
A PRACTICAL GUIDE & KEEPSAKE PLANNER

Your wedding ceremony

The words, the music and the moments in between.

Make room for the moment.

A ceremony can feel like a lot of decisions. Start with the moments that matter to you, agree a few clear cues, then let the day unfold.

Four musical moments to consider

Guests arriving / Walking in / Signing, if included / Walking out

How to use this planner

Read the ceremony guide on pages 2-3. Gather ideas and plan your entrance on pages 4-5. Complete the cue sheet on page 6, then use page 7 to resolve practical questions. Sources and further reading are on page 8.

Our names

Wedding date, ceremony time and venue

Ceremony type and the person conducting it

Print on A4 at actual size, in colour or greyscale. The writing spaces are designed for pen or pencil. Keep a working copy; share your final cue sheet with the people supporting your ceremony.

One day, different traditions

Use the running order as a starting point, then confirm it with your ceremony leader.

Civil marriage

The registrar leads the legal ceremony. In England and Wales, civil ceremonies are secular: religious worship, hymns and religious readings are not permitted. An incidental reference to a deity in an otherwise non-religious song may be acceptable; ask the registrar to approve your exact choices, including instrumental arrangements. Northern Ireland also excludes religious content from civil ceremonies. [5, 6, 8]

Religious marriage

The service follows the requirements of the faith and the person conducting it. Readings, prayers, blessings, hymns or other musical responses may be included. A Church of England service, for example, includes declarations, vows, rings and a proclamation, with prayers and blessings; the proclamation may come well before signing. Other traditions have different structures. Agree music and visiting musicians with the officiant. [7]

Scotland and Northern Ireland

Scotland recognises marriages conducted by registrars and authorised religious or belief celebrants. Northern Ireland also recognises authorised religious/belief ceremonies. A humanist ceremony is therefore not automatically a symbolic ceremony: check the celebrant's authorisation and the local requirements. [8, 9]

Personal or symbolic ceremonies

In England and Wales, an independent celebrant-led or humanist celebration does not itself ordinarily create a legal marriage; arrange the legal marriage separately. A symbolic ceremony may omit legal declarations and official signing, or include a keepsake signing. Confirm which event is legally binding. [10]

Signing means paperwork, not more vows.

For a legal marriage, confirm when the marriage schedule or document is signed and by whom. A symbolic signing is optional and has a different purpose.

Our ceremony variations / approvals to confirm

02 / THE SHAPE OF THE CEREMONY

A running order that breathes

A practical outline, not a fixed script. Your registrar or officiant confirms the final sequence.

01 Guest arrival

Guests settle and find their seats.

PLAY: welcoming music. Agree the start time; 15-20 minutes beforehand is a useful starting point, not a requirement.

02 Processional / walking in

The wedding party and couple enter in the agreed order.

CUE: begin only when the nominated person signals readiness. Finish naturally once everyone is in place.

03 Welcome and readings

The leader welcomes everyone; readings may occur here or elsewhere.

QUIET: pause for spoken words. Any standalone musical interlude should be separately agreed.

04 Declarations, vows and rings

The legal wording and promises are spoken; rings may be exchanged.

NO MUSIC: leave declarations, vows, ring words and other legal wording fully clear. Rings are customary, not a universal legal requirement.

05 Signing, where applicable

The couple, witnesses and relevant official sign the schedule or document.

CUE: start after instructions, on the leader's signal. Prepare two or three pieces; there may not be time for all of them.

06 Pronouncement / closing words

The marriage is proclaimed and closing instructions are given.

QUIET: this may happen before signing, especially in a church service. Do not treat applause or a kiss as an automatic exit cue.

07 Recessional / walking out

The couple leave, followed by the wedding party and guests as directed.

CUE: play the exit piece after the final words, on the agreed signal. Confirm whether music continues while guests leave.

Religious services may add hymns, prayers, a sermon, blessings or other rites. Place these with your officiant; music should never obscure spoken promises or instructions.

03 / WALKING IN

An entrance that feels like you

You do not need to calculate every step to the second.

Choose the feeling first, then discuss the arrangement. Live musicians can repeat a phrase, extend a section or find a natural ending as the entrance unfolds. Walk at a comfortable pace; a pause or an unexpectedly speedy child need not spoil the moment. [2]

If there is a favourite chorus or musical phrase

Tell the musicians in advance. They can discuss a suitable starting point and transition. Agree a visible cue; avoid relying only on a clock or recording timestamp.

