

Officiant Worksheet

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Your wedding day is one of the most significant events in your life. Though much more efforts go to planning the reception, the wedding ceremony is the most important part of your big day. The ceremony should provide you, your families and your guests with a meaningful, smooth and gentle experience and increase the joy that you already feel being with each other. Your first step in realizing your dreams of this special day is to decide whether you want a religious or a secular ceremony, how traditional or contemporary you want it to be and if you want the officiant to be a clergy or a licensed officer of the court.

Next, envision all aspects you want your ceremony to include such as customs from your background and heritage, traditions that you cherish, musical selections, special readings, vows, unity candle lighting, blessings bestowed by parents and guests, special prayers, a meditation, or a remembrance. If either one of you is a member of a congregation, the decision of who will officiate at your wedding is a given. Unless yours is a destination wedding, your clergy will, of course. Otherwise, you need to find the right person to marry you. Since this person will have a huge influence on the tone of the ceremony, you need to interview various officiants. Choose the one who offers you a unique ceremony that will capture the personal and spiritual emotions of your special day. An officiant whose delivery will utter words meaningful to both of you, your friends and your families, words that express the love and commitment you both feel, as you take this important first step.

How do we find a Secular Officiant?

A Justice of the Peace

You may find a Justice of the peace by checking the Internet and the phone book. You may also request the county clerk's office where you will get your marriage license to provide you with a list of local Justices of the Peace who are licensed and willing to perform wedding ceremonies. Your best bet however, is to get referrals.

City Hall

You will surely find a person to marry you. However, take into consideration that a ceremony at City Hall is a no frills event, done in a speedy fashion without the typical elements most brides and grooms want at their wedding ceremony.

How do we find a Religious Officiant?

If you or your family are members of a congregation, and you plan to get married in the house of worship you or your family belong to, your choice is easy. The Clergy of your house of worship will be your Officiant

Otherwise; you'll need to find an Officiant of the religion or denomination that best fits with your beliefs. To accomplish this you need to contact the appropriate houses of worship, attend some worship services to get a sense of different styles practiced by the clergy, and if you like them and their style, meet with them to make sure that they are available on your chosen date and are amenable to the type of wedding ceremony you envision. Just as you would other wedding vendors, interview at least three possible officiants and choose the one that you are the most comfortable with.

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Other Officiant Options

Interfaith weddings

If you and your future spouse are affiliated with different religions, you need to decide whether to have an interfaith wedding conducted by one officiant from each religion, or be married by a Justice of the Peace, or other civil leader. If you chose the latter, expect to recite your vows to incorporate your personal beliefs at another time. Having an Interfaith ceremony is not always easy as clergy of some religions or denominations will not perform a wedding ceremony with a clergy of a different faith. However, this is not impossible, as interfaith weddings are becoming increasingly more common.

One of you is an atheist or agnostic, the other religious

If one of you isn't religious and the other is a devout believer, you need to compromise on what you want to dominate at your marriage ceremony. Be aware that some clergy may insist that either the partner who is not religious converts, or they will not perform the ceremony. In this case you may opt to have a civil ceremony,

Religious, but want to get married in a non-religious setting

If you are religious but want your wedding ceremony to be performed in a secular site such as a park, beach etc., ask your religious leader for recommendations. Some clergy will perform wedding ceremony in locations other than their house of worship. Some will not, but may have good suggestions.

Do you need a Bi-lingual ceremony?

If either of you has friends and family who speak a foreign language, while the other has friends and family who speak only English, look for an officiant who is fluent in both languages and can perform a bi-lingual wedding ceremony. You may consider an officiant who is familiar with the cultures and include customs that will make your ceremony unique and very special.

Non-denominational Officiant

A Nondenominational Officiant should be versed in the various religious traditions as well as in spirituality and should be able to craft a spiritual, religious, traditional, nontraditional or a blend into your wedding ceremony services. Since they are not bound by a specific religion or core traditions, most non-denominational Officiants can offer you a ceremony that is custom tailored to your needs.

About Marriage Counseling

Since marriage is about how you want your future to unfold, use your engagement period to discuss your future together. Examine your individual and combined values and goals and your feelings about home, family, finances, education, profession and work, religion(s) and faith, and all that is important to both of you individually or as a couple. Though you can cover everything by yourselves, some states, as well as various religion denominations, demand marriage counseling, as a pre-requisite to officiating a marriage ceremony. The counseling sessions are geared to teach the bride and groom how to work together and communicate effectively, to resolve problems, conflicts, and disagreements. Most churches and synagogues offer pre-marital counseling. Secular couples can seek marriage counselors as most offer pre-marital counseling sessions.

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Finding the Right Officiant

Based on recommendations, meeting in bridal shows, and searching the Internet and the Yellow Pages we contacted various Officiants.

We screened those we met or were referred to and chose those that greeted us cordially, provided the information we requested in a timely manner and the people we spoke with were helpful but not too eager. They did not pressure us to book on the spot, or to upgrade to a more expensive level of service. They gave us the opportunity to go home, discuss it, think it over and get back to them. However, they did follow up.

We also judged them by their web sites. We liked:

- ✓ The look and feel,
- ✓ The testimonials we saw on the site,
- ✓ That the information we were looking for was right there,
- ✓ That they were helpful and not over selling,
- ✓ That they included clearly posted name, address, phone and Email contact.

