takes decent photos when the ISO is set high. There's a line where the image quality will be unacceptable for your client, and you need to know where that line is.

While practicing your low-light shooting, take some samples at each ISO and find where you think the line is. You still might have to push it a little at the event, because sometimes you need all the light grabbing ability you can get. But by knowing ahead of time what your camera can do, you will reduce the likelihood of wasting your time by taking trash images.

## **Always Use RAW Files**

There are many advantages to shooting in RAW. One of them is that they enable you to correct colors and exposure errors after the fact easily. They enable you to control white balance, tint, and contrast details far more effectively than other file formats. With the right software, you can even batch edit the photos quickly if you know the specific adjustments that all of the images need. For example, if the venue used green mood lighting and a quick level adjustment fixes it right up, you can set up a batch with just that level adjustment. These little tweaks in your workflow can save you hours in the post-processing phase of the project.

## **Light it Up**

Your best friend at dark events will be a solid Speedlight, but the last thing you want to do is stick it on the camera's hot shoe and aim it right at your subjects. Avoid that deer in the headlights look but using an on-flash soft box. These are plastic boxes that stick onto the flash itself to give it a much softer and more diffused light. With the correct manual exposure settings, this will keep your subjects sharply exposed and focused and will avoid underexposed backgrounds.

Another technique that can be used to great effect indoors is using the moveable head of your flash and bouncing the light off of the ceiling or walls. Manual settings on the camera will also allow you to expose the background of the venue behind your subjects so that they are not just sitting in a field of black. This can work great, but in general, doesn't produce the same pleasing results that a good soft box diffuser does.

## **Choose Your Best Photos for Editing**

Event images have a very limited lifetime, so you need to deliver them quickly. You want to be a master of your post-processing workflow, whatever it might be. Everyone works a little differently, but after the event isn't the time or place to figure your workflow out for the first time.

In a big event, you're likely shooting a thousand or more images. Your client won't want that many. Be brutal and edit your photos quickly. If it's not technically perfect, get rid of it. Try to get yourself working set of good images that includes every VIP, at least one of every attendee, and all of the other shots on your shot list.

Once you've narrowed your image set down, get to work editing, and get the shots to your client. Deliver the event photography pictures while the event is still fresh in their minds. It's more convenient to share your photographs via a digital client gallery platform.

Not only is digital delivery faster, but it also lets your client proof, comment, and ask for modifications in particular photographs

## **Equipment Considerations**

„Always have a backup.” Have a second or third available for everything in your kit, from the body and lens to your memory cards and batteries. Even the best equipment can and will break, and you might not have time to troubleshoot.

Go into the event with every battery fully charged and every memory card formatted. Have fresh batteries for your strobes too. Clean all of your lenses. Your primary camera body should be something that excels in low-light conditions. Full-frame digital SLRs are usually the best choice. Their big sensors let in more light, to begin with, giving you an advantage from the start.

Your lenses should match the body in their low-light abilities. Fast lenses are a must-have, and you should consider f/2.8 to be a minimum requirement. While prime lenses that are that fast are more affordable, a zoom lens is much more user-friendly in the event setting where you might not have time to move around yourself. There is no one-size-fits-all lens, but a 24-70mm f/2.8 is a great starting place. You’ll also want to pack telephoto zoom on your second body, just in case you need to shoot events or speakers from across the room.

Do not plan on changing lenses during the event. If you need to swap to telephoto lens, it should be ready to go on a second body.

## **Event Photography Pricing and the Event Photography Contract**

Event photography pricing is a little art and a little science. You need to do the math for your business. Calculate all of your fixed and variable costs going into the event. You need to cover your transportation, equipment, and time for both being there and also the post-processing required.

Figure out how much it’s going to cost you to be there, and then you’ll have a rough idea of your break-even point. You need to know this in advance in case the client wants to negotiate the rate

It’s up to you whether you want to charge by the hour or by the event.

Charging by the event is sure to be less of a headache since events often take longer than planned. Every event is a little different, so whatever photography pricing plan you work out, you should build in some flexibility.

Don’t pigeon hole yourself into doing an event photo session for a set price? Instead, provide a rate table based on the number of photos taken or hours of photo services needed.

Event photography contracts are one of the most critical aspects of doing this type of work. Yes, a good contract protects you against disgruntled or unhappy clients. But a good contract goes a long way to preventing disappointed customers by laying out the exact terms of your agreement.

Have your contract written for you, or at least reviewed, by a contract lawyer.

## **Conclusion**

Event photo sessions can be a lot of fun. They are varied and different, and you get to interact with different people and businesses that you might not normally get to meet. Mastering your event photography techniques and getting a proper event photography contract set up is easy. But best of all, for the working photographer, they are an easy sell and can be made a profitable part of your business.

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## Bio

My name is David Wright.

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