



*Rehearsal  
of your  
Wedding Ceremony*

Courtesy of:

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Marriage Commissioner

## **Marriage Ceremony Rehearsal Guide**

This guide will help you do your own rehearsal prior to the ceremony.

The pictorial on the next page shows the typical positions of the marriage commissioner, wedding party, whose family will sit where and the typical order of the processional and recessional.

### **What you will need for the rehearsal:**

All of the key people should be present when possible and on time. Make sure that if you are having your rehearsal at the same location as your ceremony, that another wedding won't be going on or about to start when you plan to have your rehearsal.

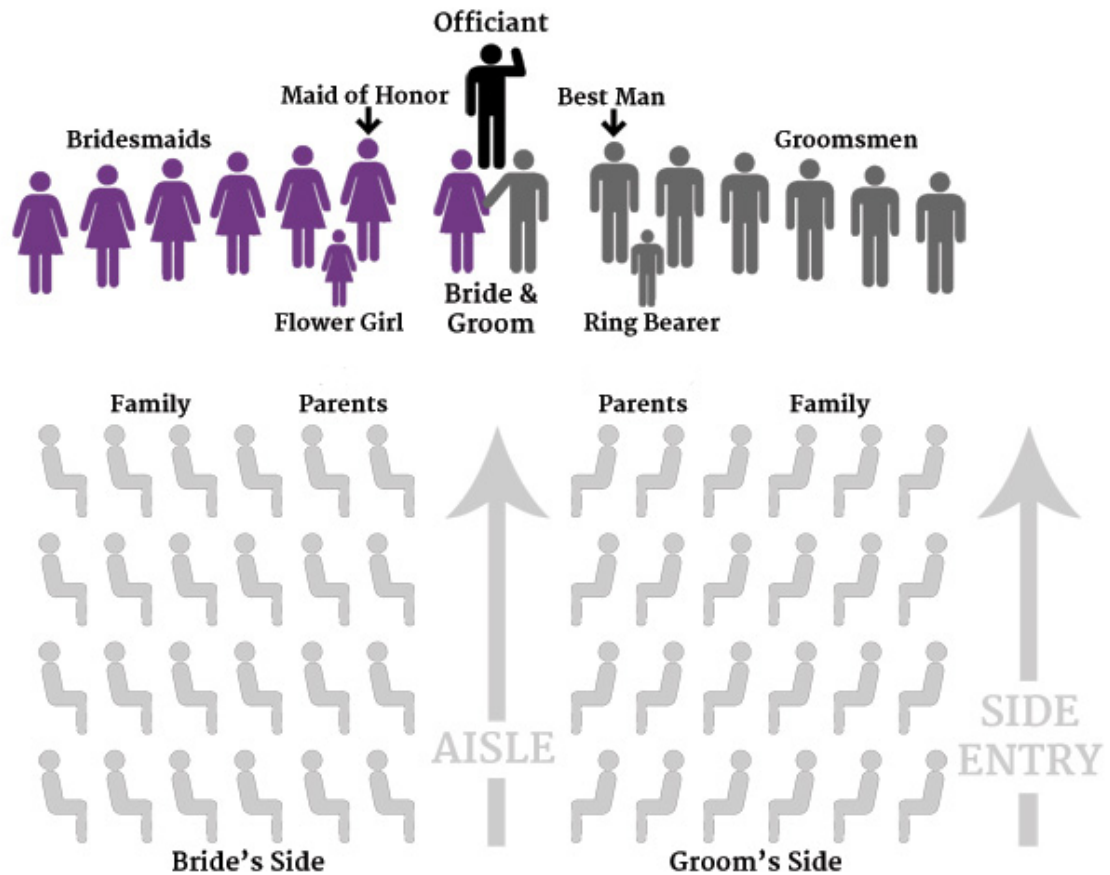
Have the music you have chosen for the ceremony and a small speaker to practice with, even if you will have live music on the day, to ensure that everyone will get from point A to point B in the time allowed. This way, all will be somewhat familiar with the music that will be playing at the ceremony itself. The advantage of live music is that the musician can keep on playing longer if necessary.

