

Officiant's Instructions for Imagery

Symbolism and imagery are effective ways to dramatize any ceremony. The options listed below help to make a great wedding, and also make for excellent photo opportunities.

Ask their DJ to play soft music during imagery to fill any dead air.

Unity Candle, buy on Amazon [here](#)

Be sure to speak to the couple and their moms before the ceremony to make sure everyone knows what they're doing. Instruct the couple to meet behind the table, standing next to each other and facing their guests. You want the couple and their moms to face the guests for photos, and so guests can see what is happening. Have their moms go to the back or side of the table and stand next to their child. Instruct moms to take their child's individual candle from the holder and light it, and then place the lit candle back into the holder. My suggestion would be to have a lit tea light or votive candle so moms don't have to fumble with a lighter, but to have a lighter on or near the unity candle table as backup. After moms light their child's candle and put it back into the candle holder, instruct them to exchange hugs with the couple and then to kindly return to their seats.

"Bride and Groom have chosen to symbolize their commitment through lighting the unity candle. For those of you who aren't familiar with the unity candle, it's meant to represent two lives becoming one through marriage. We'd like Bride's mom, Name? and Groom's mom, Name? to come up and join in the ceremony. (Moms make their way up to the ceremony) They have asked their mothers to light the outside candles because they lit their lives and as an expression of love, a way of saying "Thank you" to all of their parents for bringing each of them to this point in their lives. Together, Bride and Groom light one candle from two smaller candles as they acknowledge their union as husband and wife. (Nod to couple now, or tell them to light the unity candle) As their individual flames come together, the single flame burns much brighter, symbolizing their strength in marriage. By allowing the flames of the two smaller candles to remain lit, they agree to respect each other as individuals. Bride and Groom are each unique people, but have chosen to be bound together as one. As a married couple they will fully share the "ups" and "downs" of life and from today forward their plans will truly be mutual." (Ask couple to return to their spots)

Sand Ceremony (add more containers of sand so kids from a blended family can participate)

Be sure to speak to the couple before the ceremony to make sure they know what they're doing. Instruct the couple to meet behind the table, standing next to each other and facing their guests so their backs aren't to their photographer and so guests can see what is happening. Make sure the couple knows who will pour their sand first and tell them to take their time because they only get one shot at it. Buy on Amazon [here](#)

"Bride and Groom have chosen to commemorate their marriage by blending sand. (Nod to couple or ask them to head over to the unity sand table) For those of you who aren't familiar with the sand ceremony, it's meant to represent separate lives coming together as one. Bride and Groom, today you join your lives together. The separate bottles of sand represent your lives before today. Each grain of sand not only represents every memory and experience you've had individually, but also represent your combined experiences going forward for many years to come. (Tell Bride and





Groom to blend sand now) As these two containers of sand are combined, the individual containers of sand no longer exist, but will be joined together as one. Just as these grains of sand aren't easily separated and poured again into their individual containers, so will your marriage be."

(Ask couple to return to their spots)

Wine or Champagne Sharing

Be sure to speak to the couple before their ceremony to make sure they know what they're doing. Instruct the couple to meet behind the table, standing next to each other and facing their guests so their backs aren't to their photographer and so guests can see what is happening. Make sure the couple knows who will pour the wine or champagne. Verify that the cork is unwrapped and mostly popped open so it doesn't take long during the ceremony. Is the groom pouring two glasses or are they sharing one? Some couples take a polite sip and then set their glasses down, while others refill their glasses and start the party.

"Bride and Groom have chosen to commemorate their marriage by sharing wine. **(Nod to couple or ask them to head over to the table)** Throughout history in nearly all cultures and traditions, sharing wine or champagne has been used as a universal, central act during significant moments. There's symbolism to be honored. Wine is the result of years of hard work, the tender care of the grape, a thoughtful mix of ingredients, the patient fermenting and the unique flavors of each year. **(If they haven't already poured their wine, instruct them to do so)** So it's fitting that Bride and Groom share their first glass of wine as husband and wife to not only celebrate all that has taken place up to this point, but as an expression of hope and faith in the harvest of their lives. **(Nod to couple or tell them to drink the wine or champagne now)** As you share the wine, so may you share all things from this day on with love and with understanding. May you be blessed with joy and gladness, vigor of body and spirit, love, harmony, and peace." **(Ask couple to return to their spots)**

