

PHOTOGRAPHING COUPLES WITH EASE

The “Foundation TEDI” Posing Technique

with Megan Lane
megan-lane.com



Posing sometimes gets a bad reputation in the photography world (“*I want my couples to look natural!*”). But the truth is, unless we’re working with professional models, we **MUST** pose our clients. People have nooooo clue how to act in front of the camera. And there’s nothing more uncomfortable for a client than being in front of the camera, having no idea what to do, and getting zero guidance from their photographer.

Our clients want gorgeous pictures of themselves that look natural, effortless, and flattering. And they want the session itself to be fun and stress-free.

We can make **BOTH** of those things happen when we become experts at posing.

It’s not an easy skill to master, but it becomes infinitely easier when we go into each session with a plan. And that’s where the Foundation TEDI technique comes in!

Where this all started....

I came up with the Foundation TEDI technique to eliminate the problem I had of “blinking out” during photo shoots and weddings. I would go into a session (or wedding) with lots of ideas for posing—only to have my mind go completely blank when it was time to tell my couple what to do!

Afterwards I would be sooooo frustrated that I had {yet again} resorted to the “Ok guys, stand there. Now smile at me, now smile at each other, now kiss.... Ok! Let’s move to the next spot!”

YUCK!

From my conversations [with lots and lots!] of other photographers I know I’m not alone in this problem.

The Foundation TEDI Technique is a combination of three simple strategies:

1. Slow down and use fewer locations.
2. Have an established flow of posing to follow for every session.
3. Realize that posing is alllllll about the **hands** and **heads**.

1. Slow Down and Use Fewer Locations

In the past, whenever I struggled with posing I tried to cover up that insecurity and “brain scrambling” by moving my clients to a new spot. I thought that the physical act of moving/walking would give me time to think, and that perhaps the next spot would inspire me and I would have more posing ideas [spoiler alert: it never helped].

I think subconsciously I was also using the different backgrounds to provide variety for my clients “Ummm...I don’t know what to tell them to do...but at least they’ll have lots of different pictures!” But while the backgrounds changed, but the posing did not. So essentially my clients had tons of beautiful pictures of themselves...doing the exact.same.thing.

As I developed the Foundation TEDI method I started limiting myself to 3-4 locations per session (or wedding). This forced me to slow waaaaay down, and it gave me permission to shoot the heck out of each spot and each pose I arranged for my clients.

These days, before each shoot or wedding I make a general plan of where my 3-4 locations will be. *[Just to clarify, these aren’t 3-4 different locations around town; these are 3-4 different “backgrounds” at the same location.]* If I’m at a brand-new location this means showing up early to the session or scouting the location ahead of time.

2. Have an established flow of posing to follow.

Part A: Foundation Poses

In my quest to master posing I looked at toooooons of pictures of couples, and found that I could organize most of them into one of six basic categories. I call these the “Foundation Poses.”

The 6 Foundation Poses:

- Side by Side
- “V” – the two people have their back shoulders tucked together but their belly buttons are not touching; this makes a “V” with their bodies.
- Tummy to Tummy (belly buttons are touching).
- “T” – the guy’s belly button is facing the camera and the girl’s belly button is facing the guy outside his arm, which makes a “T” with their bodies.*
- Girl behind Guy (and vice versa)*
- Sitting

** When photographing same sex couples the same Foundation Poses apply, you just alternate each person’s position.*

I have memorized these six Foundation Poses so I that I never get stuck or draw a blank during my sessions!

It’s also worth noting that as you change your angle to the couple, each of these Foundation Poses looks TOTALLY different, so I try to remind myself to “shoot 360” during each pose (or make a game out of “shuffle rotate!” with my couple).

Side by Side



“V”



Tummy to Tummy



"T"



Girl Behind Guy (& vice versa)



Sitting



2. Have an established flow of posing to follow.

Part B: The TEDI Framework

After setting up your couple in one of the Foundation Poses, use the “TEDI” part of the technique to create variety in your shots.

TEDI stands for:

- Traditional
- Editorial
- Detail
- Interactive

Working through this acronym means that I don’t have to worry about “brain blanks,” and it also helps me create a well-rounded collection of images for my clients (win-win!).

Definitions

Traditional = both people looking at the camera smiling (full length, $\frac{3}{4}$ crop, &/or close-up).

Editorial = creative or unique image captures.

