

Robyn Ashley Weddings

NYC WEDDING OFFICIANT

*The whole script,
with my notes out
here in the
margin.*

A Wedding Ceremony, *Start to Finish*

A complete ceremony script you can read aloud this weekend, with my notes in the margin and room to make it yours.



AS SEEN IN

Tamron Hall / Brides / The Knot

Before you read it *aloud*

Whether a friend asked you to marry them or this is your own wedding, congratulations. You have a date on the calendar and a ceremony to put on, and this script will get you through it.

I'm Robyn Walker, a wedding officiant in New York City, and I write every ceremony from scratch. This one is built the way I build those. The parts are in the order I trust after 300+ ceremonies, the wording is plain enough to say out loud without tripping, and the notes in the margin are what I would tell you if I were standing next to you at the rehearsal.

You can read it as written. It runs about fourteen minutes, and it holds together with nothing added but the names. It gets better when you add three true details about the couple, and there is a page with room for those.

So treat this as a script you finish. Type the names once and they fill in on every page. Make the five choices that follow the map, write the story, then print it and read it out loud with a timer running.

You've got this, so start with the map.

Robyn

ROBYN WALKER · ROBYN ASHLEY WEDDINGS · NYC



In place with the script open, before the processional starts.

The ceremony *on one page*

Ten parts, about fourteen minutes. The clock on the left shows where you should be if the welcome started at zero.

0:00	<i>The welcome</i>	Seat everyone, say who you are, and thank them for coming.	1 minute
1:00	<i>Why we're here</i>	What a marriage is made of, in plain words.	1½ minutes
2:30	<i>Their story</i>	Three true details about the couple. You write this part.	2½ minutes
5:00	<i>A reading</i>	Optional. Someone they love reads something they chose.	2 minutes
7:00	<i>The "I do"</i> READ AS WRITTEN	Each of them agrees to the marriage out loud.	1 minute
8:00	<i>The vows</i>	Their own, or repeated after you.	3 minutes
11:00	<i>A unity ritual</i>	Optional. A candle, sand, or a cord, if it means something to them.	adds 2 to 3
11:00	<i>The rings</i>	Short lines, repeated after you.	1½ minutes
12:30	<i>The pronouncement</i> READ AS WRITTEN	You declare them married, and they kiss.	1 minute
13:30	<i>The introduction</i>	You present them, and they walk out first.	½ minute

Two of these parts do the legal work. In most states the law wants to hear each of them say yes to the marriage, which is the "I do," and wants to hear the officiant pronounce them married. Everything else is yours to shape. Marriage law is set by each state and sometimes by the county, so call the county clerk where the wedding will happen and ask what they need from the ceremony and from the officiant.

A bride in Central Park once leaned in halfway through and whispered, "Wait, are we married yet?" Nobody had shown her which parts count, so now I show everyone.

Start here: *type the names once*

Fill these in and they appear everywhere the script needs them. The two word boxes take husband, wife, partner or spouse. If you are printing first, write the names in by hand and highlight them on every page.

First partner's name

Second partner's name

The word for the first partner

The word for the second partner

Officiant's name

The state where the wedding takes place

Who is reading, if there is a reading

The unity ritual, if there is one

How they want to be introduced at the end

How to read the script pages

Please, have a seat.

Large type is what you say out loud.

Take one full breath.

The small green lines are things you do.

Slower than feels natural.

The handwriting in the margin is me, telling you why.

A tinted box is yours to fill in, on a screen or with a pen.

Make it yours in *twenty minutes*

Five choices change this ceremony more than anything else you could do to it. If you are officiating, sit down with the couple and tick one box in each row.

Secular or spiritual

As written, the script never mentions God or faith. For a spiritual ceremony, make three swaps.

- In the welcome, after the first line, add: “We are gathered in the presence of God and of everyone who loves these two.”
- Before the pronouncement, add: “May you be patient with each other and quick to forgive. May your home be a place where people feel welcome, and may you be given many years to enjoy it together.”
- In the pronouncement, say: “So in the presence of God and these witnesses, and by the authority given to me by the State of” and carry on from there.

☐ Secular, as written ☐ Spiritual, with the three swaps

Their own vows, or repeated after you

The script assumes the couple wrote their own. If they would rather repeat after the officiant, feed them these a few words at a time: “I choose you. I promise to tell you the truth, to laugh with you, to stay close when things are hard, and to keep choosing you for the rest of my life.”

☐ Their own vows ☐ Repeated after the officiant

A reading, or none

One reading is plenty. Skip it and you save two minutes, and the ceremony holds together without it. If you keep it, pick something under two minutes and hand the reader a printed copy at the rehearsal.

☐ With a reading ☐ Without The reading is

A unity ritual, or none

A candle, sand and a handfasting cord are all optional. A ritual goes after the vows and before the rings, and it adds two or three minutes. Honestly, I’d skip it unless the ritual means something to the two of them.