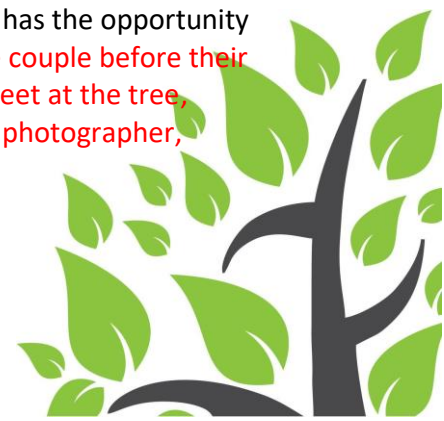
Flowers and Hugs

Many people feel indebted to their families so couples often like to surprise moms/grandmas with flowers and dads/grandpas with hugs following the unity candle, sand ceremony or wine sharing, or any piece of imagery. **Before their ceremony begins, verify that the flowers are on the unity table for the couple to hand out. Encourage them to go together to the bride's family and then together to the groom's family.**

"Before Bride and Groom exchange rings, they've requested the opportunity to surprise their moms with flowers and dads with hugs because they love you all so much. **(Couple takes flowers from table and goes over to moms/dads in first row)** Thank you for bringing them to this amazingly special point in their lives."

The Blessing Tree

For couples wanting to incorporate nature and also have a way for guests to contribute, the Blessing Tree is a great option. A blessing tree is a sapling, usually no more than six feet tall. VIPs are invited up to tie their 'blessing' to the tree during the ceremony. Blank cards can be placed at each table setting or on a table at cocktail hour or reception so that every guest has the opportunity to affix their own note to the tree throughout the night. **Be sure to speak to the couple before their ceremony to make sure they know what they're doing. Instruct the couple to meet at the tree, standing next to each other and facing their guests so their backs aren't to their photographer,**



and so guests can see what is happening. Verify that their family members have their written blessings and know that you'll invite them all up to tie their blessings to the tree and give hugs. Be patient and allow the scene to unfold at its own pace. Some family members like to have short conversations with the couple.

"Bride and Groom have chosen to include a really unique element in their ceremony. You may have noticed the tree up here. This is called The Blessing Tree. Right now, we'd like to invite their grandparents, parents, siblings up to tie their blessings to their tree and give hugs. (Small families can be invited up all at once, otherwise invite grandparents up first. One set gives hugs while the other set ties their blessings to the tree. Then invite up parents, with one set tying blessings while the other set hugs. Then invite siblings up the same way) You'll all have the opportunity to write a blessing or fun comment on a card during the reception and tie it to their tree. It could be poetry, a personal note, a religious passage, a quotation, whatever works for you. Then they'll plant the tree in their yard and watch it grow along with their marriage. Your blessings might then go into their photo album with their wedding pictures. Each year on their anniversary they'll take the time to admire the tree, reflect on the marriage and smooch."

Butterfly Release (try <https://butterflyrelease.biz/>)

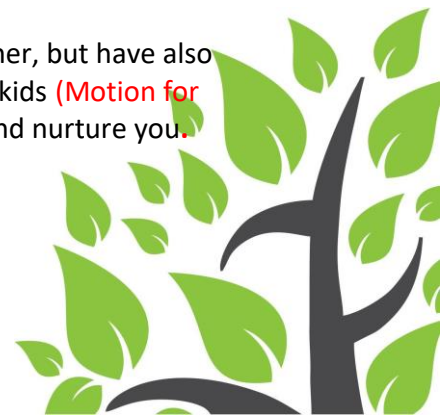
I've seen butterflies released by the couple from a box that's on a table in the ceremony space and I've seen cardboard triangles containing a live butterfly on each guest's chair for them to release. Butterflies are warm-weather creatures. This option does not work if it's chilly. Verify with the couple, at what point they'll be set free. Sometimes it fits best at the end of the ceremony, just before they're pronounced husband and wife.

