

Editing Guide

Step 1 – Import & Create Proxies

Import footage and create proxies to make sure your computer can handle the files with ease. This allows your thoughts to translate into editing choices immediately, without any bottleneck.

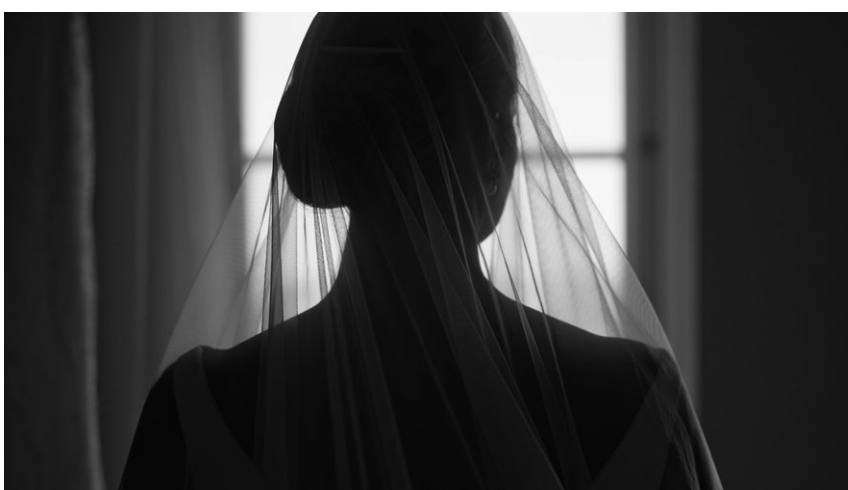
- When importing footage, it's essential to set up a clear, logical folder structure to make the editing process straight-forward. On your hard drive, start by separating footage into **Video** and **Audio** folders. Under **Audio**, organise by **Ceremony** and **Speeches**. In **Video**, divide by camera, especially if you're using multiple angles.
- NOTE: This workflow is designed for DaVinci Resolve, which offers specific tools for key-wording, organising, and labelling. Users of other software, like Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere Pro, may need to adjust these steps based on the tools available in their programs.
- When imported into DaVinci Resolve, this folder structure is mirrored exactly, giving you an organised, easily navigable workspace from the start.
- Once the footage is imported, create proxies to ensure smooth editing. With 4K, 10-bit, 4:2:2 footage, although my M1 Max Mac can handle the files, once I start adding effects and grades there is a slight delay, which adds up over an entire season of editing. Generate proxies at *half* the resolution of the original footage using the **ProRes LT** codec. This setting strikes an ideal balance between manageable file sizes and quality, allowing even effects-heavy clips to run smoothly on my Mac Studio with an M1 Max chip.
- Creating proxies in DaVinci Resolve is straightforward: simply highlight all clips, right-click, and select **Generate Proxies**. I tend to set this going while taking a break/working on something else/overnight, keeping my workflow uninterrupted.
- This proxy setup ensures your timeline responds instantly to your creative decisions, supporting a smooth, intuitive editing process without lags or delays. With proxies, you can think and immediately see those thoughts come to life on the timeline, enabling your creativity to flow naturally so that the editing software becomes an extension of your mind.



Step 2 – Label & Sort

Sort your footage and organise/label by part of day and camera. Your goal is to locate different parts of the day at a glance. For example, all the ceremony footage and audio should be grouped together, despite being from multiple cameras and audio devices.

- Once all footage and audio are imported into DaVinci Resolve, organisation becomes the priority. Start by adding camera metadata (e.g. **Camera 1**, **Camera 2**, **Camera 3**). Next add specific keywords to categorise each clip by its role in the wedding day, such as:
 - **establishing shots**
 - **bridal prep**
 - **groom prep**
 - **pre-ceremony**
 - **ceremony**
 - **post-ceremony**
 - **mingling**
 - **couple shots**
 - **dinner/table decor**
 - **dancing**
 - **Miscellaneous evening** (cocktails/fireworks/sparklers)
- For audio, apply **ceremony** and **speeches** keywords to so that the audio is organised with the video clips
- To ensure all clips are accurately labeled, sort by keyword to catch any untagged footage. If unlabelled clips appear at the top, you can address them immediately.
- To visually streamline the editing process, assign consistent colour codes across all edits. For example, for me, couple shoot clips are always labeled **orange**, creating a sort of muscle memory so that whenever I see orange clips in the timeline, I know instinctively that they are couple shots.
- Bonus tip: this structured system begins during the shoot itself. I try to shoot in a way that groups similar shots together. For example, I try to shoot all my establishing shots in one chunk—so they can be labeled quickly in post. Obviously I'll flex this approach if the day requires it.



