

Tailored Ceremonies

Custom-designed, non-denominational weddings

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Sample Ceremony Elements and Traditions

What you include in your ceremony is limited only by your imagination. All of these rituals offer opportunities for parents, children, and extended family to participate in the ceremony whether through an active role in the ceremony or giving a reading its meaning. Here are some sample ceremony elements that you may wish to include or customize:

Unity Candle Ceremony

The unity candle continues to be popular in all its variations. Parents light single tapered candles, which the bride and groom then use to light the unity candle as a symbol of the two families joining together. This can incorporate one or both parents, and may include a few spoken words by either the officiant or the parents themselves.

Rose Ceremony

The rose ceremony also has a variety of forms. In some ceremonies, the bride and groom each give their own mother (or parents) a single rose to symbolize their thanks for all the families have done for them. Others choose to have the bride give a rose to the mother of the groom and the groom give a rose to the mother of the bride, each symbolizing the giving of gifts to welcome the new family members. Many times, these single roses are presented without the parents' knowledge this will happen to make the gesture feel less staged.

Some brides and grooms choose to each give a rose to each other as their first gift as husband and wife. This makes a lovely keepsake if the rose is preserved (whether dried or preserved with silica, which helps maintain the color).

In all of these, there is an opportunity for the bride and groom to tell those present what the roses symbolize, or the tradition can be explained by the officiant or in the program.

Sand Ceremony

The sand ceremony is especially well-suited for beach and waterfront weddings. Sand representing each family is poured together into a single container to symbolize the blending of the two families. This ceremony also offers choices in the sand colors to create sand art in a bottle or container that retains the individuality of the bride and groom or their families as they combine to make a single work of art. Some choose shadow boxes, vases, or bottles that can be kept as keepsakes.

If you are looking for ways to include children, a different color sand can be used by each person to show the unification of the blended family. Brides and grooms can also choose to have their parents or siblings share in the ceremony to include them in the event.

Water Ceremony

Like the sand ceremony, the water ceremony has the bride and groom (or members of their families) pour water from separate glasses into a single bowl, vase, or glass. The bride and groom may also share the glass of water, with each drinking from it. Alternatively, colored water can be used to create a new color when combined.

Tea Ceremony

This Chinese tradition is growing popularity because tea can be enjoyed by all. The complex Chinese ritual of serving tea to the groom's family, beginning with the elders, symbolizes the family's acceptance of the marriage and the celebration of the new family. While brides traditionally serve their parents at home before the ceremony, a more modern adaptation could include them, as well.

Wine Ceremony

For this ceremony, the bride and groom pour wine from two separate carafes into a single glass, which they drink from together. Often, the officiant reminds the bride and groom that like the wine, their lives will blend both bitter and sweet together. As with some of the other ceremonies, this one contains symbolism of the two become one. Brides and grooms may also choose to pour the wine into separate glasses and intertwine their arms to symbolize their unity and yet their continued independence, as each still drinks from his or her own glass.

Bread Ceremony

The bread ceremony is a tradition that reflects the bride and groom's willingness to care for each other and their families. In this ritual, the bride and groom tear pieces off a loaf of bread and share with each other. Often, they share with family and friends, too. A Polish tradition calls for the parents of the bride and groom to bring salted bread and wine to the newlywed's during the reception to symbolize their hope that the couple will not be hungry (the bread), will overcome obstacles (the salt), and will have a life of joy (the wine).

Hand Ceremony

The hand ceremony calls on the groom and bride to take turns holding each other's hands palms up while a reading (often by the attendants) reminds them that those hands will hold them, care for them, nurture them, wipe away tears, and caress newborns. The wording of the readings can be tailored to your wishes.