"The butterfly symbolizes new beginnings, freedom and happiness and the butterfly release is a special way to celebrate love. According to an American Indian legend we can whisper a wish to a butterfly and the wish will ride upon the butterfly's wings into the heavens. Since a butterfly makes no sound, the wish is only revealed to the Great Spirit and in gratitude for giving the butterfly its freedom, the Great Spirit always grants the wish. We have gathered to grant Bride and Groom all our best wishes and are about to set these butterflies free in trust that those wishes will be granted. (Ask couple to open the lid and let 'em go) The butterflies will carry forth the good news of your promise of love and commitment to each other. Congratulations, you two!"

Parental Vows with Children (Immediately following the couple's vows to each other)

Parental vows are an excellent way to assure children of newly blended families that they are important. This option includes the children in the ceremony and allows those in attendance to witness the creation of a new family. Before their ceremony, verify that the kids know to come up and join hands with the couple and tell the kids what they'll repeat after you. Practice once with them. Practice with the couple too, so they know your cadence. You can hold the microphone in between them all, but I suggest asking one of the parents to hold the microphone so you can be out of their personal space. I've put commas or periods in red below, so you know where I pause when asking them to repeat after me.

"Love is a gift. Bride and Groom have not only found the gift of loving one another, but have also found the sacred union of family. Bride and Groom please join hands with your kids (Motion for kids to come over) and repeat these promises: We together promise, to guide and nurture you."



We promise to respect you as individuals, to love you and listen to you, and to make great memories as a family.

(Children Promises, repeating after officiant): We promise, to work together as a family. We will do our best, to listen and learn from you, because we love you. Optional prayer: "God, may Bride and Groom be an example of your loving care to their own children. Give them the patience, energy and confidence they'll need to stay great parents. Please strengthen and unite their family and their love for one another. Amen." **(Ask everyone to return to their spots)**

Present Gifts to Kids, buy on Amazon [here](#)

Another great way to honor the children in a newly blended family is by giving thoughtful gifts. It can be the same gift for each child, or something specific to each one. Get creative! **Verify that the couple brought the gifts to the wedding. Let them know when during their ceremony they'll present the gifts.**

"Bride and Groom wanted to take this opportunity to surprise (Kids' names) with necklaces/ or whatever because they love them so much and wanted to make sure they know how important they are."

Stone Blessing (This goes best just before exchange of vows and rings)

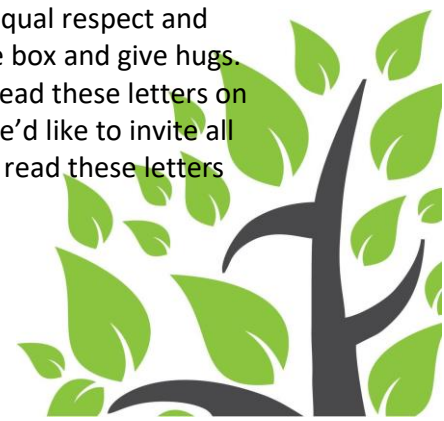
Before their ceremony, verify that stones are on the guest's chairs. Buy on Amazon [here](#).

"Hopefully you noticed the stone that was sitting on your chair. That is called a blessing stone. Before Bride and Groom exchange their vows and rings, we ask that you think of all the amazing possibilities that await them and send those positive thoughts and prayers into your individual stone and then place it into the vase/box on your way out. Bride and Groom will then have a wonderful keepsake from these next few minutes that includes the essence of each and every one of their friends and family who came to celebrate with them today."

Letter Box, buy on Amazon [here](#)

This is a great way to honor family by asking for advice and gives you something to look forward to. **Before their ceremony instruct the couple to meet behind the table that has the box on it, standing next to each other and facing their guests so their backs aren't to their photographer, and so guests can see what is happening. Verify that their family members have their letters and know that you'll invite them all up to deposit their letters and give hugs. Be patient and allow the scene to unfold at its own pace. Some family members like to have short conversations with the couple. After guests deposit their letters and give hugs, they take their seats as you invite the next round of guests up.**

