

The Order of a Marriage Ceremony

Weddings today reflect the wishes of the couple. They may be held in any venue at any time or on any day. Your choice might be a beautiful building, your own backyard, a boat, a forest or beach. Apart from some legal requirements you can structure the ceremony however you wish. You should [talk to your celebrant](#) about your ideas. Many people like to keep some of the traditional structure of a wedding ceremony so here is a run-down of a marriage ceremony.

General

Play some low volume music as the guests arrive. The pre-ceremony music will be what sets the scene for your big day. Having something playing as your guests arrive and take their seats will build excitement and provide background noise so your guests feel comfortable talking amongst themselves.

In a more formal setting, appointed friends, relatives or Ushers can greet guests as they arrive, and escort them to their seats - filling the front seats first with guests to prevent a look of large empty sections on your photos. Ushers should be mindful to leave a few seats open upfront, on both sides, for the immediate family. Traditionally, the bride's guests sit on the left (Bride stands to the left of Groom).

In an informal setting, guests will mingle first and then make their own way to the seating area. Perhaps you can have a sign that allows for general seating.



The Procession

The groom and his groomsmen are waiting at the end of the aisle with the celebrant, in front of the guests. The wedding music commences and the bridesmaids enter and take their places on the opposite side to the groomsmen. The Matron of Honour enters (she will be standing closest to the bride), then flowergirls and pageboys walk down the aisle and take their places among the bridal party.

The music changes and the guests are asked to stand to welcome the Bride. The Bride enters on the arm of her escort. The bride can walk down the aisle with whomever she wishes. She can be alone or with as many people as she likes. The Father of the Bride and Stepfather can simultaneously walk her down the aisle, an uncle, a son, a single parent or both mother and father. This is a choice for the Bride to make, she should not feel pressured to make the 'right' choice. Her choice will be the 'right' choice.



The Celebrant's Welcome

This is the part where the celebrant says hello, welcomes and then thanks the family and guests for coming to the marriage ceremony of the Bride & the Groom. The celebrant will also introduce themselves and state that they are duly authorised by law to solemnise marriages according to the law - that part is a legal requirement.

The Monitum (The Warning)

This is when the celebrant stresses to the couple the seriousness of marriage using these words:

"Before you are married in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses, I am to remind you of the solemn and binding nature of the relationship into which you are now about to enter."

The celebrant then goes on to explain what marriage means in Australia using these words:

"Marriage, according to the law in Australia, is the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life."

The Exchange of Vows

There are personal vows and then there are legal vows. These are generally said one after the other. Your personal vows can be anything that you want to say or promise to your partner at that moment; they can be as long or as short as you want them to be; they don't have to be the same as each other, they just need to be meaningful to each other.



The legal vows must say these words:

"I call upon the people here present to witness that I, (full name), take you, (full name), to be my wedded wife/husband."

The Ring Exchange

Exchanging rings is a traditional ritual in a marriage ceremony, however it is not a legal requirement, so you don't have to do this part - or you can exchange different gifts. You can include the ring exchange whilst your saying your legal vows or you can do this part straight after your vows each saying special words like:

"I give you this ring a sign of my love and commitment."



The Pronouncement of Marriage

Once you say your vows in the presence of the celebrant and your two witnesses, you are technically married, however traditionally, the celebrant makes a statement to make it official

"I now pronounce you husband and wife".

The Kiss

You are allowed to kiss anytime you want during the ceremony, but traditionally you are meant to wait until after the celebrant pronounces you "husband and wife" and then it's socially acceptable for you to go for it!



Signing of the Register

Once the marriage is official, then the bride, the groom, the two witnesses and the celebrant must sign 3 documents: The marriage register (which the celebrant keeps); the official marriage certificate (which is sent into the Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages to be registered); and the Interim Marriage Certificate (which is yours to keep).



Final Words

The celebrant says some final words and gets the guests ready to welcome and celebrate the new married couple. Also, they will sometimes give instructions or directions for the guests to follow for after the ceremony.

The Recessional

This is where the newly married couple grab each other's hands and race back down the aisle and into their brand new future, followed closely by the bridal party, then they all congregate and wait for all their guests to come and congratulate them!



Remember - this might be the traditional order of events in a marriage ceremony, but (apart from the legal wording and placement of that legal wording) you can add in other rituals, readings, poetry and stories, and you can involve family and friends into the mix which really helps to make your ceremony your very own.

