

A Guide to Planning Your Commitment Ceremony



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Commitment Ceremonies are a celebration of the bond of love between two people. Although with the current laws in most states and territories of Australia it is not yet a legal commitment - it is however an ethical one. A commitment to a loved one is a one of the most meaningful moments in a person's life. And regardless of your sex, age or cultural background I would love to work with you to create a cherished moment in your life.

Some couples decide to celebrate this commitment with a simple private ceremony. Others decide to have a large celebration to ask their family, friends and co-workers to come together to recognise the relationship. However you decide to celebrate this moment, it is important to take some time to reflect on your feelings, your love for each other, and your commitment to each other. Please note - there are no legal benefits to having a Commitment Ceremony. The difference is that rather than being a legally binding ceremony, it is simply a public affirmation of a couple's commitment to one another.

A commitment ceremony is usually secular and less formal. However this is a choice you make with the options available. The makeup of the ceremony will depend on the couple's own preferences.



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What does my service include?

- ❖ Initial interview in your home or at a mutually convenient location.
- ❖ Telephone and email communications as necessary.
- ❖ Creation of fully personalised, unique and distinctive ceremony.
- ❖ Preparation of a keepsake Commitment Ceremony certificate.
- ❖ PA system if required for microphone and music.
- ❖ I welcome discussions about music, symbolism, rituals and any other requests for the ceremony to make it.....your ceremony.
- ❖ My promise that I will do my utmost to make your day as stress free as possible.

Confirmation of Booking and payment details

The ceremony date and time will be confirmed and secured by return of the booking fee of \$150.00.

The balance of \$245 is to be paid at least one week prior to the ceremony. There may be an extra charge for extended travelling time which I am happy to discuss.

The ceremony will not take place unless all fees have been paid.

If the ceremony is cancelled by you, the deposit is non-refundable.

Conditions

- ❖ Should you wish to alter the time and date of your ceremony please contact me as soon as possible for confirmation of my availability.
- ❖ The Ceremony must start close to the scheduled time.
- ❖ Please note that the couple is liable for and indemnifies the Celebrant against liability or loss arising from, and cost incurred due to, the couple not being ready at the venue within half an hour of the designated commencement time.
- ❖ Approval from Local Authorities for use of Public Park or space is the responsibility of the intending parties. The Celebrant must be given a copy of such approval.

As an Authorised Marriage Celebrant it is my pleasure to create a personal and memorable ceremony, one that reflects your individual personalities, in a warm, relaxed and sincere atmosphere. Please let me know if there is any aspect of your Ceremony that I can help you with.

Andrea

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Suggested Format

You may wish to start with a song here

Welcome & Opening

Welcome to Country

You may wish to add a reading/poem here.

Vows: I can help you write your personal vows for you to read from a card OR I can ask you vows, for you to say I Do/We Do.

You may wish to add a reading/poem here.

Rings or another commitment exchange (E.g. Matching Wedding Tattoos, Engraved Watch, Love Letter Exchange, Symbol of a Shared Hobby, Meaningful Artwork)

Signing of certificate

You may wish to add a song here

Closing

Pronouncement

Kiss

Presentation

You may wish to add a song here



Ideas for Openings

When you first joined hands and hearts __ years ago, you did not know where life would take you. Life has surely brought you both wonderful blessings and difficult tribulations and you have faced them all together.

Good relationships never stop growing. Like fine wine, they get better with age. _____ and _____, you have now been together __ years and through all the years of your journey together, you have now come to this beautiful setting, so that you can now make a commitment of love for each other.

No relationship is perfect. As you continue in this union, you already know that it will continue to take a lot of love and work to keep your relationship an ongoing success.

Many couples tend to think of marriage as a 50/50 proposition. Actually, the best relationships are 90/10. If you both will give 90% and take only 10%, you will have a formula likely to continue to bring both of you happiness for a lifetime.

As you continue on your journey together, I ask you to remember this advice:

Let your love be stronger than your anger.

Learn the wisdom of compromise, for it is better to bend than to break.

Believe the best of your beloved rather than the worst.

Confide in your partner and ask for help when you need it.

Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship.

Give your spouse the same courtesies and kindnesses you bestow on your friends.

Say "I love you" every day.

A Commitment Ceremony is a celebration of falling in love and beginning a life together as one. It is a celebration of staying in love and staying together in good times and in troubled times.

In the past _____ years you have been part of their lives because by your thoughts, your feelings and your acts towards them, you have strengthened their vows. Your presence today is an affirmation that you will continue to take interest in their life ahead.

