

Draft marriage ceremony

This draft is written with the idea that the couple will change it, personalise it, add to it and cut it down, with whatever consultation they wish. You are welcome to borrow from this draft, though I would prefer that any written version include appropriate acknowledgement.

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Celebrant:

We are here as the family and friends of *Names of the Couple* to celebrate their marriage.

This is a serious occasion. Marriage is not to be entered into lightly, but only after serious thought. It requires sincerity, honesty and mutual respect.

But although this is a solemn occasion, it is also an occasion of joy, because marriage is an expression of love, optimism, and life.

A marriage is not the beginning of a relationship. *Names of the couple* have been important in each other's lives for some time.

It may be good to tell something of the story of the couple's meeting, and of their courtship, or their life together.

But although they have been together for x years, this ceremony does mark an important point for them, and for their hope and ours that their relationship will go on in growth over the coming years – that it will endure and become even stronger over time.

Marriage is not an end to problems. No relationship is without troubles. But it is a commitment to face problems, to attempt to solve problems, and to rise above them. It is a commitment to try to do no wrongs to each other, but also a commitment to try to forgive the wrongs that are done.

Names of the couple believe that marriage is ...

... a partnership in which companionship, help, support, encouragement, love and comfort should be given and received.

They believe that marriage is the voluntary union of two people who trust one another, who love one another, and who want to share their joys and their sorrows and their plans, their home and their future.

They believe that marriage is a partnership, but it is not a dissolving of individualities. Marriage recognises an interdependence of two people but also their independence, their right to their separate friends and opinions and ambitions.

They believe that marriage is the voluntary, full and exclusive commitment of a two people, entered into with the hope and the firm intention that it will last for life.

Of course this may not only be cut or changed, but also personalised in any way you choose. Perhaps you would like some reflection on the importance of love.

This is an appropriate part of the service for readings, poetry, music or song, or some reflection. These may reflect and explain to your friends and families something of your views about love and marriage.

First Name, do you of your own free choice wish to take *Second Name* to be your wife/husband/partner in marriage?

First Name:

I do.

Celebrant:

Second Name, do you of your own free choice wish to take *First Name* to be your wife/husband/partner in marriage?

Second Name:

I do.

Celebrant:

You have all gathered here as the friends and family of *Names of the couple* to witness this exchange of vows.

If you commit yourselves to do all in your power to support this marriage now and in the years ahead, then would you please now respond by saying, "We do"?

The gathering:

We do.

And here too is a good place for any children from previous relationships to indicate their support for this new marriage, and for an exchange of public declarations of the kind of relationship sought between step-parent and step-child.

Feel free, of course, to write your own vows. There is no reason why the vows of the man and the woman should be identical.

Usually the vows will be considerably shorter than the following. Only the first three lines are essential (and they can be changed a little, too, so long as they are to similar effect).

Celebrant:

Names of the couple, take each others hands and First Name, say after me:

First Name, following celebrant:

*I, Full First Name,
take you, Full Second Name,
to be my legal wife/husband/partner in marriage.*

*I call upon our families and friends gathered here
to witness that I love you.*

I am committed to our marriage.

*I promise to be your lover, companion and friend,
Your ally in conflict,
Your student and teacher,
Your comrade in adventure,
Your consolation in disappointment,
Your accomplice in mischief,
Your strength in your need.*

*I seek to share with you
a relationship of love
and humour and tenderness.*

*I will always try to be open and honest with you.
I will share my life
and my worldly possessions
and my thoughts and feelings with you*

I will help you fulfil your needs.
I will allow you to be yourself.
I will rejoice in your growth.

I will stand by you through our futures together,
respecting you,
supporting you,
and enjoying you.

Celebrant:

Second Name, say after me

Second Name, following celebrant:

I, *Full Second Name*,
take you, *Full First Name*,
to be my legal husband/wife/partner in marriage.

I call upon our families and friends gathered here
to witness that I love you.

I am committed to our marriage.

I promise to be your lover, companion and friend,
In good times and bad—
Your ally in conflict,
Your student and teacher,
Your comrade in adventure,
Your consolation in disappointment,
Your accomplice in mischief,
Your strength in your need.

I seek to share with you
a relationship of love
and humour and tenderness.

I will always try to be open and honest with you.
I will share my life
and my worldly possessions
and my thoughts and feelings with you.

I will help you fulfil your needs.

I will allow you to be yourself.
I will rejoice in your growth.

I will stand by you through our futures together,
respecting you,
supporting you,
and enjoying you.

Celebrant:

A ring—a circle—is taken as a symbol of endlessness, and so of your hope that your marriage will last forever.

First Name, say after me

First Name, following celebrant:

I give you this ring
as a symbol of my love
and as a sign of my vows.

Celebrant (quietly):

Now place the ring on *Second Name's* finger.

Second Name, say after me:

Second Name, following celebrant:

I give you this ring
as a symbol of my love
and as a sign of my vows.

Celebrant (quietly):

Now place the ring on *First Name's* finger.

It is increasingly the practice to sign the documents before (rather than after) pronouncing the marriage complete. This is usually done at a table slightly to the side in front of the gathering.

Celebrant:

Now, before we pronounce the couple married, the documents will be signed.

You will wish to think about some music being played during the signing of the documents.

There are two copies of the marriage document to be signed—by couple, two witnesses and the celebrant.

After the signing the couple and their supporters gather together again in front, facing the gathering.

There are a number of rituals from different cultures, which might be incorporated here. The celebrant would announce what is going to happen, and explain its symbolic meaning.

- *The bride and groom lighting a candle together (not for outside weddings in Wellington).*
- *Tying wrists of the couple together with a cord.*
- *Breaking a glass.*
- *The couple drinking a toast to each other.*

Celebrant:

First Name and Second Name, you have freely expressed your wish to be united in marriage. You have made vows to one another before this gathering. Rings have been exchanged. The documents have been signed.

May your love deepen and grow through all the tests and joys that life has to offer you.

I now pronounce you fully and legally married/husband and wife.

....

It is customary ... if necessary ... for the celebrant to give the couple permission to kiss.

In more formal weddings the married couple depart together followed by their supporters, accompanied by appropriate music.

In less formal situations often the celebrant will simply say:

There will now be a chance for you to congratulate the couple.

And everyone mingles.

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