

OFFICIANT TIMELINE & CHECKLIST



Being asked to officiate is a huge honor, but the role of Wedding Officiant comes with great responsibility as well. Whether you're performing your first ceremony or your fiftieth, officiating always requires planning, organization, and consideration.

You'll want to save and/or print this checklist – it will help you get started and keep you on track. Just like every couple, each ceremony will be different, so feel free to make adjustments, and add your own notes as needed.

We wish you the very best!



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1 FIRST THING'S FIRST ✓

Once you're ordained, you'll need to review marriage laws and [registration policies](#) in the state where you'll be officiating.

2 AT LEAST 9 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING ✓

(or as soon as the date is set)

Meet with the couple and begin your discussion about their ceremony expectations.

Be sure to ask questions, [take detailed notes](#), and gather as much information about the wedding and the couple as possible. This will help shape the ceremony and hone in on the details that will make it unique to them.

3 3-9 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING ✓

[Order your credentials or registration materials](#). Remember, regardless of where you live, you'll want to order your credentials for the state (and/or county) where the wedding ceremony will be taking place.

Current Shipping Options

- **USPS Media Mail** (Up to 3 Weeks + Tracking) **Free**
- **USPS First Class Mail** (3-5 Business Days + Tracking) **\$5.50**
- **USPS Priority Mail** (2-5 Business Days + Tracking) **\$9.50**
- **USPS Express Mail** (1-2 Business Days + Tracking) **\$26.50**
- **USPS International** (7-21 Days + Tracking) **\$35.00**

If you're officiating in a state with registration requirements, allow enough time for your documents to arrive in the mail, and then additional time to submit them to your county clerk's office without worrying about rushing. If you're concerned about receiving your materials a quickly, we recommend selecting Priority or Express Mail to ensure a timely arrival.

If you order your registration materials too early (more than a year in advance), the county clerk's office will likely request a newer set of documents – which means you'll have to place a new order for updated materials, and potentially delay your registration. However, if you order too late (less than a month before you need them), you risk not being able to register in time. Stick to our timeline and don't get caught in a bind!

Keep all of your credentials, important documents, notes, and ceremony scripts organized and in one place. (Need help? Check out our [Royal Officiant Folio!](#))



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4 3-6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING ✓

If you haven't yet begun, it's time to start drafting the ceremony script.

Visit the [Wedding Training](#) section of our site to review the ceremony basics.

Check in with the couple as needed to ensure you're all still on the same page (quite literally) with the desired ceremony components and expectations.

If you're feeling a little overwhelmed and want a detailed crash-course on officiating, consult [Asked to Officiate](#) for step-by-step guidance on how to craft and deliver a thoughtful, memorable wedding ceremony with confidence!

If you plan on gifting the couple with a [commemorative marriage certificate](#), place your order *now*.

5 3-4 WEEKS BEFORE THE WEDDING ✓

Finalize the ceremony with the couple. Go over timing, any special details (like ceremony readings from other family or friends), and get their approval of the finished script you have created.

Confirm that the couple already has or will pick up their marriage license.

Practice, practice, practice the ceremony!

Review articles on our [American Weddings](#) blog for tips on public speaking and helpful guidance from seasoned wedding pros.

6 3-4 WEEKS BEFORE THE WEDDING ✓

Attend the wedding rehearsal and practice the entire ceremony if possible.

Carefully review the information on the marriage license to ensure that the details are correct.

Marriage license return policies vary across the country. Some important things to note are:

- *How soon the completed license must be returned after performing the ceremony*
- *Where it must be returned to*
- *Who is responsible for returning it (the couple or the officiant)*

Whether it must be returned in-person or by mail

Check the weather forecast to plan ahead for attire changes, or potential logistical issues (traffic, sound system if outdoors, etc).

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DAY OF THE WEDDING ✓

Bring several copies of the ceremony script - including a digital copy (emailed to yourself or saved on a mobile device) and printed paper copies.

Perform the ceremony!

[Complete the marriage license.](#)

Celebrate and take photos with the couple to commemorate a job well done!

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AFTER THE WEDDING ✓

Return and file the completed marriage license according to the instructions provided. If it's the couple's responsibility, make sure they follow through.

Upload your photos and ceremony script to the [AMM Wedding Wall!](#)