Examples and Sample Vows for a Commitment Ceremony

"I am proud to commit to you on this day. I promise to wipe away your tears with my laughter and your pain with my caring and compassion. We will wipe clean the old canvases of our lives and let God, with His amazing artistic talent, fill them with new colours, harmony and beauty. I give myself to you completely, and I promise to love you always, from this day forth."

"I believe in our relationship more strongly than ever. (Name), it is with joy born of experience and trust that I commit myself to be your partner in life.

Today, after (number) years of being together, I ask you to continue to take me as your partner in life. You have stood by my side through sorrow and joy, triumph and defeat, sickness and health, and for this I am so grateful. I thank God for the gift of you. I thank you. My promise to you is perhaps best spoken through the words of Wilfred Alan Peterson: "Across the years I'll walk with you, in deep green forest, on shores of sand, and when our time on earth is through in heaven too, you will have my hand." I love you, (name).

(Name), I have always loved you and will always love you. You are part of me, the best part of me. With you by my side, I have grown so much. We have evolved and transformed together. We have endured together, laughed and cried together. Beloved, please take my hand. With you as my partner, the best is yet to be. For this I pray.

(Name), you are my heart, my best friend, my life. Today before family and friends, I pledge my commitment to you. I promise to love and cherish you, respect you and grow with you for all the days of our lives. This is my solemn vow.

Emily Bronte once wrote, "...he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same..." This is how I feel. Today before our family and friends I make a lifetime commitment to you. My love for you has deepened beyond anything I could have imagined. May it continue to shine as a beacon light in this world and the next.

(Name), the best thing I ever did was to meet you. I didn't always deserve you, but I always loved you. My vow to you, before God, is to do better, be better. I want to be the best partner I can be for you, for me, for us. I will do my best. This is my promise to you for the rest of my life.

(Name), you are the love of my life. I promise to love you, honour you, comfort and keep you. I pledge to be by your side in sickness and in health, in times of want, and times of plenty, for better or worse, for the rest of our lives. We have had all of those things, and you have been by my side as we created a life together. Today, at the beginning of our ____ year together, in the presence of God, and our family and friends, I make my commitment to you, pledging my eternal love for you, and eagerly awaiting what life may bring us.

A couple can end their vows with a poem, for example, this verse by James Weldon Johnson:

*"The world, for me, and all the world can hold is circled in your arms,
for me there lies within the lights and shadows of your eyes the only beauty that is never old."*

I _____, take you, _____, to be my always-and-forever partner and friend. I have known no other love like yours and I joyously pledge myself to you now, just as I did ____ years ago. I will continue to share with you all of the good and all of the bad, all of the joy and all of the sorrow of life. I rejoice in our union and promise to continue loving you for the rest of my life.

My dearest _____, it was ____ years ago when we met and fell in love. We have been through a lot together — laughter and tears, joy and sorrow - and yet, through all of those times, I can honestly say, I have loved you every step of the way. Today, I want to make a commitment to you and pledge my love and life to you. I promise to be there for you in sickness and in health, and through all the stages of life, on good and bad hair days. Whether you feel thin, fat, beautiful, ugly, fit and trim, or out of shape I will always think that you are perfect - perfect for me. I am here to be your supporter, your confidant, and your best friend. You have been a blessing to me for all these years and am honoured that I get to spend the rest of my life with you. I love you.

"I offer myself to you as a partner in life. I vow to love you in sickness and health. I commit myself to encourage you in good times and in bad. I will cherish and respect you all the days of our life together. Starting anew once again, I give thanks that I have found you. May our marriage be a gift to the world and our families as your love is a gift to me."

Writing your own vows?

Try the following to help you with the writing of your personalised vows:

Go through a book of wedding vows OR Google and jot down all the words and phrases you like on a piece of paper.

Answer these questions:

How do I love my partner? How has our love grown over the years?

How has my partner made me a better person?

For what am I most grateful to my partner? What is my pledge to him/her for the future?

Quote famous authors of love poems or books

Rings

From earliest times, the ring has been a symbol of love. An unbroken and never-ending circle symbolises a commitment to love that is also never ending.

Let these rings serve not as locks binding you together, but as keys, unlocking the secrets of your hearts for each other to know, and thus bringing you closer together forever.

"Do you, _____ continue to take _____ as your loving partner? Will you continue to love her, honour her, comfort and treasure her, forsaking all others for as long as you both shall live? Do you, _____ continue to take _____ as your loving _____? Will you continue to love him, honour him, comfort and treasure him, forsaking all others for as long as you both shall live?"

"Husband/Wife, I give you this ring as a token of our abiding love and commitment to one another."

