

Officiant's Instructions

Congratulations on officiating a wedding and thanks so much for allowing me to guide you! I was ordained online in 2007 to officiate my best friend's wedding and loved it. Little did I know that I'd make it my full-time job and then get a bachelor's and master's degree in metaphysical sciences and become an actual minister! I came into an industry dominated by older, conservative men and am slowly changing what's available to those who want a different option. Thank you for being part of that. I hope this process is fun and stress-free for all involved. I've tailored this material over time as I've officiated hundreds of weddings and worked with those couples. If anything in the material you've purchased from me can be improved, please let me know. I'm always trying to improve every aspect of my life, especially when it involves others. I hope officiating your upcoming wedding is an incredibly fond, lifelong memory for you and your couple.

[For multiple tips on timing, stage presence and to see me read all ceremony material, consider my video training and even 1 on 1 coaching. Check it out \[HERE\]\(#\).](#)

Email all the ceremony documents to your couple (Excluding the "officiant's instructions") and ask them to copy/paste their favorite selections from the corresponding documents into their sections within the "ceremony outline." Detailed instructions are below and on the "ceremony outline" for the couple to see. While the document PDFs cannot be edited, your couple can highlight to then copy/paste into the "ceremony outline," which is a Word file that can be edited. Ask your couple to email their "ceremony outline" back to you after pasting their selections in from the corresponding PDFs. Since their "ceremony outline" is a Word file, you can move sentences around and edit there.

Welcoming Guests

Ask your couple to open the "welcoming guests" document and for them to copy and paste their favorite into this section of the ceremony outline. I welcome couples to mix and match or edit in any way they like, but it's simplest if there happens to be one selection they like best.

Opening Commentary

Ask your couple to open the "opening commentary" document and for them to copy and paste their favorite into this section of the ceremony outline. The opening commentary is where couples often pick and choose specific sentences from the various choices to include in one overall choice. For example, they might like "continue to flirt" overall, but also like several sentences from "a few suggestions" and ask that those particular sentences are worked into "continue to flirt." Deciding where to best fit specifically chosen sentences into an opening commentary selection is more work for you, but they probably asked you to officiate because they're confident you'll do a good job. Their smiles will be worth your effort.



First Reading

Readings take the place of scripture in a church wedding. Ask your couple to copy and paste from the “readings” packet, unless they already have readings in mind. If the author is known, introduce the name of the reading and author to the wedding guests. It’s proper and legal that way. I might say, “Bride and Groom’s first reading is called, Falling In Love Is Like Owning A Dog and was written by Taylor Mali.” The officiant reads all three readings around 80% of the time. Couples often ask guests to come up and read the other times, which I discuss below under the Second Reading section.

Imagery (See: Officiant’s Instructions for Imagery)

Ask them to copy/paste their selection from the “imagery” document. Not every couple chooses to include imagery, but their ceremony will probably only be around 15 minutes without it. Imagery is used to possibly get the guests involved, start a new tradition, use symbolism or metaphor, or have a keepsake sitting around their house to remind them of their wedding. The letter box/wine box are becoming quite popular.

Second Reading

Ask your couple to copy and paste from the “readings” packet, unless they already have readings in mind. If the author is known, introduce the name of the reading and author to the wedding guests. It’s proper and legal that way.

If they choose to have a guest come up to read, properly introduce that guest and say the name of the reading and author to keep it legal. For example, “Close friends and family are the most important thing in Bride and Groom’s lives and in an effort to honor you all, Bride and Groom have asked two of you to come up and read for us. To start things off we’d like to invite Bride’s Aunt, Susie to read My Promise To Love You, which was written by Dorothy Colgan. Aunt Susie, come on up!”

After their guest is done reading always say to the crowd, “How about a round of applause for aunt Susie?!” This will allow the reader to feel much more comfortable as they make their way back to their seat and the applause also acts as an easy transition. Try to dissuade your couple from having more than two guest speakers since asking the audience for applause can be redundant. If there are guest readers, have the couple ask their DJ or venue for a microphone on a stand set off to one side for the reader. Or you can simply hand your microphone to the reader who then takes your spot in the center of it all, which is inconvenient with a clip-on/lapel mic, but the reader can then easily exchange hugs with the couple.