Who walks in, and in what order? Include any pauses or separate entrances.

One piece for everyone, or separate pieces? Title / artist / version.

The moment we want to hear, and who enters at that point

Who gives the start signal? How will the musicians see or receive it?

At the front: take a breath and settle. Agree that the music closes naturally before the ceremony leader begins speaking. For a short aisle, a brief musical introduction can help; for a longer entrance, agree where the music can extend.

04 / COLLECT YOUR IDEAS

Our ceremony soundtrack

A shortlist is enough. Listen to the intended arrangement, not just the original recording.

The feeling we want: calm, joyful, intimate, cinematic, traditional...

IDEA 01

Song / piece, artist or composer, and version

Possible moment, why it matters, and any favourite phrase

IDEA 02

Song / piece, artist or composer, and version

Possible moment, why it matters, and any favourite phrase

IDEA 03

Song / piece, artist or composer, and version

Possible moment, why it matters, and any favourite phrase

Please include / please avoid: styles, songs or other preferences

Guest-arrival music can follow a mood rather than a fixed playlist. Keep the most significant choice for a clearly cued moment. For signing, put your favourites first; the ceremony need not wait for every piece to finish. [1, 3]

05 / SHARE THIS PAGE

Our final music & cue sheet

Give the same agreed version to your musicians, coordinator and ceremony leader.

Names / date / venue / ceremony start / version date

Guest arrival

Start time, mood, must-play choices and when to stop

Entrance(s)

Who enters / piece and version / start signal / transition

Signing or agreed interlude

First choice / second choice / reserve / start and finish cue

Exit

Piece and version / exact signal after closing words / guests leaving

NO MUSIC UNDER DECLARATIONS, VOWS OR LEGAL WORDING

Cue giver and contact / backup cue giver

Music and running order approved by: _____ Date: _____

Any hymns, responses or extra musical moments: attach the approved service order.

06 / MAKE THE DAY EASY

Questions worth asking

Resolve the practical details together, then leave yourselves space to enjoy the ceremony.

- ☐ Has the registrar or officiant approved the music, readings and ceremony order?
- ☐ Where will signing happen, and does the pronouncement come before or after it?
- ☐ Can the musicians see the entrance and cue giver? Who signals if the view is blocked?
- ☐ What setup space, access, power and sound arrangements do the musicians need?
- ☐ For an outdoor ceremony, what shelter and indoor backup have we agreed?
- ☐ Who tells the musicians about delays or a room change, and what if time runs short?

Questions for our registrar / officiant / celebrant

Questions for our musicians / venue, including any access needs

Who will confirm the answers, and by when?

Small timing changes can usually be accommodated musically. Significant delays or moving equipment may affect what is possible, so agree the fallback plan and performance timings in advance. [4]

KEEP EXPLORING

Advice behind this planner

Source notes and useful links / checked 13 October 2026

Adapted from JAM Duo's ceremony advice, with official guidance used for legal and ceremony distinctions. The running order and worksheets are planning aids: confirm the requirements for your own ceremony with the person conducting it.

[1] JAM Duo: ceremony music

www.jamduo.com/wedding-music-advice/wedding-ceremony-music/

[2] JAM Duo: bridal entrance timing

www.jamduo.com/wedding-music-advice/how-long-should-bridal-entrance-music-be/

[3] JAM Duo: music while guests arrive

www.jamduo.com/wedding-music-advice/music-while-guests-arrive/

[4] JAM Duo: when wedding timings change

www.jamduo.com/wedding-music-advice/wedding-timings-change-advice/

[5] GOV.UK: plan your ceremony (England and Wales)

www.gov.uk/marriages-civil-partnerships/plan-your-ceremony

[6] GOV.UK: Registrar General's approved-premises guidance

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-registering-a-venue-for-civil-marriage-and-civil-partnership

[7] Church of England: walk through the wedding service

www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding/walk-through-wedding-service

[8] nidirect: civil and religious/belief ceremonies

www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/getting-married-civil-ceremony

Religious/belief ceremony guidance

www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/getting-married-religiousbelief-ceremony

[10] House of Commons Library: humanist marriage in England and Wales

commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/SN05864/

[9] National Records of Scotland: authorised celebrants

nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/marriage-and-civil-partnership-celebrants/

More ideas, when you need them

jamduo.com/wedding-music-advice/

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