

Writing Your Own Vows

Writing your own vows can be a poignant way of personalising the central part of your marriage ceremony. But composing the most magical promise of love you have ever created takes time, and some serious soul searching. Before embarking on this journey be sure your groom is as keen on the idea as you are, and that your officiant does not object.

Something old, something new

Start by looking for inspiration from traditional marriage vows that have stood the test of time. These contain moving and trusted words that have joined couples together for generations, eloquently expressing the key promises upon which a happy marriage can be founded.

You may choose to combine phrases from traditional wedding vows with your own words. A favourite is the traditional Protestant query,

Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honour and keep her/him... as long as you both shall live?

which many couples choose to incorporate into their own wedding vows.

Make it personal

Be sure to express what's unique about the two of you. Ask yourselves, what does marriage mean to you? If you are from different backgrounds, you could promise to support and uphold both heritages whilst together building traditions of your own. If marrying for you is about having a family together, you may want to include a something like

I take you, (Name), to be the father / mother of my children, to have and to hold...

I promise...

A vow is really a promise, so focus on meaningful promises and commitments that you would like to make to each other. Your words should be heartfelt and sincere, but avoid long descriptions on the nature of your love for one another which are better kept for the speeches. You could for example pledge to:

- Love, honour, respect and cherish each other
- Be kind, trusting and tolerant
- Support each other in times of trouble
- Encourage one another
- Respect each other's individuality
- Be understanding and patient towards each other
- Stay together for life
- Be faithful and honest
- Be a good friend
- Bring fun and laughter into the marriage

Remember that your vows should be written as a public declaration of your commitment to each other, so avoid any overly intimate details. You should keep them short, preferably under two minutes. It's advisable to discuss them with your officiant, who with all their experience may have lots of helpful suggestions.

Sample vows

I promise to love, comfort and encourage you, to be open and honest with you, and stay with you forsaking all others as long as we both shall live.

I promise to love, respect and honour you, sharing your plans, dreams and emotions, through all the trials and tribulations of life, as well as the joyous times, caring for you in lifelong commitment.

I promise to be your confidante, always ready to share your hopes, dreams and plans for the future.

Practice makes perfect

A sentence that looks great when written can be difficult to understand or overlong when spoken. For this reason it's a good idea to practise your vows out loud. Check there's nothing that might trip up your tongue and make adjustments until it sounds right. Read slowly and clearly, and practise projecting your voice so your guests will be able to hear you.

Whether you want to recite your vows independently or repeat them, make sure you give your officiant a copy. That way if your nerves kick in and your mind goes blank, you can just repeat them after your officiant.

This is an extract from the highly acclaimed 'One Stop Wedding Kit', the book that fast-tracks you to your dream wedding with expert advice, tips and inspirational wedding ideas. For just the cost of a bottle of wine, The One Stop Wedding Kit exposes secrets that will save you thousands of dollars. Visit www.loveandcherish.net/wedstore_kit.asp to check it out.