

Tips for writing your own wedding vows

A wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime event for many couples, so brides and grooms wish for the event to be momentous and memorable. As such, couples are increasingly integrating personal nuances into their ceremonies and receptions to tailor weddings to their unique visions. The desire to include personalized wedding vows continues to be a popular trend.

If you are considering personalized wedding vows, first realize that it may not be a simple task. That's because you want the message conveyed to be dear to your heart, and that can be challenging when faced with the pressures and planning of the rest of the wedding. That isn't to say that writing your own vows is impossible. Here are some guidelines for personalizing your ceremony with your own sentiments.

- Schedule time for writing. Amid the bustle of dress fittings and interviews with photographers, it can be easy to put off the important task of writing vows for another day. But as any great writer can attest, it takes writing -- and rewriting -- to achieve a finished product you can be proud of. Give the task of writing your vows your undivided attention. Mark it in on your calendar or set a reminder on your computer just as you would any other appointment.
- Be aware of ceremony guidelines. It is best to check with your officiant and confirm that personalized wedding vows are allowed. During civil ceremonies it's often acceptable to customize vows as you see fit. However, during religious ceremonies there may be lines of scripture that need to be read or certain passages required. Before you spend hours working on the task, be sure that it is allowed and that your spouse and you are on the same page.
- Jot down your feelings. Answer some questions about what marriage means to you and how you feel about your spouse. Try to avoid trite sayings and think from your heart and personal experiences. Think about what is the most important thing you want to promise to your future partner. These notes can serve as the starting points for the actual vows.
- Read inspirational writings. Perhaps there is an author or a poet who inspires you? You can quote

certain writers in your vows or let the tone of their works help shape the words of your vows. There also are suggested wedding readings and other quotes about marriage readily available at the library or with a quick search online.

- Decide on a tone. Although the day is based on love and affection, you may not feel comfortable spouting words of adoration in front of friends and family. Feel free to tap into your unique personality. Humor can be used if it aligns with the way you normally express your affections. Be sure to weave this tone into more traditional passages to create a cohesive expression of your feelings.
- Establish an outline. Put together all of the words and phrases you've jotted down into an outline to help you organize the flow of the vows, using these words as a blueprint for the vows and building upon them. Make sure the vows will be concise. Aim for your entire speech to be around 1 minute in length to keep everyone engaged and the ceremony moving along.
- Put everything together. Draft your vows and then practice them by reading out loud. You want to avoid long sentences or anything that trips you up. Although large words may sound impressive, they could make the vows seem too academic and not necessarily heartfelt. Enlist the help of a friend or two to act as your audience to see if the vows sound good and are easily understandable.

Writing your own vows can be a way to include personal expressions of love into a couple's wedding day. Public speaking is seldom easy, nor is finding the perfect words to convey feelings about a future spouse. However, with some practice and inspiration, anyone can draft personalized vows.

