

Tips Before You Start

Pulling together the pictures for your Photo Memory Video and planning how you want it to go is not difficult, but by considering a few hints ahead of time, you can help assure you will have a production you will be proud of for years to come. These tips can help you organize your photos, decide on the theme and objective for your video, and even select the package that will work best for your objectives.

1. Be picky with your photographs

While technology has made it possible to have faded, torn, or poorly developed photographs restored, there is only so much that can be done. The pictures that will look the best on your Photo Memory Video will be the ones that look the best as prints. If you have a large number of precious memories that are unfortunately only in poor photos, you should consider our Platinum package with photo restoration included. But the best result will still come from selecting good photos to begin with.

2. Think about your audience.

Who will be watching your Photo Memory Video? What will they be expecting to see? People always like to see themselves so you may want to include pictures of more than just your main subject. For example, for a wedding video, you may want to include pictures of the bride with members of the bridal party when they were both kids, or pictures of the groom with relatives or boyhood friends. If you go for a humorous effect in places, make sure the humor is appropriate to the audience's age and sensibilities. An offended audience is not an appreciative audience.

3. Pacing is important.

You don't want to show your entire collection of 20 years of photos in one sitting. In other words, set your time limit and try to stick with it. Photo Memory Videos that are around 10 minutes in length are ideal for wedding receptions and for other events where there are a large number of people present who are not close family members. This usually works out to about 3 songs and 75-100 pictures. Deciding which photos to leave out is usually more difficult than just including them all, so keeping an overall playing time in mind is helpful.

While you can certainly use more photos in your Photo Memory Video, (and we offer several packages containing as many as 300 photos) you want to be careful to not subject your guests to a long show without taking great care to keep it entertaining throughout. Of course, if your audience is mostly close family, they may want to see a longer video. Some people choose to have two Photo Memory Videos. One that will be given to their parents or kept for themselves and the other is their public Photo Memory Video that will be shown during the big event. If you think you may be interested in this, and all or most of the photos in the shorter video are included in the larger, we will be pleased to offer a custom quotation on a combined 2-video package price.

The playing time used throughout our descriptions is an estimate based on 6 seconds/photo. Package pricing is based on the number of photos, not playing time. Actual playing time will vary depending on type of video (sentimental versus upbeat), features (such as extra titles), and the length of the sound track.

The theme of your video and your selected sound track will in large part determine the number of photos per minute. For example, a sentimental or romantic video will have a slower pace, with photos lingering on the screen longer, than will a faster-paced sports themed video.

It is possible that your chosen song is too slow or too short to accommodate all your photos. Most songs can be digitally edited to shorten or lengthen them. We provide that as an optional service.

We will work with the length, pacing, and production values of the Photo Memory Video to keep your audience entertained.

4. Horizontal pictures fill the screen best

A standard TV screen's dimensions are a ratio of 4:3 (width : height). So to fit full screen, that 4x6 vertical picture will have to be cropped to 4x3 (chopping off half of the vertical length). A 6x4 horizontal, on the other hand, would only have to be cropped to 5.3x4, which may not remove anything you care about. Remember, though, those vertical photos and non-full-screen photos work very well for adding variety, especially with pan and zoom. And of course with photo editing and montages, just about any orientation of a picture can be used. Unless you tell us otherwise, your entire photo will be visible on the screen, with black bars on the left/right (for verticals) and top/bottom (for horizontals). But, if you have a choice between a vertical and a horizontal orientation of essentially the same photo, choose the horizontal.

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5. *Variety is important*

Using a variety of photographs can keep your Photo Memory Video entertaining. Even though you may have an understandable sentimental attachment, your audience may not want to see all 3 rolls of film of your child's first steps. Vary the content to keep the video moving.

Show your subject in both posed and candid photos. Formal portraits are very nice, but they are, well, formal! Do include them, (those school pictures can be very effective in bringing back memories!) but try to have some variety, too. People posed in front of various things, such as your typical vacation shots, are less formal, but still very stiff. Mix in as many candid shots of people just being themselves as you can. Variety will keep the pace moving and the audience watching.

Variety can also be enhanced with the various special effects we offer in our packages. The variety introduced by these effects can help keep the audience entertained throughout even the longer playing time of 200 or 300 photo productions. Be assured, we will always use these special effects consistent with good production values.

What do we mean when we say we will use certain special effects consistent with good production values?

Our focus with your Photo Memory Video is a production that will keep your audience's interest. It needs to bring tears, laughter, or both; it needs to tug on the heart, to recall fond memories, and maybe poke fun at a person or two! It is not there to WOW them with fancy effects, or to make your audience say "cool!" It is easy to overuse the high-tech special effects. We want the viewer to get totally involved in the story you are telling. We do not want them jarred by a flashy and out of place effect that makes them think, "That was bizarre." If that happens, we may lose their interest in the story altogether. The effects should enhance the purpose of the video, not become the purpose of the video. The overuse of flashy effects is very distracting to viewers. Even the popular "pan and zoom" is often overdone. Overuse of pan and zoom can almost make your audience dizzy, the same as an amateur video that is constantly zooming in and out.

Do not at all think this means we are looking minimize the use of these effects – nothing could be further from the truth; we will always be generous with their use, *consistent with good production values*. But, we have had people request pan and zoom or 3D transitions between each and every photo without realizing how annoying and distracting this actually is for the audience. We will discourage you from purchasing a video like that. But, in the final analysis, the choice is yours.

So, you don't get your "money's worth" by using flashy technology between every photo. You get it by relying on the judgment of a good producer to use these features to their maximum effect. In other words, to use them *consistent with good production values*!

6. *Choose music for the mood and the story.*

If you are trying for a sentimental mood, you probably don't want to choose a fast tempo song. And, similarly, a segment on your child's softball state championship season probably will not work well set to a romantic ballad.

When selecting your songs, music that is meaningful to either you or your guest(s) of honor should be high on the list. If you don't know their favorite songs, don't be afraid to ask them!

The length of the music is important. If you've chosen one of our 50 photo packages, you might not want to choose the long 9 minute version of "Sunrise, Sunset." While we can keep the pictures on the screen for whatever time it takes to fill the time, your audience will start to lose interest if pictures are on screen for more than 8-9 seconds each, and a faster pace works much better. We are in the MTV age. Sentimental videos should be in the range of 5-8 seconds per picture, and upbeat videos should be in the 2.5 to 6 seconds range. We do offer a sound track editing service if you must fit the only song you want to the desired playing time of the Photo Memory Video, but we can also help you with your music selection to better match your music length and mood to the number of pictures you have chosen.

7. *Know the equipment you will be using to show your Photo Memory Video.*

If you're planning on showing your Photo Memory Video at an event where you are not providing the equipment (for example, the reception hall is providing a DVD player, projector, and screen), try and test the equipment prior to the big day. If your schedule is tight, we can provide test DVDs for you to use before your Photo Memory Video is ready. We can also provide your Photo Memory Video on VHS tape as a backup. If you cannot test the equipment, we strongly encourage having a VHS tape backup.

Your DVD can be enjoyed for years to come. Using a studio with an emphasis on producing an entertaining, engaging video, will result in a Photo Memory Video you'll be proud of, and that you will show to friends and family over and over.