"Bride and Groom have asked their families for advice, blessings and support, and are starting a time capsule of sorts. We'll invite some of their family members up now to deposit their letters into the time capsule and give hugs. Out of sincere respect and admiration, Bride and Groom would like their grandparents to come up first. **Mr. and Mrs. ???** will you please join us? Bride and Groom plan to read these letters on their tenth wedding anniversary. **(They can certainly choose whatever anniversaries they like. As they're finishing up, invite the next guests up)** With equal respect and admiration, now we'd like to invite your folks to join us to put their letters in the box and give hugs. **Mr. and Mrs.?, Mr. and Ms.?** Will you please join us? Bride and Groom plan to read these letters on their fifth anniversary. **(As they're finishing up, invite the next guests up)** Now we'd like to invite all your siblings to join us to put their letters in the box and exchange hugs. They'll read these letters





on their third anniversary. (Siblings return to their seats) Next, the letters written to each other/or vows are placed in the box, which will be read next year, on their first anniversary. During the next year Bride and Groom will grow together as a couple and on their first anniversary they will open this wooden box that has protected their wishes and thoughts and present their letters to each other. This is a really great tradition you have started. Our hopes and prayers are that the adventures of Bride and Groom will have included many of your aspirations by the time you read all of these letters. You've created a wonderful way to reflect on who you've met, the successes that have lifted you up and the challenges that you've been forced to learn from. Congratulations you two!" (Ask couple to return to their spot)

Wine Box (This is often combined with the letter box, buy on Amazon [here](#))

Before their ceremony instruct the couple to meet behind the table that has the box on it, standing next to each other and facing their guests so their backs aren't to their photographer, and so guests can see what is happening. Stand the bottle of wine up so guests can see it and tell the couple to set the bottle down, place their vows in the box, and then close it. They can return to their spot while you're still talking.

"Bride and Groom have written each other love letters and they'll be placed in this box along with a bottle of wine to be read and shared next year, on their first anniversary. There's symbolism to be mentioned. Making wine is a time-honored process, the tender care of the grape, a thoughtful mix of ingredients, the patient fermenting process and the unique flavors of each year, like relationships. They're setting a special bottle of wine aside to share and celebrate all that's taken place together, and also as an expression of hope and faith in the harvest of their lives. Over the next year Bride and Groom will grow together as a couple and on their first anniversary they will open this wooden box that has protected their wishes and thoughts and present their letters to each other and toast to everything they've accomplished together and to a wonderful future. They might then replace this one with a new bottle of wine to be shared on a successive anniversary. This is a really great tradition you've started. You've created a wonderful way to reflect on what you've done together as a team, the successes that have lifted you up and the challenges you've been forced to learn from. Congratulations you two!"

Tying the Knot (This goes best at the very end of the ceremony)

"Before I pronounce Groom and Bride husband and wife, they thought it would be fun to honor the ancient tradition and to actually tie the knot in front of you all. (Hand them two pieces of rope, or ask the best man or maid of honor to hand the rope to the couple) It's not easy to tie the ropes together on the spot, in front of you all, so when they cinch it tight, let's send them off with a round of applause! Groom and Bride, it gives me great pleasure to pronounce you husband and wife. Kiss the bride!"



Handfasting, buy on Amazon [here](#)

You'll be holding the book you're reading from and possibly a microphone, so have either the maid of honor or best man wrap the cloth around their wrists. Before their ceremony, verify that the maid of honor or best man has the rope and instruct her/him to take your spot, standing in between the couple, facing their guests. That way no one has their back to the guests or photographer. Instruct maid of honor or best man to return to their spot after wrapping the cloth.

"Bride and Groom have chosen to symbolize their commitment to one another by having their wrists bound to each other, which is known as handfasting. (Invite maid of honor or best man over to wrap their wrists) Handfasting evolved from the handshake, but shows an even stronger intent and is often what people think of when they hear the term, "Tying the knot." Handfasting originated in ancient Scotland and took the place of today's modern engagement. A couple hundred years ago, couples were literally bound together for one year and a day, and if they still loved each other after that time, they'd then have their community's blessing to get married. The modern day handfasting is a bit more practical. Wrapping and knotting cords around the couple's hands symbolizes total commitment and devotion to each other. Different colored rope is often used, white for purity, blue for fidelity, and red for passion. Pink symbolizes love, green represents fertility and purple is spiritual strength. By tying their hands together, Bride and Groom promise to ride out the peaks and valleys of marriage. They'll be there for each other when the tide is high or low, doing their best to live in their present relationship and accepting it as it is at that moment. They understand that life is a process that ebbs and flows and they promise to always be there to remind each other when they forget. Bride and Groom, as your hands are bound together, your lives and spirits are joined in a sacred union of trust." (They can unwrap the cloth before their vows)

