



# PRE-SESSION CONSULTATIONS

## A Photographer's Guide



Professional  
Photographers  
of America

# contents

Introduction .....	3
What's a Pre-Session Consultation? .....	4
Why Are Pre-Session Consultations Important? .....	5
Where to Conduct a Pre-Session Consultation? .....	6
How to Conduct a Successful Pre-Session Consultation.....	7
Pre-Session Consultation Questionnaires.....	9
Sample Portrait Session Consultation Questionnaire .....	10
Sample Wedding Consultation Questionnaire.....	12



## INTRODUCTION



Any experienced photographer will tell you that good planning is the key to a successful session. It allows you to get on the same page as your clients, minimizing any potential misunderstandings that could prevent you from delivering the best client experience. That's why taking the time to meet with your clients before a photo session is crucial.

Here's what you need to know about a pre-session consultation and how to maximize your results.

## WHAT'S A PRE-SESSION CONSULTATION?

A pre-session consultation happens before a photoshoot. It's a meeting between you and your client to discuss the project.

---



During this meeting, you get all the details about the client and set expectations on how you'll be working together. This session allows you to get to know them and make them feel comfortable with you, to choose a style to inform your creative process, to help the client visualize the results, and to discuss budget or payment options.

While these sessions are helpful for any professional photographer, they're critical for assignments that require close interactions with the subjects, such as wedding photography, portraits (e.g., newborn, high school seniors, family), and commercial or editorial projects.

## WHY ARE PRE-SESSION CONSULTATIONS IMPORTANT?

Investing the time and energy in pre-session consultations can help you create work that meets clients' expectations and increases client satisfaction, which are the keys to retaining more clients and promoting your business through word-of-mouth.

---

### Here's why you should hold consultations before your photography sessions:

- You can set expectations and goals for the session to make sure that you're on the same page as your clients and to avoid disagreements and frustrations that could later sour relationships.
- Clients can share their vision of the final artwork to inform your creative process. For example, you can help them envision where the portrait will be displayed so you know how to frame the image and orchestrate groupings.
- It gives you the opportunity to get to know your clients, discover their preferences, and understand the dynamics between subjects to create a more memorable client experience.
- You can gain insights on how to interact with each subject to make them feel at-ease and elicit the right expression during the session.
- You can help clients plan their outfits to deliver added value and create a stress-free experience, all while ensuring that the portraits achieve the intended results. For instance, you can do this by matching the color scheme of the interior décor.
- Photo sessions can be an overwhelming experience for some clients. A pre-session consultation helps you lower the tension and answer questions ahead of time to make the subjects feel at-ease so you can achieve better results.
- You can use this session to introduce your product offerings. This prevents clients from experiencing sticker shock at the ordering appointment because you've already discussed expectations and price ranges.
- A pre-sale meeting also allows you to focus on the value you deliver instead of the price tag of each product.
- Clients are likely to purchase more products if the portraits reflect their vision and fit well within their homes, which means more sales and more revenue for your business.
- This session gives you the time to review studio policies, educate your clients on copyright, and get model releases signed. Taking care of all the logistics will allow everyone to be more comfortable during the shoot and have a better experience.



## WHERE TO CONDUCT A PRE-SESSION CONSULTATION?

Pre-session consultations can be done in-person, online, or over the phone. You can meet in your studio, at the client's home, in a quiet coffee shop, or at other locations of your choice. The key is to select a place that's comfortable, distraction-free, and allows for fluid conversation.

---

Here are a few things to know about each option:

### In-Studio Consultations

These consultations allow you to build trust by demonstrating your professionalism. They also give you a chance to showcase products in your studio environment so that clients can touch and feel the items. You can use the opportunity to build anticipation about the photoshoot and create an exciting client experience.

### In-Home Consultations

Meeting with a client in their home allows you to see the home's style and wall space so you can help the client envision how their portrait can be displayed. You can also provide guidance on how to set up the portraits or groupings and take wall measurements to make recommendations during the ordering appointment.

In-home consultations give you an opportunity to elevate the level of customer service and client experience. They also help you think outside of the box and create works of art that truly reflect your clients' visions and personalities.



### Location or Online Consultations

If you don't have a studio, or if the client lives too far away, you can meet at a location that's convenient for both of you or conduct the consultation online via a video call. Make sure you pick a place with minimal distractions and bring your product portfolio with you or have it ready for screen sharing.

## HOW TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL PRE-SESSION CONSULTATION

A pre-session consultation not only helps you better prepare for the assignment but also allows you to add value, build rapport, develop trusting relationships, and create a memorable experience that will keep clients coming back.

---



Schedule a pre-session consultation about two weeks before the photo session. This will give your clients enough time to prepare their wardrobe and get ready without feeling rushed.

### Here are a few things to know about each option:

#### Establish a System

Having a structure in place to orchestrate the session and guide the client experience can give you more freedom to exercise your creativity. For example, you can establish an agenda and share the outline with your clients ahead of time to make sure everyone stays focused on what matters.

#### Make It Personal

Having an established process doesn't mean you need to push your clients through an "assembly line." Keep the conversation personable and adjust the flow to each client's unique circumstances. Remember, the goal of the session is to help you get what you need to do your best work.

#### Keep Things Simple

Don't make your clients jump through hoops! Streamline the consultation process to make it as easy for your clients as possible. While it's important to go through some key information, gauge your clients' reactions, and don't overwhelm them with unnecessary details.