Our future is a circle unbroken, much like these rings, with which we make our pledge to one another of never-ending devotion."

Ideas for Closing

May the sun bring you new energy by day.

May the moon softly restore you by night.

May the rain wash away your worries.

And may you live the days of your lives in peace, love, and happiness.

May that special love you now share continue to grow and blossom in the years to come and be sustained by family and friends, and by the commitment you make today.

May you find in each other companionship as well as love; understanding as well as compassion; challenge as well as agreement.

Above all, may you find an even richer joy in living, learning, and loving together.

Ideas for Pronouncement & Kiss

_____ and _____, having witnessed your vows of affirmation with all who are assembled here, and by the authority of love itself, I do affirm that you have expressed your desire to commit to one another for the rest of your lives.

You may seal your vows with a kiss.

Hand Ceremony

_____ please face _____ and hold his hands, palms up, so you may see the gift that they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, strong, yet tender and sincere with love, as he again promises to love you all the days of his life.

These are the hands that have worked along side yours, as together you built your home and family, as you laughed and cried, as you shared your innermost secrets and dreams.

These are the hands you placed with expectant joy against your stomach, until he too, felt his child stir within you.

These are the hands that look so large and strong yet were so gentle as they held your babies for the first time.

These are the hands that worked long hours for you and your family.

These are the hands that have held you tight as you struggled through difficult times.

These are the hands that comforted you when you were sick, or consoled you when you were

grieving.

And these are the hands that will continue to love you passionately and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

Now, hold his left hand in yours and repeat after me

I ____, give to you, _____,

a new promise and yet not so new;

a new life, and yet not so new;

a new affirmation of love from the heart that has loved you for over ____ years

and will love you for as many more as God allots to it.

This is the covenant I commit to you today.

_____ please hold _____ hands, palms up, where you may see the gift that they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, small, yet strong and sincere with love, as she again pledges her love and commitment to you all the days of her life.

These are the hands that have worked along side yours, as together you built your home and family, as you laughed and cried, as you shared your innermost secrets and dreams.

These are the hands that held you in joy, excitement and hope, each time she told you that you were to have a child, that together you had created a new life.

These are the hands that holds each child in tender love, soothing them through illness and hurt, supporting and encouraging them along the way, and knowing when it is time to let go.

These are the hands that massages tension from your neck and back in the evenings after you've both had a long hard day.

These are the hands that have countless times wiped the tears from your eyes: tears of sorrow and tears of joy

These are the hands that have comforted you in illness and held you when fear or grief wracked your mind.

And these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

Now, hold her left hand in yours and repeat after me

I ____, give to you, _____,

a new promise and yet not so new;

a new life, and yet not so new;

a new affirmation of love from the heart that has loved you for over ____ years

and will love you for as many more as God allots to it.

This is the commitment I make to you today.

Prayer

God, bless these hands that you see before you this day.

May they always be held by one another.

Give them the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment.

Keep them tender and gentle as they nurture each other in their wondrous love.

Help these hands to continue building a relationship founded in your grace, rich in caring, and devoted in reaching for your perfection.

May _____ and _____ see their four hands as healer, protector, shelter and guide.

We ask this in your name, Amen.

Lighting a Unity Candle

Every human being possesses a special light that burns within them.

When two spirits, destined to be together, find each other, their streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light, goes forth from their union.

Readings for Sand Ceremonies

In a lovely twist on tradition, some of my couples, after they had scooped up sand from the beach and poured it into a bottle, ask me to read an Apache Wedding Prayer - an example of a selection of readings for unity sand ceremonies. I recite the blessing and then place it into the bottle. They then cork the bottle and throw it out into the ocean with everyone cheering in the background. That indicates the end of the sand ceremony.

_____ and _____ have chosen An Apache Prayer for their final blessing:

(Name) and (Name),

Now you will feel no rain,

For each of you will be shelter to the other.

Now you will feel no cold,

For each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now there is no more loneliness,

For each of you will be companion to the other.

Now you are two bodies,

But there is one life before you.

Go now to your dwelling place,

To enter into the days of your togetherness.

And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

I then slip the written Apache Blessing into the bottle, they cork it and throw it into the ocean.

For other ceremonies I have placed words of William Blake into the bottle.

_____ and _____ your lives are now joined in the most sacred and joyous of unions. We pray that your life be blessed. In the immortal words of the poet mystic William Blake, together may you...

"See a world in a grain of sand

And heaven in a wildflower

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand

And eternity in an hour."

I am looking forward to planning the perfect ceremony with you.

Warm regards

Andrea