Wedding Bells (This goes best at the very end of your ceremony, buy on Amazon [here](#))

Invite a parent up to present you with your bell of truce. Usually a large, nice bell. Also have small, inexpensive bells on the guest's chairs for them to ring when you're pronounced husband and wife. Before their ceremony, verify that bells are on each guest's chair and that the parent has the nice bell to come up and give to the couple during their ceremony.

"Bride and Groom thought it would be fun to honor an old Celtic tradition and will now be presented with their bell of truce. Mr?/Mrs? will you please come up? (Make sure the parent knows to give big hugs to the couple before sitting back down) Bride and Groom, for the rest of your lives when you aren't stopping to smell the roses or if a stressful situation is getting the best of you or your family, you agree right now that one of you is to go get the bell of truce and ring it. All of you as guests, please have your bells ready to ring when I pronounce them as husband and wife, and just to warm 'em up, let's all ring our bells now! Bride and Groom, when you ring your bell of truce, it's supposed to conjure up the memory of being pronounced husband and wife and of those closest to you, who came here to support and celebrate with you. Whatever is troubling you at that time should pale in comparison to tonight's celebration, and the wonderful memories will reset the situation and help you to feel grateful again. Everybody keep your bells handy to ring in just a few moments after they kiss and walk down the aisle as husband and wife!" If you choose to immediately pronounce them say, "Groom, kiss your beautiful bride! Ladies and gentleman please ring your bells and rise as I introduce for the first time ever, Mr. and Mrs. _____!"



Signing the License (This goes best at the very end of the ceremony)

Your guests will feel like they're part of your ceremony if they actually witness you sign your license. Invite anyone over the age of 18 to sign as witnesses, usually your best man and maid of honor.

Before their ceremony, verify that their license is on the table up front and fill it all out, leaving only the bride's, groom's and two witnesses' signatures blank. Introduce yourself to their witnesses.

Ask couple to stand together behind the table, facing their guests. In the spirit of ladies first, ask the bride to sign first, then the groom. Ask witnesses to stand on each side of the couple. Ask the maid-of-honor to sign as the first witness and tell best man he'll be last of the four signatures. Tell witnesses to promptly return to their spots in the bridal party after signing. I usually pronounce them while at the table, right after the best man signs and begins to walk back to his spot.

Sometimes a couple is more comfortable returning to the spot where they stood for the ceremony for the pronouncement.

"While marriage is a contract of trust between partners, it's also a legal contract. Normally the bride and groom are whisked away to sign their marriage license in private, with just a few close people to witness, but with you all being so important to Bride and Groom, they wanted to sign their marriage license right now, with you all acting as their witnesses. However, only two lucky people receive the special honor of signing the license along with Bride and Groom. Maid-of-honor (use her name) and best man (use his name) , will you please sign as witnesses? You are now, as your hearts have always known you to be, husband and wife. Groom, kiss your beautiful bride!"

Glass Stomp (This goes at the very end of the ceremony, buy on Amazon [here](#))

Before the ceremony, verify that there is a light bulb or glass wrapped in a cloth napkin on stage. Do not stomp a CFL bulb. The mercury inside is quite toxic. Occasionally couples want to keep the broken shards of glass, so verify and don't assume they're trash. "Before I pronounce Bride and Groom as husband and wife, they'd like to honor the Jewish tradition and break the glass.

Traditionally this marks the beginning of the wedding celebration, but breaking glass also symbolizes the transformation that's happening for them right now, and as a reminder of the fragility of life. The glass is broken to protect their marriage with the implied prayer, as this glass shatters so may your marriage never break." (Place light bulb napkin near Groom's foot) After Groom stomps on the glass we invite everyone to cheer and shout the Hebrew words, Mazel Tov, meaning good luck and congratulations. Stomp! Kiss the bride! Ladies and gentlemen please rise as I get to introduce for the first time ever, Mr. and Mrs. _____!

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