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Step 3 – Ceremony & Speeches

Create multi-cam timelines that sync footage from your cameras with multiple audio sources. Tweak each angle and then cut the multi-cams meticulously to ensure the viewer sees the best angle at all times.

- For the Ceremony and Speeches, set up a **multi-cam timeline** using DaVinci Resolve's built-in syncing feature. Start by selecting all relevant clips using the **ceremony** keyword, then right-click and choose **Create Multicam with Selected Clips**. Sync by audio and use the camera metadata from Step Two to help Resolve identify each camera angle automatically. Once the multi-cam timeline is generated, go through and ensure the correct audio source is used at key moments—like switching to the groom's mic during vows or using the officiant's mic when they speak.
- Before cutting, each angle undergoes a near-final colour grade and check for wonky horizons. This minimises the need for additional adjustments later in the edit. During the multi-cam cut, any minor grading tweaks are handled on the spot to maintain visual consistency.



- Selecting the “best angle” is an intuitive process. When a speaker shares something heartfelt, hold the shot on them to let the couple experience those words directly, then cut to the couple's reaction. For pivotal moments ensure you return to the speaker's face to memorialise that expression. Reaction shots and wide shots are used during natural pauses to keep the visuals dynamic, but if a speaker pauses emotionally, hold the shot to capture that raw emotion.

- **Audio Refinement:** After syncing, take the audio files into Final Cut Pro to apply the **voice isolation** effect at forty-five percent, which provides more refined results than DaVinci's tool. Export and bring the

isolated audio back into DaVinci for seamless editing. Add a **compressor** to level the dialogue, ensuring soft moments are clear and loud moments are controlled. Normalise all audio clips to peak at around -6db for consistency across the entire speech.

- Finish by rewatching the ceremony & speeches, pulling out the most powerful & emotional moments. The audio from these sections will make up the story of the film. Look for unique, personal anecdotes or statements that reveal the couple's character and their journey together. Common compliments and generic statements are usually less impactful. Instead, focus on moments that are specific to the couple, such as the story of how they met, funny anecdotes, or other interesting angles. The goal is to make the audience care about the couple, so that by the time the significant moments—like the vows or first kiss—arrive, the viewer feels deeply connected to them and can empathise with the emotions they are feeling. We will call this **the narrative audio**.

Step 4 – The Cull

Sift through all footage to delete unwanted clips. Add ‘in’ and ‘out’ points to those that remain so that you’re ready to build the film. Think of this as preparing the ingredients to cook.

- The cull is an essential first step in the creative process, setting the stage for a focused and meaningful edit. Start by scrubbing through each clip with keyboard shortcuts, deleting anything unusable, such as shaky footage, poor exposure, unflattering angles, or moments that simply don’t add value (e.g., awkward pauses or blank stares during conversations).
- For clips that make the cut, set precise **“in” and “out” points** where the action starts and stops, capturing the most engaging moments. For instance, a shot from the drinks reception may start with casual chatting but include a laugh or smile later on—mark that as the “in” point to make the clip instantly engaging. DaVinci Resolve’s sub-clip feature allows for multiple **in and out points** within a single clip, enabling you to pull out every usable piece of a longer take without cluttering the timeline.
- Beyond technical refinement, the cull is also an important first look at the day’s story. By handling it personally, you gain a natural sense of the day’s flow, energy, and emotional moments. This process allows your subconscious to begin shaping the narrative, planting early ideas for structure and tone and creating a mental roadmap for the story you’ll craft.

Step 5 – Soundtrack

Find a soundtrack that fits the vibe of the wedding, fits the personality of the couple, and also complements the narrative audio. The tracks you select should have the ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ in the right places.

- Selecting the right soundtrack is a nuanced process that goes beyond just finding good music; it’s about choosing tracks that resonate with the couple’s personalities, the wedding’s atmosphere, and the film’s emotional arc
- e.g. I tend to open a film with a softer track that builds to a crescendo for the aisle entrance. Then I may bring in a more upbeat song that finishes with energy for the dancing.
- This mirrors the day’s progression—moving from the tension and build-up of the ceremony to the relief and celebration of the reception and ending with the energy of dancing. Occasionally, a third track may be added, or only one track used, depending on the narrative needs of the day.

Step 6 - Craft the narrative

The most important step. Place the narrative audio over the soundtrack in the combination that best conveys the story you're trying to tell. Aim for emotional pay-off moments throughout the film.

