

WHAT IS A REHEARSAL?

A rehearsal is a means to help make the wedding ceremony run more smoothly and organized. The entire bridal/wedding party gets together and goes through the physical motions of the ceremony so each person understands the choreography. The rehearsal dinner usually follows. Socially, it's a way to acquaint folks with each other, especially when families and close friends are meeting for the first time.

Do we need one?

If you have a full wedding party: yes.

If you have a small wedding party with best men/women, parents, and children who have never participated in a wedding: yes.

If you have a very formal wedding: yes.

If the wedding party members have largely already participated in weddings: probably not. They will be okay with simple instructions.

If you do not have a wedding party or only a Best Man/Woman: probably not.

Who conducts the rehearsal?

Years ago, the family of the couple would get together, possibly with their local minister, to have a rehearsal at home. If the ceremony took place in the church, most often the 'church ladies' would direct the rehearsal.

Today, celebrants either issue information about the rehearsal or conduct it themselves. Most often, since celebrants request extra fees for them, the couple, coordinator, or venue help with rehearsal. Many venues and coordinators simply gather the wedding party for a walk-thru one hour before the ceremony starts.

If you plan to do a walk-thru one hour prior to the ceremony, I am happy to help! However, I no longer conduct rehearsals on separate days.

Preparation

1. Pick your musical selections and give them to your DJ or musician at least seven days in advance. Formal weddings have at least three in addition to the prelude music: for the parents/close family and friends; wedding party; bride.
2. Make a detailed list for the processional order with the names and titles of each person. Give that list to everyone involved in that part of the ceremony at least seven days in advance.
3. If you do not have a coordinator, ask a friend or family member (one person only) to be a "point

person.” Make a detailed list that is not too long for this person. This person can help the officiant and musician make sure that all the ingredients are set for the ceremony. For example, does the officiant have the license? Is the table with the unity rite stuff ready? This person can also let the officiant and musician know when the ceremony will commence. It may or may not be a good idea for the groom or best man/woman to handle this job. If the point person is not the coordinator, be sure to give him or her a special gift.

HOW TO CONDUCT THE REHEARSAL

You will need the entire wedding party, including parents and grandparents if they will be in the processional.

1. Line everyone up where they will actually stand or sit. Some couples prefer if the entire wedding party stands. Others allocate seats for each member. Have everyone stand/sit in the same places they will take during the ceremony. Normally, the most important member(s) of the wedding party stand or sit closest to the couple.
2. Recess(ional): Exit in the reverse order of the processional: married partners; best men and women; flower girl/ring bearer; parents; officiant.
3. In most cases, the bride's side is on the left (the bride is to the left of the groom while facing the minister/officiant); the groom's side is on the right. In Jewish ceremonies, the groom's side is on the left, and the bride's side is on the right. Same-sex couples can make-up any tradition they want. Personally, I think whatever works for you will be great!

4. Processional

Ultra traditional: Groomsmen/Partner A's best people act as ushers to seat key family members; Officiant; Groom/Partner A with friends/family/groomsmen; bridesmaids/Partner B's family/friends; flower girl/ring bearer; Bride/Partner B with father and/or mother or guardian

Traditional: Officiant; Groom/Partner A; the wedding party of the partners enter together with the Best Man/Woman last; flower girl/ring bearer; Bride/Partner B with parents or guardians

Modern (& Jewish): Officiant; close friends or siblings; flower girl/ring bearer; Groom/Partner A with grandparents and parents/guardians; Bride/Partner B with grandparents and parents/guardians

Very Modern (common in some European countries): Grandparents, siblings, and parents enter last; Officiant; wedding party; partners enter together.

5. Repeat the above until everyone is comfortable.

OTHER NOTES

1. The Bride(s) typically gives flowers to her best woman/man once she reaches the “altar area.” This person then returns the flowers after the kiss.
2. Entrust the rings to someone who is trustworthy.
3. If you are having a unity candle, be sure to have a votive candle from which to light the tapers. Remember that you cannot light unity candles in public parks. If you are in a private space outdoors that allows candles to be lit, be sure to get a “volcano” cover to shelter the candles from the wind.

4. When possible, having a small table to designate the altar area is a good idea. You can hide tissues and water underneath the table. If you are doing a unity rite of any kind, a small table definitely needs to be present.
5. Be prepared. Things may or may not be perfect on your wedding day. If it does not go seamlessly, think about the funny stories that will result.
6. When selecting music, keep in mind the length of the aisle. If you have three pieces and the aisle is short, the music will not play for long—maybe thirty seconds. In that case, you may wish to consider having only one piece, so the entire song will play.
7. I've seen some interesting scenes emerge with aisle runners outside. Honestly, spreading dried/new rose petals or dried lavender (or the like) to mark the aisle will look fantastic and are more durable.
8. Most know that throwing rice is now prohibited. Birdseed, petals, and bubbles are three more popular alternatives. You can even obtain a bubble machine for kids to tote as a wagon—yes, for real.
9. The couple ought to face each other because (a) they are marrying each other, not the officiant (b) it will look better in photos (c) they will feel more at ease.
10. The Bride's mother (or the couple's parents) should stand when they see the Bride/couple coming up/down the aisle. This is a signal for everyone to stand for the Bride/couple. About fifty percent of the time, I am happy to say "Please rise for the bride." BUT if the musician/DJ does not include a break in the music, I will not. Also, if the space is too tiny for everyone to stand and see the processional comfortably, I will leave it out as well. (If the space is small, it is also easier for the photographer/videographer to capture everything with family and friends seated.)
11. I do not have any weird rules about photography or videography during the ceremony. However, the photographer / videographer / anyone else should not interrupt the ceremony. In the past, two photographers (separate weddings) asked me to pause because "their batteries ran out" in the middle of the ceremony. That's not okay for more reasons than one. I also had one or two photographers rather push me aside. I usually shift naturally, especially during the kiss, if I see that the person wants "the shot." But it's just plain rude to push—even if gently—the officiant while she is speaking.

YOUR PROCESSIONAL

Prelude Pieces/Musical Selection #1 _____

(Name/s) _____ (i.e. sibling/grandparents) _____

(Name/s) _____ (Title—i.e. Parents) _____

(Name/s) _____ (Title—i.e.) _____

Musical Selection #2 _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e. Officiant) _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e.) _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e. Partner A) _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e.....) _____

Musical Selection #3 _____

(Name/s) _____

(Title—) _____

(Name/s) _____

(Title—) _____

(Name/s) _____

(Title—) _____

(Name/s) _____

(Title—) _____

(Name/s) _____

(Title—Ring Bearer/s) _____

(Name/s) _____

(Title—Flower girl/s) _____

Musical Selection #4 _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e.....) _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e.....) _____

(Name) _____

(Title—i.e. Partner B) _____