

Wedding ceremony guide

Your ceremony can – and should – be as individual as you are. No two ceremonies are the same and should be designed to suit your individual needs. Your ceremony should convey your dreams and values as a couple, and is always better if it includes personalised statements and stories that convey this. Whether formal or informal, serious or humorous, your ceremony should resonate with you as a couple and, hopefully, with your guests.

A small part of your ceremony will involve legally-required wording; however, the majority—including the order—is optional.

Below is an outline of a ceremony framework (without the required legal wording) to give you an idea of the various parts that can be included or not, depending on your preferences.

Introduction

In this part, the celebrant introduces themselves to the guests. This is done whether it is just the couple and two witnesses or a large bridal party with hundreds of guests. The thoughts and feelings that the couple has on marriage can also be expressed (optional), and a little about their relationship history is read (also optional).



Reading

This is a very personal part of any ceremony. It is entirely optional, but can be used to separate and give balance to two parts of a ceremony. It also provides an opportunity for family or friends to participate. A reading at this point divides the introduction and the authorisation. It can also occur after the authorisation.

Any number of readings can be included in the ceremony, according to the couple's wishes. Music can also be used instead.

The authorisation

This is legally required. It formalises the celebrant's authority to conduct marriage ceremonies and is used to describe the nature of the marriage relationship.

Example wedding ceremony template

NB The full names of the couple must be used at least once during the ceremony to identify them. This is usually done during the introduction or the authorisation.

The giving away

This is an optional part of the ceremony. Traditionally, the bride's father gave her away, but more often now, couples choose to omit this from their ceremony. Sometimes they will seek the blessing of parents and/or friends and family instead.

The asking

This part involves the couple asking each other if they take one another as their spouse, to which they normally answer 'I will' or 'I do'. This part is actually optional, but is usually included in most ceremonies.

The vows

This allows the couple to make special promises or pledges to one another. No matter what promises they make, the vows have a legally required component.



Ring ceremony

If rings are exchanged, this often commences with the celebrant making a short statement on the symbolic nature of the rings prior to them being placed on the couple's fingers. Rings are entirely optional and can involve one ring being given to one party, both parties exchanging rings, or no rings being exchanged at all.

Declaration of marriage

This is a legal requirement and involves the celebrant declaring the couple to be officially married.

Signing of the marriage documents

This is also a legal requirement and is done in the presence of two witnesses (both of whom must be 18 years or older). It is followed by the presentation of the newly-married couple to their guests.