- I think as wedding filmmakers, we deal in the **currency of emotionally impactful moments**, and there are a finite number of these moments available to us with each film. You have to make sure you're getting the most bang for your buck by not wasting these moments, and instead using everything available to you to elicit an emotional response.
- e.g. the bride walking down the aisle - this is such a huge moment for the bride. She's thought about this moment probably her entire life. It needs some fanfare, it needs some build-up to it. It can't be treated in the same way as any other shot in the film. It should therefore coincide with a crescendo in the music or something momentous in the narrative audio.
- Every wedding should be approached uniquely, but these impactful moments are the pillars around which you build the entire film. Start with these emotional peaks and then everything else follows.
- When considering how to piece different elements of narrative audio together, consider the overarching narrative, rather than the snippets on their own merits. e.g. if different people speaking bring up similar themes or discuss the same things, then I might try and weave those together. I'm always trying to find a cohesive thread throughout.
- Wedding films are all about pacing. You're taking the viewer on a journey through the wedding day and through the couple's story, and you are in charge of their feelings throughout. It's a great responsibility, and we have to be careful to manipulate the emotions in the right way, so that we do get maximum impact. The goal for me is always to try and elicit tears. After a particularly intense or dramatic moment, pacing slows to let shots breathe, allowing viewers to process what they've just experienced.
- I typically think of a wedding film as having two distinct storylines that run in parallel with each other and can even cross over and interact with each other. So you have the chronological story of the wedding day (getting ready, ceremony, drinks reception, dinner, dancing), and also the narrative audio on top, which is what we're creating and manipulating by selecting parts of the vows and speeches to use.





Step 7 – The Cut

With the audio and music laid out, build the film by inserting clips from the rest of the wedding day. Constantly ensure the best footage is paired with each moment of narrative audio.

- With the narrative audio and soundtrack in place, it's time to build out the film by adding clips from the rest of the wedding day. This step is about filling in the timeline with shots that advance the story and support the narrative audio. While the visual sequence may sometimes follow a chronological order, it's often shaped by the underlying story—aligning shots with the narrative audio to enhance its impact. For instance, if the father-of-the-bride's speech references his daughter, a delayed reveal of the father-daughter first look can visually amplify his words. Each shot in the timeline must have a purpose, driving the story or underscoring the audio.
- To create depth, consider “stories within a story” sequences, e.g. build-up to ceremony: wide shot of the church, then guests arriving and taking their seats, shot of groom at end of aisle with guests in foreground to give context, tighter shot of the groom's face looking nervous. This builds narrative layers within the overall story by telling a mini story, *and* we've also visually told a story by progressing through focal lengths (wide, mid and tight).
- Pacing is largely guided by the soundtrack, with certain emotionally charged shots allowed to “breathe” longer to honour the weight of the moment—like the father-of-the-bride reveal. This balance between pacing and breathing room ensures emotional resonance without overstimulation.
- Transitions between shots are generally kept simple, using cuts for a clean, natural flow. Occasionally, cross dissolves or slow fades help smooth the transition between different parts of the day or enhance a dreamy sequence. These effects are used sparingly, only when they align with the music and the feel of the footage.

Step 8 – Re-cut and Check for VIPs

Once the initial cut is done, review each section of the day to ensure you've included the best footage. Check that the couple's closest friends and family are featured (ask them this before the wedding).

- After building the initial cut, go back and review each section of the day to ensure that you're using the best footage available from each part of the day. Sometimes it's best not to dwell on any one moment too long in Step 7, so as to allow for the editing process to flow. It can be best to simply get a clip down to help you figure out the structure of the film, then you can go back at this stage and make sure you've used the best shots.
- Ensure that VIPs—those closest family members and friends who matter most to the couple—are present. In my pre-wedding questionnaire, I request a list of the couple's VIPs along with photos. This provides clear guidance on who to prioritise in the edit, making it easier to spot and include them naturally in the footage.