If you will have flower girls or ring bearers, will they be seated once the ceremony starts or will they stand with the wedding party? It may be a bit of both depending on their ages.

If pets are involved, will they be skittish around a large group of people? Who will be the designated handler?

Who will have the rings? Often it will be the Best Man. If you will have a ring bearer (human or animal), they should not have the rings until they are about to walk down the aisle to prevent them from getting lost. Another option is for the ring bearer to have mock rings and the best man will keep the real ones. (Yes, rings have gotten lost!)

## 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

# Ceremony Rehearsal Checklist

## Step one: Introductions

Introduce everybody before getting started with the rehearsal, Wedding Party, Parents, immediate family including Grandparents and siblings.

## Step two: Standing positions of the Wedding Party

Before we can practice the processional, it is important that everyone knows where to stand during the ceremony.

Find the positions for the Bride, Groom and the Wedding Party as they will be during the actual ceremony. Do not include flower girls, ring bearers or anyone else at this time. They will be included when we practice the Processional. If the officiant is not present, assign someone to stand in that position.

The Bride and Groom should stand facing each other or the officiant, whichever they prefer. If facing each other, allow about 2 feet between the two of you and about 1.5 feet if facing the officiant.

The wedding party should fan out in a slight V shape if space permits. The Best Man and Maid of Honor should stand about 3 feet from the Bride and Groom and then about 1.5 feet for each of the additional members of the Wedding Party. All members of the Wedding Party will turn to about a 45 degree angle facing slightly towards the Bride and Groom.

The Best Man, Groomsmen, or women as the case may be should stand with hands loosely clasped in front of them, right over left or left over right. It makes for better looking pictures if they are all the same.

The Maid of Honor and Bridesmaids should stand with their bouquets, if they will be carrying them, at about hip height and held with both hands. They should not be too high or pointed downwards. If there are men on the Bride's side, they will stand similarly to the Groom's party.

**This is how it will look on the wedding day. Make note of your positions.**

### **Step Three: The Recessional**

Why are we doing the recessional now? You will actually practice this a few times, plus it gets you back to where you will need to be to start the processional.

The Bride and Groom will leave first, but to ensure the photographer can get their shots, allow them to reach the top of the aisle or at least 20 feet away before the Best Man and Maid of Honor leave. From that point, allow about half that distance for the rest of the Wedding Party.

### **Step Four: Planning The Processional**

You will need to determine a few key points before we start this step and you probably already have your answers for each of these items.

Will the Groom and his party be coming down the aisle or from the side?

Perhaps only the Groom will enter and the wedding party will come down the aisle in pairs.

Will the officiant be leading the Groom's party or waiting at the front. If waiting at the front, will the Groom's party be there as well?

During the ceremony, will the flower girls and ring bearers be standing at the front or will they be seated? Instruct them as to who to look for or where they will be seated.

Using the diagram a few pages back, line up everyone in the order they will enter at the locations they will start from.

By now, you should hopefully have a clear idea of the order and timing for everyone that is entering.

## **Step Five: Practice the Processional**

Cue the music chosen for each processional and everyone will make their way in turn to where they will be standing or sitting as the case may be. In many cases, the Grandparents, Parents, and the Groom's party will enter during the Prelude music. Other times, there could be one piece music for the Grandparents and Parents, another for the Groom's party, one for the Bridal party and another one again for the Bride and her escort.

### **➤ This is the most important part of the rehearsal!**

1. Once the bridal party is situated at the front, the Bride's Processional song is played. When the Bride hears her song she counts to ten and then enters.
2. The bride walks on her Father's left, down the aisle to just beyond the first row of guest chairs and stops.
3. The Bride gives her father a hug and kiss to thank him for bringing her this far.
4. The Groom steps up and gives the Bride's Father a handshake to thank him. The father sits down.
5. The Groom steps beside the Bride on her right side and holds up his left hand, palm facing downwards.
6. The Bride places her right hand on top of his left.
7. They walk up to the Officiant, turn and face each other.
8. The Maid of Honor arranges the Bride's dress and Bride keeps her flowers for the time being.

