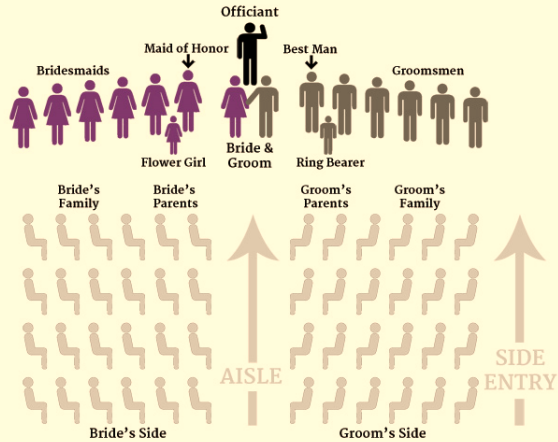


Wedding Ceremony Rehearsal Guide



ENTRANCE ORDER (PROCESSIONAL)

1. Grandparents of the Groom
2. Grandparents of the Bride
3. Officiant, Groom, Best Man, and Groomsmen
(from side entry if desired)
4. Parents of the Groom
5. Mother of the Bride
6. Bridesmaids
7. Maid of Honor
8. Flower Girl and Ring Bearer
9. Bride / Father of the Bride

EXIT ORDER (RECESSIONAL)

1. Bride and Groom
2. Maid of Honor and Best Man
3. Bridesmaids and Groomsmen
(in pairs when exiting)
4. Flower Girl and Ring Bearer
5. Parents of the Bride
6. Parents of the Groom
7. Grandparents of the Bride
8. Grandparents of the Groom
9. Officiant
10. Wedding Guests

Wedding Rehearsal Guide

Why do you need a Wedding Rehearsal?

Even if you want a simple casual style ceremony, and yet, you are going to have more than your Maid of Honour and Best Man in your bridal party, it is important to at least have a wedding rehearsal so that everyone will know where and when to walk and stand. A rehearsal profoundly reduces stress during the wedding. Having someone to assist in coordinating the actual ceremony dramatically reduces stress so that you can relax, enjoy and focus on the reason why you are there; to marry the love of your life!

I have officiated many weddings over the years and only a few where there was no wedding planner and no rehearsal; chaotic confusion! Officiants typically arrive half an hour early before a ceremony the day of a wedding, but

cannot contend with caterers arriving late, DJ' still setting up, guests already enjoying the bar, bride still getting dressed and the bridal party does not know where or when to line up and how to stand.

Officiants typically arrive early for a wedding and we do our best to assist but we cannot direct people when we are assuming our own position at the front of the ceremony.

A wedding planner is the best way to ensure details are being handled. If this is not financially feasible, you can have a friend or family member assist.

My adage is, that twenty-five years from now, I'd like you to look back on the ceremony, not with regret but with fond memories. Your wedding day is a once in a lifetime moment.

Organizing a wedding ceremony rehearsal, helps the ceremony run smoothly. There are many options to a procession, the following tips are a general non-denominational wedding ceremony. (Please consult with your Officiant for assistance if you want a simple justice of the peace style or specific cultural, religious or inter-faith ceremony, there are many options.

Who needs to attend rehearsal?

Only those participating in the actual wedding ceremony. This will save time, distractions and confusion. These typically include:

- Ushers, at least two and preferably four. Not just a classy touch to act as greeters, but to also assist women in high heels, the elderly etc., and ushers can deal with all sorts of last minute problems.
- Bridal party
- Groomsmen
- Bride and Groom Parents

- Ceremony guest speakers
- (Most DJ's, Musicians and Photographers are experienced and adapt at going with the flow and can easily follow the ceremony, so typically, do not need to be at rehearsal)

Ushers: as guests arrive, direct them to their seats (at least five minutes) before the ceremony. Refrain from serving alcohol or having the bar open to guests before the ceremony.

~ It is a difficult challenge to rally rehearsal attendees and guests to ceremony seating once they begun festive socializing. It is best to save alcoholic drinks and socializing for after the ceremony. You can have water available, especially if it is a sweltering day.

~ Prior to rehearsal, advise your wedding ceremony participants party to come prepared to be calm, quiet and do what they are directed to do. Again, save the bar and festive socializing until after rehearsal. For a rehearsal coordinator, dealing with wedding party attendees that are well into a festive mood, is like wrangling a group of excited monkeys. While fun for rehearsal attendees, I have heard of Officiants charging extra for the bother.

