

## How long does a Wedding Ceremony last?

A wedding ceremony can be as brief as 20 minutes or longer than an hour. In planning your wedding, you may want to shorten, or lengthen, the basic ceremony. A ceremony which is too brief, for example, may mean that some guests arrive so late they do not get to witness the main event! A ceremony which is too long will begin to bore people and cause them to pay less attention to the core elements of the ceremony—the exchange of promises or vows, the giving of wedding rings, etc.

Here are some major factors which will affect it's length:

- Does the wedding start “on time”, or is it delayed because of the late arrival of Bride/Groom, attendants or important guests?
- Size of the Wedding Party: since weddings traditionally include a formal ceremonial entrance and exit of the Wedding Party, the size of the party (number of Bridesmaids, flower girl, ring bearer, etc.) will affect the length of the whole ceremony.
- Musical additions: if one or more solos, duets, choir anthems, etc., are added to the ceremony, each one may add 5 or more minutes to the total length.
- Readings: typically one or two readings from the Bible are included to set the context and meaning of Christian marriage and give instruction to all assembled as to the importance of the wedding rite. Sometimes other readings from secular or non-Christian religious sources are added.
- “Customs” such as lighting of a unity candle, tying a lasso around the couple, exchanging coins, etc. are added. These are part of the ritual “fun” which makes a wedding memorable.
- Holy Communion: some couples desire to celebrate the traditional Mass or Eucharistic rite as part of their wedding. This includes additional prayers, music and the consecration of the bread and wine. All faithful people present are invited to come forward and to eat and drink. This typically adds about 15 minutes to the length of the wedding.
- Photography and videography: an important part of any wedding day, if extensive posed photos are taken *after* the ceremony, before the wedding couple is free to greet and mingle with their guests, this adds to the *perceived* length of time for the wedding. It may delay the beginning of the Reception, and should be taken into account when planning the whole event.
- Unforeseen events: small or big mishaps do happen. Examples: the groom forgot to bring the marriage License to church and had to return home for it; the organist did not remember the time of the ceremony and arrived late; the Bride's helper dropped the wedding gown in the gutter when getting out of the car, and it had to be partly washed, dried and pressed on an emergency basis!

The bottom line: Plan everything carefully; allow enough time before the ceremony, between the ceremony and the reception, etc., and make quick decisions about solving unforeseen problems.