

SCHEDULING GUIDE

“Just Work Your Magic” *Isn’t a Plan*

The do’s and don’ts of a winning shoot schedule.

PAUL PACEY



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A wish list is not *a shot list*.

Five habits that build a winning schedule, each paired with the mistake it prevents.

01 THE PLAN

DO.

Plan the opportunities, not the pictures

Planning is what makes spontaneity possible.

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- Decide where and when the moments will happen
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- Then step back and let them unfold naturally
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DON'T.

Don't “just walk around and work your magic”

Without a plan, the best moments happen where you aren't.

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- Wandering looks like the authentic option, but it wastes the day
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- You arrive after the moment, not before it
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- Spontaneity still needs a plan to happen in front of the camera
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02 WHO PICKS THE SESSIONS

DO.

Offer choices, not orders

A teacher who chose the activity will make it work.

- A menu of activity options for each goal and age group
- Teachers pick what fits their timetable
- Start with what's already happening: least disruptive, often most genuine

DON'T.

Don't let the timetable build the schedule

What looks good on paper rarely tells you what will happen in the room.

- Sessions get picked from the timetable, not from what's really planned
- Teachers may or may not know the photographer is coming
- You're committed to a class that won't pay off, while the better moment happens elsewhere
- It's almost worse than walking around and hoping

03 THE CONVERSATION

DO.

Build the schedule with teachers, face to face

A timetable shows what's happening on paper, not what will happen in the room.

- Talking in person is faster and more informed than waiting on emails
- You see how open each teacher is to adapting a lesson for 20 minutes
- You find the teachers who will make a moment come alive

DON'T.

Don't assume "a photographer is coming" means "make it exciting"

What you mean and what a teacher hears are rarely the same.

- Most teachers will simply carry on as normal
- Some will put on something stiff for the camera
- A real conversation is the only brief that works

04 THE BRIEF

DO.

Check the plan against the goals

Close the gaps before the day, not during it.

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- Compare teachers' picks with your priorities
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- Invite select teachers to fill whatever is missing
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DON'T.

Don't ask for everything

The longer the wish list, the thinner each shot gets.

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- A wide net spreads shoot time too thin
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- Start from what your website, brochures and campaigns actually need
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- Fewer, better opportunities beat a long checklist
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05 THE DAY

DO.

Clear the admin early, and don't shoot alone

On the day, the focus belongs on the moments, not the paperwork.

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- Confirm every teacher ahead of time
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- Notify parents and update the non-media list
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- Assign a school liaison to guide, keep things moving and cover safeguarding
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DON'T.

Don't cram the day

One more session feels efficient, but it costs quality everywhere.

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- Allow 20–30 minutes per opportunity; 13–18 make a full day
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- Give Early Years and PE a full period
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- Keep backup teachers ready in case something falls through
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AT A GLANCE

Five do's, five don'ts, one winning schedule

	Do.	Don't.
01 THE PLAN	Plan the opportunities, not the pictures	Don't "just walk around and work your magic"
02 WHO PICKS THE SESSIONS	Offer choices, not orders	Don't let the timetable build the schedule
03 THE CONVERSATION	Build the schedule with teachers, face to face	Don't assume "a photographer is coming" means "make it exciting"
04 THE BRIEF	Check the plan against the goals	Don't ask for everything
05 THE DAY	Clear the admin early, and don't shoot alone	Don't cram the day

“JUST WORK YOUR MAGIC” ISN’T A PLAN

Plan the day. *Then let it happen.*

The schedule is one step of the bigger picture. For the whole process, from first conversation to final edit, see *Planning Your Photo Campaign* at paulpacey.photography/planning-guide.html

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