



# Traditions both old and new to put the 'you' in 'nuptials'

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Somewhere between orchestrating the reception, traipsing through dress stores and agonizing over guest lists, the details of the wedding ceremony tend to slip through the cracks.

Aside from the location, decorations and bridal party, how much can you really do with your wedding ceremony, anyway?

By adding just a few personal touches, you can transform your ceremony into an unforgettable masterpiece guaranteed to leave you and your guests misty-eyed.

The key to creating a memorable wedding ceremony is to include aspects of your personality. From your walk down the aisle to the moment you say "I do," there are countless opportunities to tastefully incorporate the things that are most important to you.

### SOMETHING OLD

Your own heritage is a great source of inspiration for personalizing your wedding ceremony. Integrating ethnicity or religion into your ceremony is sure to make the nuptials more meaningful not only to the bride and groom, but to your families as well.

The key is deciding if you prefer to include these traditions with a subtle touch or with dramatic flair.

For those looking to add just a slight hint of the past, consider the following:

■ Native American couples recite their vows facing east, toward the rising sun, to signify the new beginnings of life together.

■ Scottish husbands, at the conclusion of the vows, drape their new wife in a sash of their clan's tartan to welcome her into the family.

If you're willing to let tradition take center stage at your

ceremony, you may be more interested in these customs:

■ Eastern Orthodox weddings include a crowning ceremony, in which the best man places crowns tied together with ribbon on the bride's and groom's heads. The ribbon unites the new couple both literally and symbolically throughout the ceremony.

■ African-American couples often incorporate a tradition called "jumping of the broom," in which the couple concludes their vows by jumping over an ornately decorated broom to signify that past troubles have been swept away.

### SOMETHING NEW

While modern weddings are frequently themed to reflect a certain season or time period, these themes all too often stop short of the chapel doors. Yet with a little creativity, there are many ways a couple can stylishly extend their wedding theme into the ceremony:

■ For a New Year's Eve wedding, consider inviting guests around 10 p.m., beginning with cocktails, and sealing your vows with a kiss at midnight. Forgo the rice for a fireworks send-off.

■ If you're planning a

Valentine's Day wedding, why not hold the ceremony in a rose garden? For a fall wedding, try an apple orchard; for a spring wedding, look for a flower field.

■ A beach wedding is the perfect setting for a "sand ceremony," in which the bride and groom pour sand from two glasses into one to signify their union in marriage.

■ For a medieval wedding, ask your minister to tie your wrists together with ribbon before you recite your vows — medieval brides associated knots with hope, luck and steadfastness.

■ If a Hollywood wedding is your style, consider rolling a red carpet down the aisle before you make your grand entrance.

### SOMETHING BORROWED

Another way to personalize your ceremony is to borrow the talents of your friends and families.

If your best pals are gifted singers or musicians, consider letting their melodies accompany you down the aisle. Got a few secret Shakespeares in the family tree? Let them write a few verses to read during the ceremony. In some states, you

can even have a friend or family member ordained for the day to legally perform your ceremony.

One of the most popular ways to personalize a wedding ceremony is to write your own vows, an experience that can be both emotionally taxing and rewarding.

As in most wedding planning, the key is to plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time. A few other tips that may help:

■ Keep it short. The entire process will be easier on you (and your guests) if you don't count all the ways you love your sweetheart.

■ Borrow liberally. Writing your own vows does not mean you have to reinvent the wheel; borrow from your friends' weddings, celebrity weddings (celebrity vows are

available at [www.weddingchannel.com](http://www.weddingchannel.com)), or the hundreds of wedding Web sites where couples often post their vows.

■ Don't memorize. You'll have enough stress on the big day without envisioning your mother hissing your forgotten lines from the front pew.

### SOMETHING YOU

There are endless ways to include whatever is most important to you in your wedding ceremony — even pets or hobbies. If your dog is a part of the family, tie the ring to his collar and have him serve as ring bearer. If you and your sweetheart are vocalists, sing your vows to each other.

The most important thing to remember is that it's all about you.

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