

Wedding Rehearsal Checklist



It's the day before the wedding, and it's time to rehearse the ceremony so everyone knows the order of events and understands their roles and responsibilities. This event can be challenging; there will be a lot of excitement in the room and it can be difficult to get everyone focused on the task at hand. It's a good idea to announce a start time earlier than you really hope to begin to insure that you have enough time allotted for everything you want to accomplish.

Whether you're the official wedding coordinator, a trusted friend, or the bride herself, it's your job to make sure every aspect is reviewed and practiced at least once with key family members and the entire wedding party. Use this guide to stay organized and get the job done efficiently and with minimal stress. This checklist follows what may be considered a traditional wedding ceremony; adjust as needed for unique or non-traditional ceremony elements.

- ___ Arrive before the bridal party, making sure the rehearsal area is arranged properly.
- ___ Check that all lighting, audio, video, and musician's needs are available and ready to go.
- ___ Greet the bridal party and answer any questions you can before rehearsal begins – where are restrooms, dressing rooms, other miscellaneous questions about the facility or the schedule.
- ___ Ask all key family members (parents, grandparents, etc.) to be seated in their appropriate places.
- ___ Begin by asking the bride and groom to introduce the entire wedding party ("Jack is my best man; we were college roommates for 3 years." "Jill is my maid of honor; we've been best friends since elementary school.") before the rehearsal officially begins. This is a great way to introduce those who have never met each other before today.
- ___ As each person is introduced, have them take their place with the rest of the wedding party until everyone is in their proper places when the ceremony begins.

PRACTICE CEREMONY

- ___ Allow the officiant to rehearse the ceremony from beginning to end as many times as needed. Make sure he/she practices with the father of the bride any words he may say during the 'hand-off' of the bride to the groom at the beginning of the ceremony.
- ___ Instruct the maid/matron of honor to take the bride's flowers before bride and groom move to altar area.

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___ If the bride's dress has a train, the maid of honor should pass off all flowers to next bridesmaid and set the train for the bride as she moves to the altar area. After bride and train are in place, flowers should be passed back to maid of honor. This may have to be repeated if bride and groom move at other times during the ceremony. The back of the dress will show up in every picture of the ceremony, so do what is necessary to make it look perfect!

___ Remind the maid of honor to pass flowers back to bride prior to recessional.

___ Rehearse the passing of rings at the appropriate time during the ceremony.

PRACTICE RECESSIONAL WITHOUT MUSIC

___ Wedding party practices exiting the ceremony area to a designated receiving line or holding area. Determine if ushers/groomsmen will return to escort parents and grandparents from the venue and who they will be.

___ Have the parents and grandparents practice exiting the ceremony area to a designated receiving line or holding area.

___ Determine how guests will be released – on their own, row by row by ushers beginning at the front, row by row by bride and groom, or some other method. Are there specific instructions that the guests need before they depart (proceed to receiving line, proceed to reception, gather at exit to see off bride and groom, etc.)? These instructions should be given to the audience after the bridal party has departed the ceremony area.

PRACTICE PROCESSIONAL WITHOUT MUSIC

___ Grandparents are ushered in and seated, typically groom's grandparents first, then bride's grandparents.

___ Parents are ushered in and either seated or escorted to altar to light candles, etc. If straight seating, the groom's parents go first, then the bride's parents (just the mother if dad is walking her down the aisle, this varies). If mothers are going the altar to light candles, etc., the groom's father should stand at the parent's row until the mothers are ushered back to the row and seated.

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___ Officiant enters with groom and groomsmen (unless groomsmen are escorting bridesmaids down the aisle).

___ Bridesmaids enter, followed by maid/matron of honor, ring bearer, and flower girl. Each person should allow the person preceding him/her to get half-way down the aisle before proceeding.

___ Bride (and father if being escorted) enters. Mother of the bride stands when music for bride begins, cuing the rest of the guests to stand.

___ Determine whether the officiant will instruct the guests to sit at the appropriate time, or if the mother of the bride will sit as a cue for the rest of the assembly.

___ When entire wedding party is in place, stop and have the wedding party check for spacing and have each one find a reference point to they can land in the same place on the big day.

PRACTICE RECESSIONAL WITH MUSIC

___ Practice recessional same as above with musical cues as many times as needed.

PRACTICE PROCESSIONAL WITH MUSIC

___ Practice procession same as above with musical cues as many times as needed.

FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REVIEW

___ Review the seating of guests. Will ushers be used? Will traditional seating be used (bride's guests on right, groom's guests on the left as seen from the officiant's point of view), or should the guests be seated equally on either side?

___ Should ushers direct guests to a guest book or provide a program prior to seating?

___ If there is no receiving line after the ceremony, instruct bridal party and other key participants where to go and what to do. Designate a waiting area if necessary, especially if you want to keep everyone assembled for pictures after the ceremony area has been cleared of guests.

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___ If bride and groom are being transported to another venue after the ceremony, discuss those arrangements (where will the car be, who has the keys, etc.)

___ If moving to another venue, assign someone (not in the bridal party) to collect any personal belongings from the ceremony venue and perform any necessary cleanup the dressing areas (a requirement at many venues, especially churches that need to transition quickly for other activities).

___ **LAST BUT NOT LEAST**, make sure everyone understands the schedule for the day of the wedding. Create a written itinerary and hand it out to each participant to explain the logistics and timeline so there are no misunderstandings. This includes the bridal party, photographer, officiant, musicians, parents, and grandparents.