#### Know Your Clients

Developing rapport and building personal connections with your clients will allow you to have more creative freedom during the photoshoot. Also, observe the dynamic among the subjects (e.g., family members) to inform how you pose them and make groupings.

## Listen and Pay Attention

Be fully present during the consultation so you not only gather information about your clients but also read between the lines to gain a deeper understanding of their sentiment and psychology to inform your creative approach.

## Be an Ally

Position yourself as a trusted advisor and expert by sharing your knowledge and experience. For example, you can guide your clients on how to select an outfit to create a certain mood or help them consider the implications of their clothing selections.

## Set Expectations

Go over your plan to let your clients know what to expect during the photo session. Tell them what you'll be doing, as well as how and why you'll be directing them.

## Review Your Pricing

Don't assume that your clients understand how pricing works in our industry. Give them pricing guidance—such as the price range for various products—to prepare them for the ordering appointment so they don't get sticker shock that could tarnish an otherwise fantastic experience. However, this is not the time to go over your entire price list, which could derail the conversation from the purpose of the pre-session consultation.

## Have the Paperwork Ready

Set up the paperwork you need clients to review and sign so you can focus on building rapport and delivering a great client experience. If you're conducting the session online or via phone, send the links to these forms via email ahead of time and use e-signature applications to streamline the process.





## PRE-SESSION CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRES

To get the most out of pre-session consultations, prepare a list of questions to ask your clients. On the following pages, you'll find examples that you can use when you meet your clients or as inspiration for creating your own questionnaire.

---

Keep in mind that these forms aren't intended for sending to your clients to complete on their own. Instead, they're designed to help you start the conversation with your clients during the pre-session consultation.

These questionnaires are structured to help you get to know your clients and understand their needs. If the answers spark additional questions or comments, pursue the discussion to uncover additional insights about your clients and their expectations.

These forms will help you gather the necessary information about your clients and their goals to create an enjoyable experience for all. The result: you'll deliver a successful session, elevate your professionalism, and generate more sales for your business.



# Portrait Session Consultation Questionnaire

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Wedding Date \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Partner Name \_\_\_\_\_

Session Type \_\_\_\_\_

Child #1 Name (DOB) \_\_\_\_\_

Child #2 Name (DOB) \_\_\_\_\_

Child #3 Name (DOB) \_\_\_\_\_

Child #4 Name (DOB) \_\_\_\_\_

Child #5 Name (DOB) \_\_\_\_\_

If newborn, birth stats (Full name, DOB, time, length, weight) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose our photography studio? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



What are your goals & vision for the session?

Who will be in the session/photographs?

Tell me a little bit about their personalities, likes and dislikes, and how they interact with each other

Anything else I should know about (special needs, etc.)

Style & home decor, including colors

Where do you plan to display your portraits?

# Wedding Consultation Questionnaire

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Wedding Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Bride/Groom – Contact #1

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Bride/Groom – Contact #2

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Ready #1

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Ready #2

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Ceremony

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Reception

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_



## Family #1

Parent 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Parent 2 \_\_\_\_\_

If stepparent, add here \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings (include spouses and children)

---

---

---

---

Grandparents

---

---

Any special circumstances we should know about

---

---

## Family #2

Parent 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Parent 2 \_\_\_\_\_

If stepparent, add here \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings (include spouses and children)

---

---

---

---

Grandparents

---

---

Any special circumstances we should know about

---

---

## Wedding Party (names & relationship)

### Attendants #1

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Attendants #2

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Flower Attendant/s

---

---

---

---

### Ring Bearer/s

---

---

---

---

### Formals List

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



[illegible][illegible]

## Formals Photography List

Which formal images would you like?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride Alone                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Groom with Grandparents  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Bridesmaids (all)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Groom with Groom's Immediate Family                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride with each Bridesmaid          | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom Alone  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride with Groomsmen                | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Officiant   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groom Alone                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Bride's Parents                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groom with each Groomsman           | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Bride's Immediate Family                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groom with Bridesmaids              | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Bride's Parents & Groom's Parents                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride with Parents                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Bride's Immediate Family & Groom's Immediate Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride with Siblings                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Groom's Parents                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride with Grandparents             | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Groom's Immediate Family                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bride with Bride's Immediate Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Bride & Groom with Wedding Party                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groom with Parents                  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groom with Siblings                 |   |

Please list any additional group shots you would like.

---

---

---

Are you doing a First Look? If so, would you like to do some or all formals at that time?

---

---

---



## Wedding Details

Please tell us the most important details of your wedding day plans and moments that are especially important to you. This information will help us prepare and be alert to special moments to photograph.

Getting Ready

Transportation

Ceremony

Reception (Including Happy Hour)

First Dance

☐ Yes

☐ No

Mother-Son Dance

☐ Yes

☐ No

Bouquet Toss

☐ Yes

☐ No

Father-Daughter Dance

☐ Yes

☐ No

Cake Cutting

☐ Yes

☐ No

Garter Toss

☐ Yes

☐ No

Grand Exit Plans

Other Details

## Additional Information

Are there any restrictions at your ceremony site that we should know about?

Are there any restrictions at your reception site that we should know about?

Total number of wedding guests (estimate)

Bride's Attire Details

Groom's Attire Details

Wedding Planner

Caterer

Videographer

Florist

Hair Stylist

Make-Up Artist