



Tips for Planning Your Slideshow

Our goal is to create a video slideshow that will tug at the heartstrings, keep your audience engaged, and can be enjoyed for years to come. While this isn't difficult, there are a few items to keep in mind as you pull together the materials for your show.

1. Determine the Length of your Slideshow

The length of your slideshow will provide guidelines for the number of photographs and songs that you can use. Will your show have simple fade-in and fade-out transitions? If so, your guidelines would be about 115 pictures for a 10 minute show. If however you will be using a deluxe package, with overlays, more complex transitions and effects, you might be able to use only 80-100 or so photographs in a 10 minute show. Both types of shows work fine, when you keep the venue and audience in mind. Have you ever been to a 2 hour movie that felt like 4 hours? Or a 3 hour movie that felt like an hour and a half? The same holds true with your video slideshow. A 10 minute "fade-in/fade-out" slideshow can sometimes feel like 20 minutes, whereas a longer more effect-filled show can seem shorter.

2. Please Your Audience

Think about what the event or occasion is, who will be watching, and what do they care about. Will the audience know who is on the screen? If not, think about adding captions to help identify individuals in the show. A few captions go a long way and they can be quite effective. If appropriate, adding pictures of audience members helps keep them engaged and makes the show more meaningful. People like seeing themselves on screen!

2. Where/When will the Video be Shown?

It is very easy to include any and all photographs you might have for a specific event. However, you want to avoid the dreaded "family vacation slideshow" that is often joked about, where people sit for hours watching pictures of this flower, or that building. When in doubt, go shorter. Let Reflections of Life help you determine the correct package, including length and style tailored to your event.

3. Choosing Photographs

Engaging slideshows have a variety of photographs. If you are planning on scanning your own photographs or slides, be sure that the surface of the scanner you are using is wiped down every 5-10 scans, to help minimize dust and fingerprints. Scan photographs in as high a resolution as possible (300 dpi or higher is recommended) to minimize blurry or fuzzy pictures. Look at the quality of your picture. While photographs can be digitally improved, the higher quality you start with, the better they will appear on screen.

- ✓ Is your photo blurry or fuzzy? Photos like this can actually look worse when enlarged for the TV/movie screen.
- ✓ How is the lighting? Is the photo too dark? Too washed out?
- ✓ Is your photo grainy? Even with today's high quality scanners, these types of photos just do not scan well.
- ✓ Has the photo been cut into a non-standard shape - say for scrapbooking? These often do not work well for slideshows.

4. Organizing Your Photographs

The first photograph and the last photograph set the tone for your video. These are the pictures your audience will remember first.

- **Set the Order for Entire Show**

When you number your photographs, be sure that you number them on the back of each photo lightly with a pencil, or place a small sticky note on the back. Regular pens or markers can bleed through when the photograph is scanned. For digital pictures, include the number in the picture name (i.e. 01_cake.jpg, 123_Vows.jpg)

- **Set the Order by Song**

If you have a group of photographs that you want to show with a specific song, you set the order, or if the order isn't important to you, then group them together (a baggie works great for this) and indicate which song you want to accompany them. If you select this methodology, be sure to let us know the order you'd like the songs played!

- **Set the Order by Timeframe**

This works great for videos that take a look back - special anniversaries, birthdays, memorials. For this type, group the photographs by year/decade - again either numbering them yourself, or letting Reflections of Life choreograph them for you to the music you have selected.

- **Let Reflections of Life Set the Order for you**

We are glad to organize your photos for you, but because of the large amount of time involved, there is an additional fee of \$0.50 per photo. So, for example if there are 400 photographs in your slideshow, it will cost an additional \$200 above your package price.

5. Should you use Video Clips?

The same guidelines for photographs apply to video clips. While short video clips can add an extra pop to your slideshow, too many clips, or clips that are too long can cause the audience to quickly lose interest. Don't be afraid to use them, but make them short (10 seconds - 2 minutes on average), and use them sparingly.

5. Setting the Tone with Music

The tone of your slideshow will be set by the music you select. By mixing the type of song (slow and sentimental with upbeat/fast paced), your show can create both laughter and tears. Choose songs that have a special meaning to you. When you select a song, be sure to really listen to the lyrics, to ensure that they fit the theme of your event. You might find that you like the sound of the music, but the lyrics themselves just aren't appropriate for the video at hand. Click [HERE](#) to view our list of song ideas to help you get started.

6. Have Backups of Your Photos

If possible, **make copies** of your photos or the negatives, any discs containing scanned photos, and any discs containing video. While it is not common for items to be damaged or lost in the mail, photographs are irreplaceable, so be sure to have a backup. Reflections of Life is not responsible for what happens to your photos while in the mail.

7. Package Your Photos Properly

- Use proper packing materials; pack tightly to help keep the photographs from moving around.
- Place 5x7 or 8x10 photographs between cardboard to protect against bending
- Place photographs, and discs in plastic bags to help protect against water damage
- Consider priority or overnight mailing services, with package tracking.

8. Test and Re-Test!

If your video montage will be shown at an event, it is highly recommended that you try to test out ALL the equipment prior to the event. This will ensure that the projector, TV, DVD player, laptop, sound equipment, etc. are all working correctly.



Reflections of Life prides itself on telling your story, your way - through your photographs, slides and music, transforming them into a DVD video album that you'll treasure for generations.

If you have any questions, just ask!

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