

# BRIDALGUIDE

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## HOW TO HAVE A PERFECT CEREMONY

Planning Tips & Personal Touches

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### tweaking traditon

- **FOR SEATING IN A NONRELIGIOUS VENUE**, instead of having two "sides," arrange seats in a circle and recite your vows surrounded by friends and family. Or why not replace chairs with couches or benches? For outdoor ceremonies, seat guests on cloth-covered hay bales, picnic blankets or heaps of Moroccan-style cushions.
- **WHO SAYS YOUR LITTLE RING BEARER HAS TO CARRY A PILLOW?** Imagine your wedding rings cradled in a blush-pink seashell or nestled on a bed of fresh dahlias. A childhood music box or other nostalgic item can serve as a pillow.
- **TRADITIONALLY, WEDDING PROGRAMS INCLUDE THE COUPLE'S NAMES**, the wedding date and a brief outline of the ceremony, with the readings, music selections and the names of all the key players. But your program is also an opportunity to highlight your wedding style. Consider binding the programs with satin ribbons in your wedding colors or printing them on paper with gilt edges. Ask your stationer to letterpress the programs with the image of your favorite symbol or flower. And delight your parents with a surprise thank-you message, formally printed for all your guests to see.

### something borrowed

Many couples include traditions and rituals from other faiths and cultures in their ceremonies. Want to borrow one for your special day?

- **THE LIGHTING OF A UNITY CANDLE** In many Christian ceremonies, the bride's parents light a candle, and then the groom's parents light another. Together, the bride and groom use these two candles to light a third, larger candle of their own. This ritual represents the joining of two families in a love that burns as brightly as a flame.
- **JUMPING THE BROOM** African-American couples will sometimes choose to honor their ancestors by jumping over a ribbon-festooned broom—a ritual created during the time of slavery, when marriage between slaves was illegal.
- **HANDBASTING** In a ritual that originated in Great Britain during pagan times, the bride and groom bind their hands together with a ribbon, symbolizing the joining of their lives. Today, many couples choose to do this immediately before or after the exchange of rings.
- **ROSE PRESENTATION** Some brides and grooms will present a single rose—a symbol of love—to their mothers early in the ceremony as a gesture of love and gratitude.
- **MEDALLION PRESENTATION** In a wedding that includes children from a previous marriage, the new stepparent might present a piece of jewelry to the partner's children during the wedding ceremony. The gift serves as a reminder of commitment to each member of the newly blended family.



### good reads

Want friends and family to take part in the ceremony? Consider these special readings:

- >> **CORINTHIANS 13:4-8, THE BIBLE**  
"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful..."
- >> **APACHE MARRIAGE BLESSING**  
"Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth for the other..."
- >> **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, SONNET 116**  
"Let me not to the marriage of true minds/Admit impediments. Love is not love/Which alters when it alteration finds..."
- >> **GOETHE**  
"It is the true season of Love when we believe that we alone can love; that no one could ever have loved as much before, and that no one will ever Love in the same way after us." ■

### the hit parade

What music will play during your walk down the aisle and back? (If you're marrying in a house of worship, remember to clear all the music with your officiant.) Here, a mix of both traditional and indie selections:

PROCESSIONAL	RECESSIONAL
1. "Canon in D Minor," Pachelbel	1. "Ode to Joy," from Symphony No. 9, Beethoven
2. "A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 61," Boston Pops Orchestra	2. "Trumpet Voluntary," Wynton Marsalis
3. "Make You Feel My Love," Adele	3. "Crazy in Love," Beyoncé and Jay-Z
4. "First Day of My Life," Bridgit Mendler	4. "I Do," The Lumineers
5. "Marry Me," Train	5. "Don't Stop Believin'," Journey

With so much attention given to planning the perfect reception, couples sometimes find that they haven't given quite enough thought to their ceremony—which is, needless to say, the most important part of your big day. After all, the service sets the tone of the entire event, and it's also the best opportunity you have to reflect on the rituals, traditions and values that mean so much to both you and your families. Here, we fill you in on all the planning basics.



### making it legal

A simple civil ceremony is all you actually need to be legally married. Religious ceremonies are a bit more complicated. If that's your choice, you must clear all your plans with your clergy person, as some houses of worship have strict rules for wedding services.

#### THE CHRISTIAN CEREMONY

- The processional marks the beginning of the ceremony. The groomsmen enter first, followed by the bridesmaids, the maid of honor, the ring bearer, the flower girl and the bride on her father's arm. The groom waits at the altar with his best man, groomsmen and the officiant.
- In the presentation, the bride's father escorts her to the groom.
- A blessing follows. The officiant asks the bride and groom that famous question, "Do you take...?"
- The couple exchanges vows, followed by a benediction recited by the officiant.
- The couple exchanges rings.

### license lowdown

Whether you marry in a church or a town hall, on a mountaintop or on a beach, you need a marriage license. License requirements vary from state to state and even from county to county (go to findlaw.com for state-by-state information). Some require couples to apply in-person and pay a cash fee (anywhere from \$25 to \$100); you'll also be asked to bring along identification, like a passport or Social Security card. Once you have the license, it must be signed by the two of you, your officiant and possibly witnesses. Your officiant must mail the license to the proper state authorities (you'll receive a certified marriage certificate in the mail within 60 days), but in the eyes of the government you are husband and wife from the moment everyone signs the license.

- The officiant announces to the community that the couple is wed and grants the groom permission to kiss his wife.
- During the recessional, the couple exits the church, followed by the other members of the wedding party.

#### THE JEWISH CEREMONY

- The signing of the *ketubah*: This ornately decorated contract spells out the rights of the bride and starts the proceedings. In an Orthodox wedding, the signing is followed by the *bedeken*, in which the groom places a veil on his bride.
- The rabbi leads a procession of the cantor, the groomsmen, the best man, the groom and his parents, the bridesmaids, the maid of honor and the bride and her parents to the *chuppah*, a canopy symbolizing home and sacred space. The bride circles the groom seven times; in some synagogues, the groom may also circle the bride.
- The bride and groom drink wine from a cup as a blessing is given.
- The couple exchanges rings.
- The rabbi reads the *ketubah*.
- The rabbi recites the *sheva berachot*, or "seven blessings."
- The groom crushes a wineglass beneath his foot, symbolizing the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the fragility of life and human relationships.
- The couple then observes the *yichud* (which means "seclusion"), where they spend a short time alone in a room, savoring their newlywed status.

#### THE CIVIL CEREMONY

- (Conducted by a judge, county or court clerk or justice of the peace):
- In the processional, the couple enters with their wedding party.
  - The couple outlines the commitment they're making to each other and exchange rings.
  - The officiant pronounces the couple husband and wife.
  - During the recessional, the couple and their attendants make their exit. →