Examples: using foreground framing, playing with creative crops or angles, using more edgy posing/expressions, shooting from far away to capture the full location/landscape, shooting reflections or shadows, playing with intentional motion blur, etc.

Detail = getting in close to capture the details of the couple’s expressions, OR capturing details that don’t include their faces.

Interactive = giving clients a prompt and then capturing the natural expressions and interactions that result from that prompt. Throughout a session I try to use some prompts that are simple, some that are surprising/silly, and some that are sweet/serious.

Examples of Interactive Prompts:

- Walk down this path.
- Twirl your partner.
- Tickle the back of their neck with your fingertips [or with a hot breath].
- Put your foreheads together and close your eyes. Now take a biiiiiig deep breath. On the exhale I want you to remember the very first time you met your partner [or your first kiss, first time you said I love you, etc].
- For the next 30 seconds pretend that it’s the first dance at your wedding....
- Lean in close and whisper a dirty word or joke in your partner’s ear.
- Touch the tip of your nose to the area just behind your partner’s temple *{capture that picture of sweet connection}*, now sniff their hair *{capture all the pictures of them laughing at that ridiculousness}*.
- Cup your partner’s face [or the back of their head] with your right hand and pull them in oh-so-slowly for a kiss.

Note: I don't always go in order with the "TEDI" pictures, in the beginning I just needed an easy way to remember these four words. And remembering "Tedi" seemed easier than any of the other combos of those four letters (DTEI? TEID?;)

3. Hands and Heads

The final piece of the Foundation TEDI technique is recognizing that posing is allIII about the placement of the HANDS and HEADS of your subjects.

This simple concept can really change everything! No longer will you need to think of huge creative ways to change a pose. Instead, I want you to think about simply changing where a hand is placed, where a client is looking, or the angle(s) of their head(s).

Example:

Starting with couple "Tummy to Tummy."

Take a few Traditional Pictures of them smiling directly at the camera and then move into the rest of the TEDI sequence:

"Awesome you guys! Ok, Amy, I want you to move your hand from Dan's elbow all the way up to the front of his shoulder. Tilt your heads a little closer together. Perfect! *[take pics]* Now Amy, turn your nose toward your left shoulder and drop your eyes to the ground. Dan look at that tree over my shoulder. Awesome! *[take pics]* Now both of you, fake laugh – loudly! Yes! Love it! *[take pics]* Ok, Amy turn your face just a bit back toward Dan, and Dan I want you to look at the end of Amy's nose, big smiles guys! *[take pics]* Ok, without moving your faces, take a biiiiig deep breath and just relax into some nice soft smiles. *[take pics]*"

While I'm talking I would be moving around the couple, changing how close and far away I was, changing my angle to them, changing lenses, etc. Every time I've noted *[take pics]* in the script above I might take a couple of quick pictures or it could be several minutes of shooting. I would be mixing in Editorial and Detail pictures as appropriate.

The key here is not feeling like you have to rush through this sequence or pose. Remember, to *slow down* and take your time!

The Heads & Hands Takeaway: when you're working through your TEDI sequence, remember that the easiest way to change the look and feel of the image is to move the hands &/or head(s) of your subject(s).

No need to change the whole pose, subtle tweaks work best!

Starting the Session

I start every session with a quick overview for my couple of my shooting process:

“Ok guys, I just want to start off by telling you how today’s going to work. I don’t want you to ever worry that you don’t know what to do or how to pose. That’s my job, ok? I’m going to tell you exactly where and how to stand, and where to put your hands, and where to look, and even what expression I want on your face. Your only job is to hold that pose until I tell you that you can “break.” It’s kind of like a game of “freeze”:) Meanwhile, I’m going to shoot lots of different pictures of each pose, far away, and close up, and with my wide-angle lens, and with my 50 mm lens.

I’ll also give you small tweaks during each pose. I might ask you to move your hand from your partner’s arm to her face, or I might ask you to look at your partner’s ear or away at the horizon.

We aren’t going to move around to different spots very often because I find that it breaks up the flow and it makes everything feel forced and rushed.

Your job is suuuper easy, you just have to follow my directions. That’s it! And I PROMISE that even though some of this (ok, probably a lot of this, haha!) will feel suuuper weird and uncomfortable, I’m only asking you to do it because it will look ahhhhmazing in the final pictures.

