

Hiring a Photo Booth?

**What you need to
know.**

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Photo Booths – What you need to know

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Photo Booths – What you need to know

Whilst many of us think of the little booth you get your passport or driving licence pictures taken in, photo booths have become very popular. The modern photo booth comes in several different guises, although they largely work in the same way.

We'll deal with the different types later. First let's take a look at the basic components.

What's inside.

Basically, all modern photo booths have five main parts in common:

- A camera. Some setups use computer webcams or smartphones, but the better-quality setups use digital SLR cameras, usually Canon or Nikon but the software might support other brands
- A computer running photo booth software. The computer stores and manipulates your pictures. Professional photo booth software includes features such as greenscreen (sometimes called chromakey, which is used extensively in TV and film to add backgrounds), and social media sharing.
- A TV screen or monitor to show output and display instructions. This might be touchscreen, but this is not essential.
- Lighting. This might be a strobe / flash, or a constant light such as LED lighting.
- A printer to print your pictures.

Types of photo booth:

There are four main types available for hire. These are:

- Fully enclosed
- Open Air
- Converted Vehicles
- Magic Mirrors

Photo Booths – What you need to know

Fully Enclosed



This is what most people think of as a photo booth. They vary in size and style, and some can accommodate up to 10 people. The downside of that is that some might find them claustrophobic. They also might require more space than is available.

Another downside of an enclosed booth is that unless greenscreen is enabled, your pictures will look as if they have been taken in a photo booth. Imagine that you held a party in a really grand location – let's say The Ritz, for an example – and you hire the booth on the right. I'm assuming there is no green screen as it's not in shot. Your backdrop will be a grey curtain, which could be anywhere.

Access-wise, enclosed booths, especially smaller ones, might present difficulties for wheelchair users in particular.

Pros: Immediately identifiable; privacy

Cons: Space requirements; may present access problems for some

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Open Air



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Whilst given a suitable electricity supply or the capacity to run on batteries, these units could be used outside in a tent or gazebo, the 'open air' description simply means that there is no enclosure. But if you look closely at the picture on the top left of this page, and compare it with the picture top-right on the previous page, you will see that in fact some "fully enclosed" booths are nothing more than freestanding "open air" booths with an added curtain enclosure.

Open air booths are more flexible and can be scaled up or down according to the space available. If your venue has features of interest, e.g. an interesting fireplace, you might want to use that as a backdrop. It is possible for your provider to use a cloth background as shown above, or a greenscreen cloth using an appropriate support frame.

Given space, there are no limits to the number of people who can fit in, plus they are easily accessible to users with all levels of abilities, especially wheelchair users. It's even possible to use setups like the photo wall here. Your



operator may also be able to provide additional screening for privacy.

Pros: Flexible

Cons: Lacks privacy if no screening available;

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Photo from CypressCamper.com

Converted vehicles

Converted vehicles are popular features at weddings, parties, and public events, especially where they are either largely or wholly outdoors. They might be in a towed caravan as shown above, or more commonly in 'camper' vans, such as Volkswagen T2 'Dormobiles'.

Like an enclosed booth, there should be curtains for privacy, and there may be a green screen or other backgrounds.

A booth of this type is primarily not designed for indoor use although this may be possible in larger venues if an electric hook-up is available. It can be stationed in an adjacent car park. Typically, there will be a gazebo or other structure immediately outside where props will be available.

Access-wise, users with different abilities might need assistance or a ramp to access this type of booth. You should ask your provider about this.

Pros: Good for outdoor events; Camper units considered very cool; good privacy.
 Cons: May have accessibility issues; must have electric hook-up for indoor use.

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Magic Mirror Booths

This is the latest type of photo booth. Essentially, it's a two-way mirror with the booth workings behind it. Unlike most photobooths, it usually takes pictures in portrait (upright) format and takes full-length or three-quarter-length pictures.

They are usually very easy to operate, and if placed correctly they are easily accessed by people with different levels of ability, including wheelchair users.

Users and operators may opt to use a background for users to stand in front of, including greenscreen if the unit's software supports that.

Pros: Does full length; great 'wow' factor; generally accessible to all

Cons: Generally no privacy.

Photo Booths – What you need to know



Figure 1: Greenscreen as used on TV

Extra Features

Greenscreen

I've mentioned this a few times already. The photobooth software will replace **anything** green with an alternative background. So, users wearing green jumpers or dresses for example will largely disappear. Note that the software can be set to other colours, but green and blue are most widely used in TV and film, where the technique originated.

If your operator provides a greenscreen cloth, and has enabled the greenscreen facility on the computer, you could ask for a picture of a feature from your venue or a favourite place as a background option. For example, if your venue is your favourite football or rugby club, you might like a view of the "hallowed turf", or the stand which spells out the club's name or initials.

GIFs

Typically, each user's session will include several pictures being taken. The software then creates a short video sequence with the pictures taken.

Boomerang

Similar to a GIF, except that this creates a short video clip (typically 1 or 2 seconds), which is then reversed and then looped several times.

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Video clips

The booth will allow you to record a short video message, usually about 30 seconds in length.

Print signing

The booth may offer you the option to sign your photos or write a message. This is a nice feature for parties or weddings, where the celebrating person or couple want copies of the pictures.

Summary

These are the four main types of photobooth. As you have seen, whilst they all look slightly different, they generally work in much the same way. Precisely what any individual booth does will depend on the combination of the computer and the software installed on it, and the camera fitted. Whilst most booths now use touchscreens, some might require users to press a button or use a mouse or other input device.

When enquiring, be it directly with a provider or via a third-party website such as Poptop or AddToEvent.co.uk, you might have a specific type in mind, so you can either select it from the list¹ when submitting your lead or state it in the 'message' or 'additional info' section. It's really important to tell potential suppliers whether the booth is likely to be positioned indoors or outdoors.

If your provider is a photographer, and not all are, they might also be able to capture other aspects of your event if you don't already have a photographer contracted to cover that. If you have a separate photographer booked to cover your event, it is courteous to let them know you are booking a photo booth. They might offer it as an add-on service at an advantageous rate.

When you've hired your booth, and the party's in full swing...

- Grab a prop
- Strike a pose
- Smile, or pull a funny face, and,

HAVE
FUN.



LOTS OF FUN!!

¹ Only some websites have this feature

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