Pre-Vow

Just before the couple’s vows I usually say, “Before Bride and Groom exchange their vows and rings, I’d like to remind everyone that this is why we’ve gathered today. They’re about to fully and publicly devote their lives to each other. If you’re lucky enough to be in a loving relationship yourself, I invite you to use this opportunity and to allow the next few minutes to act as a reminder and even rededication of your own special bond.”



Vows

Ask your couple to copy and paste their favorite from the “contemporary vows” or “traditional vows” document. Some couples choose to say the same thing to each other, while others prefer to say something different to each other. It’s certainly up to them. They can simply repeat after you. Step out of the way and behind the groom as you hold the microphone for him, so that he can hold her hands and then do the same for her. If you have a lapel/clip-on microphone, this is more

challenging. Sometimes the groom is wearing his own lapel mic, which makes your job easier. I’ll discuss microphones toward the end of these instructions.

If they’re writing their own vows they will not be repeating after you. Step behind the groom and hold the microphone for him as he vows to the bride and then do the same for her. That way they can hold the paper they’re reading from with one hand and then hold each other’s. Ask if they plan to share their vows with each other ahead of time or not. If not, give a due date and ask them to email their vows to you two weeks prior to their ceremony. My experience is that women’s vows are longer and more sincere, while men’s vows tend to be shorter and have a joke or two. If their vows happen to be substantially off-balance, giving them a due date will allow them time to make adjustments, if necessary. Guide them by asking one person to add a joke or for the other to maybe cut one out. Ask the one person to come up with more to say and ask the other person if he/she can cut a few sentences out. If not, that’s cool. It’s their wedding and they should be able to say whatever they want to each other. Vows are a very personal thing. I’ve had a groom say three sentences and his bride take five minutes reading page after page. However, have the person with the shorter, personally written vows go first during their ceremony. That way the person who goes second doesn’t look bad when compared to the long vows that came first. Ending with the longer, perhaps more well-thought out vows allows the ceremony to flow more easily.

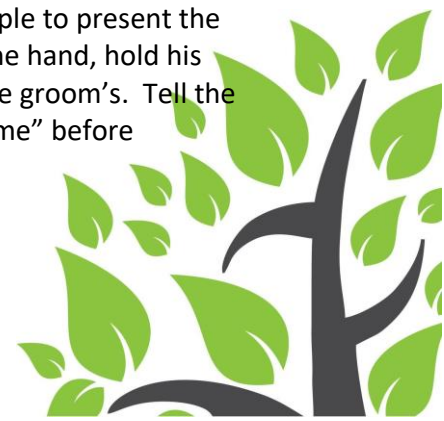
Many couples who write their own vows also want me to follow and to then ask them, “Bride, do you take groom to be your husband? That gives them each the opportunity to say, “I do.”

I usually conclude the vows section by saying to the crowd, “How ‘bout a round of applause for their vows?!” It smooths out any uncomfortable energy for the couple. Remember, not everyone likes being the center of attention in front of a crowd.

Ring Exchange

Ask your couple to open the “ring exchange” document and for them to copy and paste their favorite into this section of the “ceremony outline.” I welcome couples to mix and match or edit in any way they like, but it’s simplest if there’s one they happen to like best.

Who’s holding their rings during the ceremony? If it’s only one person, usually the best man, I ask him to walk behind the groom and to take my spot standing in between the couple to present the rings. It’s a great photo opportunity. The best man should have both rings in one hand, hold his hand out and then the groom will take the bride’s ring and the bride will take the groom’s. Tell the best man to exchange hugs, high fives or even to hit the groom with a “good game” before returning to his spot.



You'll be well-received by their photographer if you let him/her know about the best man being invited over to hand off the rings. Tell their photographer that there should be a great photo of the three of them from the aisle during their ring exchange, immediately following their vows.

