

## The Top Marriage Rituals for Your Wedding Ceremony

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### What marriage rituals can I incorporate into my wedding ceremony?

The beauty of being a Civil Celebrant is that when it comes to crafting your wedding ceremony, anything goes!

Each bespoke ceremony that I write, is unique. In essence, you can include any marriage ritual into your wedding ceremony.

You can have a mix of traditional and totally off the wall whacky.

You can opt for religious, non-religious or in our multi-cultural society you can adopt rituals from two religions in a mixed faith ceremony.

You can follow along the lines of the well-known declaratory words and contracting words of the register office marriage padded out with your own readings, poems, music and personal vows... or I can write your love story and commitment ceremony as a total one-off without any reference to traditional wording.

### Your vision for your wedding ceremony

In our initial chats, we will discuss your vision for your wedding ceremony and one of my questions will be whether you wish to include any rituals. Which ones encompass your vision of a perfect wedding ceremony, vow renewal or elopement?

Have a little read of some of the better known ones, explained below.

### Ring exchange

Yes, the exchanging of rings is totally optional. In fact at my very first wedding officiating as a celebrant, the groom was a butcher and had such enormous fingers, and regularly put his hands into such strange slimy places, that a ring simply wasn't practical! So he and his bride exchanged watches instead.

A ring is a perfect circle symbolising your never ending love. Most often made of a precious metal symbolising purity, a ring is a visual recognition that you are committed to someone else and is the most popular of all of the marriage rituals. Wording depends on whether you choose religious content or secular (non-religious), modern, humanist vows, poems or readings.

### Hand Fasting ceremony

This is probably the second most popular ritual in modern times and is the origin of the phrase , "To tie the knot", meaning to get married.

This Celtic tradition uses cloth, ribbons or cords to bind the couples wrists together to signify their unity... often with an infinity knot.



## Spanish Arras Coin ceremony

In the Arras ceremony thirteen coins are poured by the groom into the bride's hands to symbolise his commitment to provide for her. She then pours the coins into her groom's hands to symbolise her commitment to manage the finances.

Modern couples may prefer to present a coin in turn with a word of commitment – the final coin being jointly presented in the name of love.

Being in Spain, this is a personal favourite ceremony of mine – and if you would like to make it even more special, I would be delighted to perform it in Spanish for you.

## Sand ceremony

The pouring of (usually) two different coloured sands into a vessel symbolises the blending of two separate beings into one inseparable unit. Just as you cannot separate the blended sand, so you cannot divide the married couple and the new family that they have become.

## Wine ceremony

Often two different wines are shared – a red and a white, or a sweet and a bitter wine. The wine ceremony symbolises unity throughout the ups and downs of marriage.

Variations of this ceremony include the couple drinking from the same glass, drinking from their own glass whilst linking arms and blending two different wines and drinking the blend.

## Stone ceremony

A favourite ceremony for beach weddings which involves everyone.

On arrival each person is given a large smooth pebble and a pen with which to write one word as a blessing, wish or sentiment to the couple. The stones are placed in a large bowl and read out.

Just remember if you intend taking the stones home, either choose pebble-sizes or bring a very big suitcase!

## Unity Bowl ceremony

This is like a combination of the sand ceremony and the stone ceremony. It involves family who in turn pour a small bag of coloured stones into a bowl symbolising the foundation of families unified by the marriage - with the couple adding their stones last.

## Unity Candle ceremony

Another beautiful ceremony signifying the joining of two families.

The unity candle ceremony has many variations where one or more candles can be lit by just the couple, or extended family.

A favourite variation is where a representative from each family (often the mothers as originally having "given light" to their children) brings a lighted candle to jointly light a third candle for the couple.

At evening wedding ceremonies, the couple's candle can be used to light tealights held by each of the guests.

## Sri Lankan Oil Lamp ceremony

Similar to the Unity Candle ceremony, an oil lamp is lit by a significant member of each family which jointly lights a third oil lamp for the couple (in Sri Lanka it may be one ceremonial oil lamp with three wicks)

## Rose ceremony

In this ceremony the couple either exchange roses to symbolise the giving and receiving of love (a beautiful tradition to continue on future anniversaries) – or the couple offer a single rose to a respected female member of their family to represent the merging of the new family unit.

## Warming of the Rings

Most popular is to pass the couple's rings among their guests prior to the ring exchange ceremony. Each guest says a word of blessing and channels their positive energy into the precious metal.

Another option is for each of the couple to keep hold of the end of a cord which is passed around all of the guests (it needs to be a long cord!)

During the ring ceremony the rings are passed along the length of the cord so that everyone touches the rings which are warmed with the positive energy from all present.

## Jumping the broom

Another Celtic tradition whereby the couple hold hands and literally jump together over the broom to symbolise sweeping away the past and a leap of faith into a new life together.



## Bell of Truce

This Irish tradition requires each of the couple to ring a handbell which is then presented to them as a reminder of the promises they have made at their wedding ceremony.

If they ever exchange harsh words, the bell can be rung as a reminder to stop, listen, reflect and love each other.

## African taste ceremony

In this ancient tradition the couple taste four elements symbolising the contrasts they will face in their marriage and their willingness to enjoy the bitter with the sweet.

Lemon (sour); Vinegar (bitter); Pepper (hot); Honey (sweet)

## Heartbeat ceremony

This requires everyone to hold hands with one of the bridal couple at either end.

On a heartbeat, one of the bridal couple squeezes the hand of the person next to them, who squeezes the next person's hand until the pulse of the heartbeat passes through everybody and back to the bridal couple symbolising them as one

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