Step 9 – Audio Mix

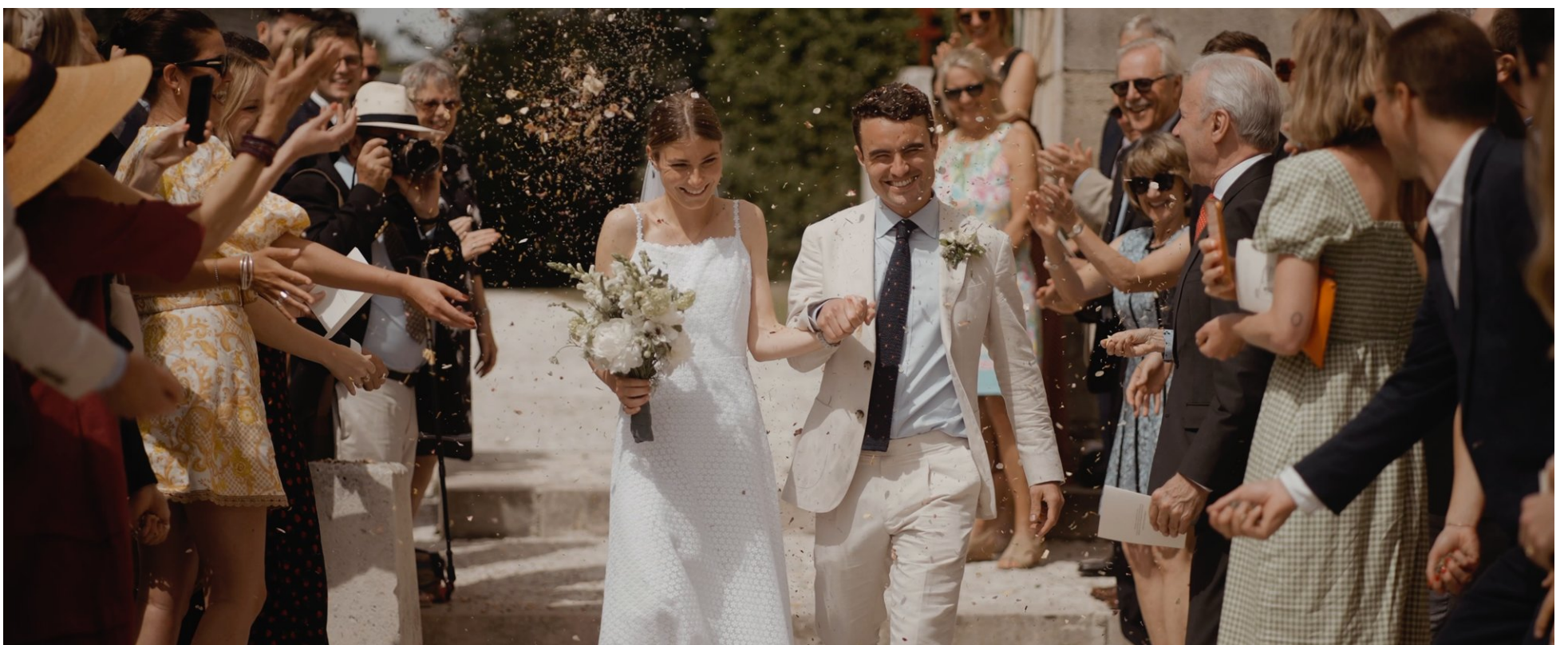
Make sure sound is never coming in/out abruptly. Normalise audio levels. Add compressor and EQ. Incorporate ambient audio from throughout the day.

- Start by ensuring narrative all audio clips fade in and out gradually and sound organic/not abrupt. Normalise audio levels, ensuring consistent volume throughout the film for each category of sound. I aim for narrative audio to peak around -6db, music around -12db, and ambient sounds subtly layered at -25db.
- Add a compressor to narrative audio to smooth out dynamic range and apply a bit of EQ, removing frequencies below 100 Hz and above 13.1 kHz to eliminate any unwanted rumble or harshness.
- Incorporate ambient audio wherever possible, drawing from clips recorded on the day or using supplementary ambient sounds from libraries like DaVinci's or Final Cut's.
- To enhance spatial immersion, pan audio elements within Resolve: position narrative audio front-center, music front-wide, and ambient audio back-wide. This creates a surround sound feel that envelops the viewer, simulating a live atmosphere.

Step 10 – The Finesse

Colour-grade by applying a LUT or preset, then tweak each clip individually. Analyse clips for shakiness or wonky horizons and correct. Check export on multiple devices before delivery.

- Colour-grade: Start by applying your custom “look” to each clip to establish a cohesive base grade. My LUT is available in my store. Then go through and tweak each clip individually, adjusting contrast and white balance, using the scopes (particularly the luma waveform and vectorscope) to ensure consistency across the entire film.
- As you review, check for any clips that need stabilising, using your editor’s built-in stabiliser tool to smooth out shakiness. Also, correct any uneven horizons by adding a slight rotation and zoom. Crop any shots that require it. Add subtle push-in zooms where it will enhance the story using keyframes.
- Once the polish is complete, export the film and review it on your computer, listening with both speakers and headphones to check the audio sounds good. Make any final adjustments as needed, re-exporting until you’re satisfied with the result. As a final check, Airdrop the film to an iPhone to verify that colours and sound quality are consistent across devices. Ultimately you want to ensure the film looks and sounds its best no matter where it’s viewed.
- **Presentation:** To share the final film with the couple, I upload it to YouTube and mark it as unlisted. Then, I embed the YouTube video into a private page on my website. This approach not only drives views on the YouTube video but also brings additional traffic to my website, creating a win-win for visibility.



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