We are now at the point that the ceremony will begin. The last page shows a typical timeline of the ceremony.

## **Step Six: Let's practice the recessional again**

Refer to the diagram earlier in this guide for the typical order or adjust to suit.

1. The Bride and Groom proceed down the aisle.
2. The Best Man and Maid of Honor are next
3. The rest of the Wedding Party follows
4. Then Parents, Grandparents, family and so on.

## **Step Seven: Do the full processions one more time with the music**

## **Step Eight: A few final details**

- Inform the ushers of their duties. Will they have programs or bubbles to hand out? Will the seating plan be Bride's side and Groom's side or pick a seat, not a side? If the centre aisle is roped off to keep the carpet or aisle flowers pristine, the ushers will instruct the guests to enter the rows from the sides.
- If you will have someone doing readings or performing a musical interlude, this is the time to let them know where they will need to be.
- If you will have microphones for the ceremony, find out how many there will be, who is wearing them and if there is one on a stand for readings.
- Will flowers be placed on chairs in honor of those that will be with us in spirit?
- Assign someone to be responsible for delivering the Marriage Licence to the Marriage Commissioner prior to the ceremony.

- If you will be including a Unity Ceremony, be sure that all of the materials needed are at the ceremony site. See the guide for Unity Ceremonies for complete details.
- If there is an amount due for the Marriage Commissioner fee, arrange to have that in the envelope with the Marriage Licence. Asking for payment in the midst of congratulatory hugs and kisses is awkward for all concerned.
- Identify any announcements that are to be made before the end of the ceremony such as group photos, a champagne toast or the location of the reception and if there will be a receiving line.
- Before heading off to rehearsal dinner, instruct everybody on the times that they are expected to be at the ceremony site the next day. The Groom's party should arrive no later than 15 minutes before the ceremony and the Bride's party should arrive no later than 5 minutes before the ceremony.
- If you are running late, as can happen, keep in mind that the Marriage Commissioner may have another ceremony after yours. Text me at 403-609-0876 if the timeline is going askew so that I can make the next couple aware well in advance. Be sure that someone in the limo has a cellphone and that the ringer is on! True story, a limo driver drove the bridal party to Canmore while the guests waited at the ceremony site in Banff!
- Are you providing a special pen for the signing? Test it so that it is ready to sign with and check that it has BLACK ink.
- Finally, a wedding has it's own ways of going sideways on you. Weather, unexpected interruptions during the ceremony and a host of other little things can come up, no matter how well you rehearsed every detail. Don't sweat it, they are almost always little things.

At the end of the ceremony, you will be married and your family and friends will be very excited for you.

**There, you have successfully completed your rehearsal.**



## Ceremony Timeline

You may have fewer or additional components to your ceremony, but here are the basics:

- ❖ The Officiant welcomes the guests.
- ❖ The Officiant announces for guests to be seated, as the ceremony is about to begin.
- ❖ The Officiant announces general instructions to the guests; turn phones off, remain in seats if taking photos or perhaps you are having an unplugged wedding. Announce if there will be a group photo or champagne toast after the ceremony. Some may be repeated or left to the end of the ceremony
- ❖ Processionals begin
- ❖ Presentation of the Bride to be married to the Groom
- ❖ The Introduction – Welcome guests on behalf of couple
- ❖ A reading may be read here
- ❖ Your Love Story or The Charge to the Couple on the meaning and significance of Marriage
- ❖ Legal Declarations
- ❖ Hand bouquet to Maid of Honor
- ❖ Exchange of Vows
- ❖ Ring Exchange
- ❖ Declaration of marriage
- ❖ Maid of Honor returns bouquet to the Bride

- ❖ Signing of the Registration of Marriage
- ❖ Perform Unity Ceremony if desired
- ❖ A final reading can be read here
- ❖ The Officiant's Closing – Determine any announcements to be made by the Officiant such as receiving line, family photos, reception information, etc.
- ❖ Presentation of the Newlyweds!
- ❖ The Recessional

Post-Ceremony events such as a receiving line, group photo or champagne toast will now take place.

**End Ceremony and Happily Ever After!**