~ At rehearsal, you will not need to practice reading through the entire ceremony, this is the job of the Officiant. You do need to practice walking in and walking out, and make sure everyone knows where to walk and stand.

~ At the beginning of the ceremony, once guests have been seated, the ushers seat the groom's parents and then the bride's parents. The officiant enters first followed by the groomsmen then bridal party. Ushers should be acting as a lookout, to "cue" the Officiant that the guests have been seated, then the Groomsmen and Bridal party when to start walking. This is normally the responsibility of a wedding coordinator/planner, if you have one. Many couples have the ushers play this role, or a friend or family member. The key

is to have a confusion free comfortable flow. (The best person for the job is of course, someone who is a natural organizer and assertive enough to keep the wedding party's attention and on track.)

Rehearsal Procedure:

1. **It is best to start in the middle of the ceremony area.** Start by gathering everyone into place, where they will be standing during the ceremony. You first clarify roles then practice walking in and out, so that each person knows where and how to stand. Refer to the diagram for the standard positions for your Officiant, parents, and attendants. Have your wedding party evenly spaced and stand at a slight angle facing your wedding guests. Bridesmaids should hold their bouquets in front of them with both hands, and groomsmen should decide on clasping their hands in the front or the back of their body.

2. **Briefly speak through the ceremony headings.** Use your ceremony draft to read through the headings aloud, so that everyone knows the gist of the ceremony. You don't need to read through the entire ceremony word-for-word or exchange vows. You can practice a guest speaker reading and rings presentation.

3. **An usher also can be responsible for:** Ensuring that a signing table is set up aside, and take care of any other items needed during the ceremony such as; candles etc.

4. **Practice walking out (the recessional).** Since everyone is already in place, practice the recessional - walking away part, as if the ceremony has just ended. Start with the presentation of the couple then exit in the proper order: The Bride takes her bouquet from the Maid of Honor and exits with the Groom. Typically, the wedding party will all exit in pairs; bride with groom, followed by Best Man with Maid of Honour, etc., then Officiant. Grandparents and parents follow.

It's important to make sure that each couple that exits the ceremony leaves enough room between themselves and the

couple in front of them (count to four, or when the couple in front of them is halfway back up the aisle, approximately 20 feet.

Once everyone has successfully exited the ceremony area, your wedding party can go directly to where you will want your first photos taken. (Guests can exit to mingle, toilet and get a beverage etc.)

5. Practice the beginning processional last. Now that everyone knows where to stand during the ceremony, practice the entrance. Once all the guests are seated, line everyone up in the order they will enter:

First, the ushers escort grandparents to their front row seats, then parents of the Groom, then Mother of the Bride.

Next the Officiant, then Groomsmen followed by Flower Girl, Bridesmaids and Maid of Honor. The Bride and her escort (typically the Father of the Bride) pause before entering. Normally there is a separate piece of music for the Bride's entrance and the officiant will usually state to the guests; "Please stand and turn to greet the Bride".

6. Bride to Groom transition. As the Bride and her escort approach the front of the ceremony, in front of the Officiant and the Groom, the escort typically gives the Bride a kiss and a hug. The escort can then shake the Groom's hand then goes to their seat. The Groom reaches forward and takes the Brides hand as she assumes her position then hands her bouquet to the Maid of Honor. The Bride and Groom now stand and facing each another in front of the Officiant and can hold hands. At this point, the Maid of Honor can quietly step forward and adjust the Bride's train, if necessary.

7. Do at least one more walk through. Now that everyone is in place, practice walking back out and back in one more time to make sure everyone knows what to do!

~ At the end of rehearsal and while everyone is still gathered, designate someone responsible to care for the rings, someone on hand after the ceremony to meet with the Officiant to receive and care for the legal certificate. Delegate and assign any other duties.

~ All should arrive early the day of the wedding at the ceremony location at least half an hour prior to ceremony. The Officiant will need time to set up paperwork on the signing table and touch base with ceremony participants before guests are seated.

~ Designate a secluded area, away from arriving guests for the Bridal Party but also, a secluded area for the Groom and groomsmen to meet - at least twenty minutes before the ceremony. Save the socializing for after the ceremony and ensure that the ceremony starts right on time.

~ *The ceremony must start on time, you cannot leave guests uncomfortably waiting, and often an Officiant is on a tight time schedule.

Congratulations and I wish you all the best!

Marriage & Life Milestone Officiate



Rev Jan Porter
*Ceremonies officiated for
your unique expression.*
*Simply spiritual, traditional, interfaith
or non-denominational, license Ordained.
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