We plan to interview the following Officiants:

Officiant: _____ Meeting location name or description: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____ Web Site: _____

Appointment Date: _____ Time: _____ Office or Room #: _____

Officiant: _____ Meeting location name or description: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____ Web Site: _____

Appointment Date: _____ Time: _____ Office or Room #: _____

Officiant: _____ Meeting location name or description: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____ Web Site: _____

Appointment Date: _____ Time: _____ Office or Room #: _____

Officiant from a house of worship - Worksheet

Questions for the Officiant of a denominational Religious Site

Questions	Officiant at Your own Congregation	Officiant Serving your denomination	Officiant Serving all denomination
Are you available on the date and time we plan to marry?			
Will you perform our wedding ceremony in a location other than your House of Worship?			
Do you honor all spiritual beliefs or lack thereof?			
Will you perform our wedding ceremony if we are of different faiths?			
Will a parent who is of a different religion or denomination be allowed to give away the bride?			
Will you co-perform our wedding ceremony with clergy of another religion or denomination?			
Will you perform our wedding ceremony if one of us is not religious?			
Will you perform our wedding ceremony if one of us is divorced?			
Will you marry us even if we are not current members of your congregation?			
Will you help us incorporate all of our ideas into the ceremony?			
How can we include our children in the ceremony to make it a meaningful blending family wedding?			
Do you require or offer pre-marital consultation? What do you charge?			
How can we include our families in the ceremony?			
Are there any restrictions or guidelines regarding the ceremony that we must adhere to?			
May we write and recite our own vows?			
May we include secular readings in our ceremony?			
May we include secular music in our ceremony?			
How much are we allowed to customize the ceremony?			
Are there any attire requirements?			
do you have a backup in case of an emergency?			

General Questions for Officiants - Worksheet

Questions for any Officiant

Questions	Officiant 1	Officiant 2	Officiant 3
Are you available on the date and time we plan to marry?			
Can you provide us with references we may contact?			
How long have you been in business			
On the average, how many wedding ceremonies do you officiate each month			
Are you a professional wedding ceremony officiant, or is officiating wedding ceremonies your sideline business?			
Will you provide us with a detailed written contract?			
Will you inform us about the marriage license requirements and procedures, advise us on the process of obtaining our marriage license and send them to the authorities after the wedding?			
Will you perform our wedding ceremony in a location of our choice?			
Do you honor all spiritual beliefs or lack thereof?			
Will you perform our wedding ceremony if we are of different faiths?			
Do you view your primary role at our wedding as the center, or merely that of the facilitator of our ceremony?			
Are you set in your ways, or willing to try unconventional things should we add them to our ceremony?			
Will you help us incorporate all of our ideas into the ceremony, sharing your experience as to what has worked and has not worked in the past, but leave the final decision up to us?			
How can we include our children in the ceremony to make it a meaningful blending family wedding?			
Do you require or offer pre-marital consultation?			
How can we include our families in the ceremony?			

General Questions for Officiants - Worksheet

Questions for any Officiant

Questions	Officiant 1	Officiant 2	Officiant 3
Are there any restrictions or guidelines regarding the ceremony that we must adhere to?			
May we write and recite our own vows?			
May we include favorite readings in our ceremony?			
May we include favorite music in our ceremony?			
How much are we allowed to customize the ceremony?			
How many witnesses do we need?			
Do you have a backup in case of an emergency?			
Do you offer various levels of service?			
Do you offer a choice of written ceremony options for us to include in our ceremony?			
Will you provide us with a written fee schedule?			
What fees other than the original fee can we anticipate?			
How can we include our children in the ceremony to make it a meaningful blending family wedding?			
Do you require or offer pre-marital consultation?			
How can we include our families in the ceremony?			
Are there any restrictions or guidelines regarding the ceremony that we must adhere to?			
May we write and recite our own vows?			
May we include favorite readings in our ceremony?			
May we include favorite music in our ceremony?			
How much are we allowed to customize the ceremony?			
How many witnesses do we need?			
Do you have a backup in case of an emergency?			
Do you offer various levels of service?			
Do you offer a choice of written ceremony options for us to include in our ceremony?			
Will you provide us with a written fee schedule?			
What fees other than the original fee can we anticipate?			
OTHER			

Bride's Name: _____ Groom's Name: _____ Wedding Date: _____

Impressions Following the Interviews with the Officiant

On a scale of 1 – 5 (1 being the best 5 the least) they rated:

Interview results	Officiant 1	Officiant 2	Officiant 3
Name			
Our first impression.			
They merit good references, so we checked out their reputation by contacting others.			
They are thorough.			
They explained the booking procedure clearly.			
They explained the ceremony, ceremony-writing process and what, how and where we can add to it.			
They explained the number and reasons of meetings we need to have before the big day.			
They are proficient writers and dynamic speakers and their speaking voice pleasing to the ear and fluent.			
Their level of energy and enthusiasm is what we want at our ceremony.			
They are interested in us and in our story and seem passionate about performing our wedding.			
They consider our wedding ceremony as a celebration not merely a prescribed ritual.			
We like their style and believe that they will conduct a ceremony to remember happily and cherish for a lifetime.			
They are very creative.			
They were courteous.			
They were helpful and accommodating.			
They offered clarification when we asked about anything we were unsure of.			
We fully understand their explanations as to how it all works.			
They were patient while we took notes.			
We agree with the ceremony procedure they offer.			
We feel comfortable working with them.			
We conclude that everything will flow smoothly on your wedding day?			
We are satisfied.			

Based on our findings, we are ready to choose.

First choice

Second choice

Third choice