If the best man and maid of honor are each holding a ring, just have the couple turn around and take it from each person simultaneously. Asking both best man and maid of honor to take your spot to present the rings can be clumsy.

Third Reading

Ask the couple what kind of vibe they'd like to end their ceremony with, something sincere that makes them feel grateful and maybe tear up, or something fun that gets people ready to celebrate? Ask your couple to copy and paste their selection from the "readings" document, unless they already have readings in mind. If the author is known, introduce the name of the reading and author to the wedding guests. It's proper and legal that way.

Pronouncement

Ask your couple to open the "pronouncement" document and for them to copy and paste their favorite into this section of the "ceremony outline." Be sure to step out and away when they kiss. Otherwise it's weird and creepy. Before their ceremony starts, tell their photographer that you'll gladly step out when they kiss and you'll score points with their photographer.

**Avoid this newbie mistake* and be sure to ask their guests to "Please rise" before pronouncing them as husband and wife. Allow the bridal party, then the bride's parents, then the groom's parents to exit before you. If grandparents or others in the front row stand up and walk out in front of you, it's not a big deal. They're all important people. As I'm walking out I usually say to the crowd, "We're going to sign their marriage license and then Bride and Groom will be snapping photos, but invite everyone to start the party during cocktail hour and they can't wait to join you soon. Have a great night!"

Timeline To Keep Your Couple On Track

Ask your couple to return the "ceremony outline" to you within two weeks and let them know that they're welcome to make changes at any time.

Make a note to give them a polite nudge in two weeks for their outline, if you've not received it from them.

Make a note to email their ceremony draft back out to them for review two weeks before their ceremony, and to ask for their vows. Few couples share their vows with each other before the wedding. You can act as a guide if they're substantially off-balance. My experience is that the groom's are often shorter, with more jokes. A deadline or due date will give them time to make changes, if necessary and reduce their stress the week of their wedding, since they'll have returned everything to you.



Before their ceremony ask the bride if someone is escorting her down the aisle, usually dad, and if she'd like you to ask him, "Who has the honor of escorting Bride down the aisle and presenting her to Groom?" If her parents are still married, "Her mother and I." is the most common response. I usually ask the bride if she wants me to ask this question while she and I are away from her dad, just in case she says no. There's no need to hurt dad's feelings unnecessarily. Good vibes are the goal!

****Avoid this newbie mistake*** and start every ceremony by asking the guests to, "Please rise" when you see the bride about to walk in. The bride is not a possession or gift, so I usually take a few steps forward with the groom to meet the bride and her dad, to then ask, "Who has the honor of escorting Bride down the aisle and presenting her to Groom?"

Make sure the groom knows to acknowledge her dad with a handshake or hug, however they're most comfortable, and to make sure Bride has a chance to kiss dad before he sits and she hands her bouquet off to the maid of honor.

****Avoid this newbie mistake.*** Be sure to then instruct the guests to sit back down by saying, "Please be seated." Wait until the maid of honor has finished straightening out the bride's dress before beginning their "welcoming guests."

Handheld Microphones

Pros: Far more reliable than lapel microphones because they can be farther from the receiver without cutting out and can also handle windy days without much interference, and allows couple to easily repeat after you. Hold the mic so the couple is heard and you're not heard easily by their guests.

Cons: Can't have your hand on the page to help keep your place. Some officiants use mic stands, which ruin photos. Don't use a stand, unless the microphone is off to the side and reserved for guest readers.

Lapel or Clip-On Microphones

Pros: Will allow you to have one hand on your page to help you keep your place and thus allows you to feel more confident and use more body language.

Cons: Lapel mics cut in and out if the receiver is too far away and they don't like windy days. Cell phones can cause interference too. The cord and clip makes it challenging to unclip and hold for the couple during their vows, ring exchange and when asking her dad, "Who has the honor of escorting Bride down the aisle?"

Your Ceremony Supplies

The book I tape my ceremonies into and read from can be found on Amazon here: <http://amzn.to/2j8PpEZ>

The removable tape I use can be found on Amazon here: <http://amzn.to/2j45xDw>

www.mattsweddingceremonies.com

