



## Some Notes on Wedding Vows

During most of a traditional wedding ceremony, couples do not have much control over what words are spoken. Most Christian weddings typically use a variation of the Book of Common Prayer while the other religions have their own forms. The recital of the bride and groom's vows are detailed in each type. But today, it is increasingly easier to influence that part of the ceremony to make your wedding special. With a secular wedding ceremony presided over by a judge or similar civil official you have even more latitude.

If you desire to make your wedding vows unique and personal, you are not alone. Many couples make their wedding more touching, dramatic and memorable by incorporating intimate feelings and special messages into their vows.

There are many books available with stock wedding vows. Many people scour the Internet looking for what other couples have done. That can be a good way to start but this is *your* wedding – not a copy of someone else's. Make your wedding vows as personal and as unique as possible. The hard part is getting started.

Start by notifying the person who will be performing the ceremony. He or she will typically give pointers and examples that will help you draw up your own vows. Your state and/or religious affiliation may also have certain things that are required to be said during the vows and your presiding official will know these things and keep everything "legal."

Next, you and your future spouse need to have an honest and frank discussion about what each of you feel should and should not be a part of your spoken vows. This highly emotional subject can be difficult to put into words. It is *vital*ly important that the other keeps a firm hold on feelings of anger and frustration as each of you stumble over what you are trying to say. Many times, the first words said are not the ones felt in the heart. Patience is the key in listening to your future spouse struggle to put deeply felt emotions into words.

The important thing is to make your vows "you" by making them personal. A word of caution here: "In" jokes and anecdotes that only you "get" will detract from your message – because everyone should know what you are talking about. In addition, this is not a time for humor. Leave that stuff out. Language should be simple but meaningful. Flowery eloquence may not ring true and take away from the importance of what you are saying.

Next, write it out – the whole thing – word for word – both parts. Take the paper and put it away for *at least* a week. Then retrieve it, stand in front of a mirror and read the whole thing out loud. Trust me – you'll probably want to revise it after that.

The other thing you will probably realize is that your vows are too long. Shorter is better. The stress of the ceremony is bad enough without the additional burden of reciting the “Gettysburg Address” of wedding vows from memory.

Show your presiding official a full copy of your vows. Although the content is ultimately your decision, listen carefully to their advice as it is usually based on extensive experience.

Grammar, spelling and pronunciation are very important. Have someone you trust check it over for mistakes. Make your final changes.

Finally, don’t cheapen the occasion by reading your vows aloud from a “cheat sheet” during the ceremony. Remember that, although this is your wedding, it is a “command performance” with your guests as the “audience.” A little showmanship is in order. You really mean these words, right? So why not show how much you mean them with an “Academy Award” performance?

It is imperative that you both practice saying your vows before the wedding. Say them in the shower – say them in front of the mirror – say them to each other – just say them over and over until you know them. I don’t mean just read them – I mean SAY THEM OUT LOUD!

As you reach the point in the ceremony when it is time to recite your vows, do whatever it takes to maintain your calm. Tense people talk too fast. The wedding vow is the most meaningful part of the wedding.

You’ve practiced – you know your lines – don’t Panic! Take your time. Speak slowly and clearly with a firm loud voice. Look the love of your life straight in the eyes and speak with the heart.

Make sure your official has a copy of your vows so that he/she can act as a prompter if your train of thoughts gets derailed. Hey, it happens! Anyone can be overcome by emotion. The prompter can help you get back on track.

Love is the lubricant on the wheels of life’s train. Here’s hoping your train runs smoothly on a track that never ends.

Some places on the Internet with sample vows.

<http://weddings.about.com/cs/bridesandgrooms/a/vowwording.htm>

[http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=2436](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2436)

<http://www.weddingministers.com/vows/Vows.htm>

[http://www.foreverwed2.com/Religious\\_Ceremonies/](http://www.foreverwed2.com/Religious_Ceremonies/)