Don’t worry, I’ll show you pictures as we go along so you can see that the uncomfortable posing is totally worth it and it’s all looking amazing! Sound good?!”

When you take the time at the start of the session to tell your clients how everything will work, they are able to relax knowing you have it all covered. It also immediately builds some of that trust that’s so essential when creating incredible images.

If the couple seems especially nervous or uncomfortable I’ll often use a “throw-away” location to start our session (i.e. a background that’s fine, but not one of my 3-4 amazing spots) so we can get the nerves out with 5-10 minutes of shooting (*I’m the only one who knows if I’m using a “throw away spot” - I would never ever tell clients that’s what I’m doing;*). I make sure to show them images during this time that look great. This gives them confidence as we move to the next locations.

Session Flow & Timing

1. Start with overview of session.
2. Go to Background #1 and set up couple in one of the Foundation Poses.
3. Work through a TEDI flow.
4. Tweak the pose (by changing the hands or head positions), or switch to a different Foundation Pose.
5. Go through TEDI again.

After we've done 1-3 Foundation Poses AND worked through a TEDI flow in each of the Foundation Poses, we move to Background #2.

My engagement sessions generally last an hour to an hour and a half, and during our weddings we usually have 45 minutes to an hour to capture Bride & Groom images. I wear a watch (especially during weddings!!) and know approximately how much time I have at each background before we need to move.

Of course, I can always change things at the session if one of the backgrounds or Foundation Poses isn't working, and sometimes I'll skip part of the TEDI if we are short on time or if it just doesn't "fit" a particular couple or background.

Perfecting your Foundation Poses

I highly recommend reading the book *Picture Perfect Posing* by Roberto Valenzuela. While the Foundation TEDI method gives you a framework for each session, *Picture Perfect Posing* is truly a master class in posing. Used together, you will see your posing skills—and your and your clients' happiness with their final pictures—grow with leaps and bounds!

Sample Images

The following pages have some examples of the Foundation TEDI technique in action.

Side by Side (transitioning to "T")



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Tummy to Tummy

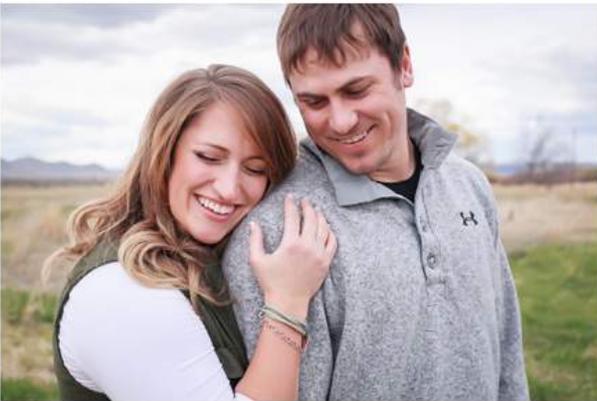
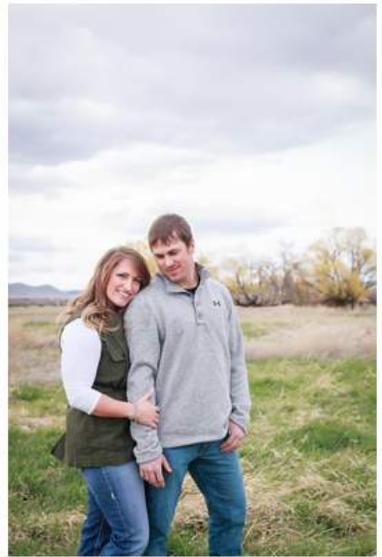


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“V” (transitioning to Tummy to Tummy)



Girl behind Guy



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"T"



"V" and Girl behind Guy



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Sitting



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In Closing

The Foundation TEDI technique has not only transformed my confidence with posing, it has also helped me produce stunning imagery for my clients consistently *and* easily. I hope as you practice this technique you'll also find yourself feeling much calmer and more creative during your sessions and weddings, and much happier with the images that you create.

I'd love to hear how it goes! Send me your thoughts to megan@megan-lane.com (bonus points - include before & after pics, or links to your "before" blog posts and to your new "after's").

If you found this guide helpful I'd love for you to spread the love!

Send your peeps to megan-lane.com/posing-guide-freebie
to get their own copy of this guide.

***Please don't just forward them this PDF. Thank you for respecting my
work/blood/sweat/and-sometimes-swearing.☺***

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