Decide these with the couple, never for them.

☐ With a ritual ☐ Without

Full or short

For an elopement or a small ceremony, use the short version: the welcome, three sentences of story, the “I do,” the vows, the rings and the pronouncement. It runs about eight minutes, and you cross out the rest.

☐ Full, about fourteen minutes ☐ Short, about eight

0:00

about one minute

Say "have a seat" out loud. If you don't, some of them will stand for the whole ceremony.

Change this to how you know them, in one sentence, and then get back to the couple.

Cut the phone request if they want phones out. Ask them first.

The welcome

— The couple is in place and the music has faded. Take one full breath before you speak.

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome. Please, have a seat.

My name is _____, and _____ and _____ asked me to stand up here with them while they get married. I said yes before they finished the question.

Before we begin, look around you for a second. None of you is here by accident, because _____ and _____ sat down with a list and chose each of you by name. So thank you for the travel, the babysitters and the days off work it took to be in these seats.

They have one request. For the next few minutes, please put your phones away and watch this with your own eyes. There is a photographer here, and the pictures will be good.

1:00

about a minute and a half

Go slower here than feels natural. Nerves speed everybody up.

Why we're here

— Look at the couple for the first sentence, then back to the guests.

We are here because _____ and _____ could have kept things exactly as they were, and they decided to make a promise instead.

If you know their real version of the dog and the plumber, use it.

Most of a marriage happens on ordinary days, long after the clothes from today have gone back in the closet. It is who gets up when the dog needs to go out at six, who remembers to call the plumber, and who notices that the other one has gone quiet and asks about it.

_____ and _____ already know this about each other. They have had plenty of ordinary days together, and today they are telling us that they want all the ones still to come.

That makes each of you a witness as well as a guest. Some day one of them will have a hard week, and it will help to remember that all of you were here when they said yes.

2:30

two to three minutes

Three details is enough. First-timers overwrite this part because they want to include everything.

The five questions to send the couple before you write this part are in Chapter 4 of the Officiant Kit.

Their story YOU WRITE THIS PART

— *Look up as much as you can here, since you know this part best.*

I asked _____ and _____ how this started, and here is what they told me.

How they met. One scene, with the place and something one of them said.

It took them a while to say it out loud, but there was a day when each of them knew.

The day it got serious, in two or three sentences.

*If you are the couple,
answer these separately
and hand both sets to
your officiant.*

*This is the shape to aim
for. Their real details will
be better than mine.*

5:00

about two minutes, optional

*Give the reader a printed
copy at the rehearsal, so
nobody is scrolling for it.*

And if you have spent any time around the two of them, you have seen this for yourself.

The small thing that is so them. A habit, a ritual, or a running joke you can explain in one line.

I wanted you to hear that before they make their promises, because small things like these are what the promises are about.

An example I made up to show the shape

“They met in the returns line at a hardware store in March. Sam was holding the wrong size of everything, and Jordan looked over and said, ‘You measured in centimeters, didn’t you.’”

“Two summers later their car died outside Scranton, and they spent four hours on a curb sharing one bag of pretzels. Jordan says that was the day she stopped wondering.”

“If you have eaten at their place, you know that Sam cooks and Jordan narrates it like a sports broadcast.”

A reading

Before the vows, and
have asked to share something they
chose together.

— Step to one side so the reader has the microphone. Stay still and listen.

— When the reading ends, wait a moment before you speak.

Thank you, .

7:00

about one minute

The “I do”

READ THIS PART AS WRITTEN

In most states this spoken yes is one of the two parts the law listens for, so keep the question and the answer intact, and check the exact requirement with the county clerk.

— If anyone is holding a bouquet, it goes to a friend now.

_____ and _____, please face each other and hold hands.

_____, do you take _____ to be your _____, to love, to stand beside, and to choose again on the days when it is hard?

— Wait for the answer. “I do.”

_____, do you take _____ to be your _____, to love, to stand beside, and to choose again on the days when it is hard?

— Wait for the answer. “I do.”

Give each “I do” a second of quiet before you move on.

Have them hold hands for this part, so nobody is wondering what to do with them.



Facing each other and holding hands, with the script off to one side.

8:00

about three minutes

Ask them to trade word counts beforehand, so one of them doesn't bring three pages and the other four sentences.

Stand a little to one side. An officiant standing directly between the couple blocks their faces in the photos.

Keep tissues in your pocket.

adds 2 to 3

minutes, and only if they want one

Set the table up before guests arrive, and walk through it once at the rehearsal.

No ritual? Cross this part out and go straight from the vows to the rings.

The vows

and have written their own promises to each other.

— Hand each of them their vow card, or have a friend bring the cards up.

, whenever you're ready.

— Take a full step to the side. Hold the microphone for them if there is only one, and keep your eyes on whoever is speaking.

Thank you, . , whenever you're ready.

— When the second set of vows ends, give them a moment before you speak.

Thank you both.

A unity ritual

and wanted to mark today with something they can keep, so they have chosen .

What it means to them, in one or two sentences.

— Talk them through each step, then stay quiet while they do it.

Thank you. Come back to the center.

11:00

about a minute and a half

Have the rings out and ready before the vows start, so nobody is digging through a jacket pocket.

Hands shake the most right here, so I feed the line a few words at a time. I once slowed everything down for a groom who couldn't get the band past the knuckle, and he got there.

The rings always get a page to themselves in my scripts. If a moment sits alone at a page break, one flipped page can skip it.

The rings

— Ask whoever is holding the rings to bring them forward.

May I have the rings, please?

These are small things, and from today they will go everywhere with you, to work and to the grocery store and through every ordinary day we talked about. Let them remind you of what you said here.

_____, take _____'s ring, hold it at the tip of their finger, and repeat after me.

With this ring, / I marry you. / I give you my love, / my trust, / and my whole self, / today / and every day after.

— Wait for each phrase to come back before you give the next one.

_____, take _____'s ring, and repeat after me.

With this ring, / I marry you. / I give you my love, / my trust, / and my whole self, / today / and every day after.



Keep the microphone close for the ring lines.

12:30

about one minute

Say the pronouncement to their faces. I see first-timers read it looking down at the exact moment everyone is waiting to cheer.

Looking up on cue takes practice. Chapter 7 of the Officiant Kit covers pace, pauses and nerves.

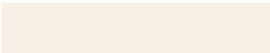
The pronouncement

READ THIS PART AS WRITTEN

In most states the pronouncement is the second part the law listens for, so say it clearly, with both names and the word “married.”

— Pause. Look up from the page and at the two of them.

 and , you have made your promises in front of the people who know you best, and you have given each other rings to carry them.

So by the authority given to me by the State of , it is my honor to pronounce you married.

— Step to the side, out of the photograph, before the next line.

You may kiss.

— Let the applause run, then raise your voice over it.

13:30

half a minute

Ask them exactly how they want to be introduced, and never guess at a last name.

The introduction

Everyone, please stand. It is my joy to introduce, for the first time as a married couple,



— Nod to whoever starts the music. The couple walks out first, and you leave last.

Then go and find the license.

The day of, *for whoever is reading it*

Experienced officiants look calm because they keep all of this on a list instead of in their heads. Tick these off as you go.

The week before

- ☐ The script is printed in large type, 16 point or bigger, and it is in a binder or folder. A second copy is in my bag.
- ☐ I have read it out loud, standing up, with a timer, at least three times.
- ☐ Every name is highlighted, and I have said each one to the couple to check how it is pronounced.
- ☐ I know who holds the rings, who reads, who starts the music, and who gives me the signal to begin.
- ☐ The couple has their marriage license, and I know what the county needs from me.

Phones dim, lock and freeze at the worst moments. Print it, and print a spare.

For the rules in your state, the Officiant Kit has a license reference for the fifteen most-asked states.

An hour before

- ☐ I am at the venue at least thirty minutes early, and I have stood where I will stand.
- ☐ I tested the microphone while looking down at the page, since that is where my mouth will be.
- ☐ I have a pen that works, a spare pen, tissues and water.
- ☐ I have seen the license and I know where it will be during the ceremony.
- ☐ My phone is on silent and out of my hands.

Right after

- ☐ The license is signed by everyone who has to sign it, before anyone leaves for the reception.
- ☐ Every field is checked: names spelled correctly, the ceremony date, and each signature in the right box.
- ☐ We have agreed who returns it to the clerk, and by what date.

License due back by

Returned by

ABOUT THE LICENSE

The rules differ by state and by county: who signs, how many witnesses, who returns it, and how many days you have. Some deadlines are only a few days long. The clerk's office that issued the license will tell you all of it in one phone call.



The Officiant Kit

Officiate like you've *done* *this before*



It's the playbook I'd hand any first-timer, with eight complete ceremonies in different tones and all the prep that goes around them.

Inside the kit

- The five questions that get a couple telling you the story they skip at family dinners
- What to say, word for word, when the rings go missing or your mind goes blank
- The rehearsal plan that runs in 45 minutes, and the few minutes after it that most officiants skip
- The five small mistakes that get a marriage license sent back by the clerk

You have the words for the day itself now, and the kit walks you through the six weeks before it, story section and rehearsal included.

Show me what's inside





The Couple's Ceremony Kit

Make every minute of your ceremony *sound like you*

I'll walk the two of you through your vows, your ritual, your readings and the plan for the day, the same way I build ceremonies with my own couples.

Inside the kit

- The six-question quiz that tells you which of five ceremony styles is yours
- The interview question that digs up the detail your vows are missing
- Why one of your promises should be about the water filter
- The unity ritual I'd never let you do outdoors, and fifteen others with full scripts

This script is ready for your officiant to read, but your vows, your ritual and the order of the day are still on your list.

Show me the whole ceremony

