



Elopement Outline



Weddings with Reverend Jim Beidle

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Foreword to the Outline

This framework serves as an example for your ceremony. Taking your thoughts into account, I compose your draft ceremony. Through the questionnaires and other communications that we share, you will tell me your choices.

The parts in **Purple Ink** are not mandatory. We use them as samples, guidance, or directions while you construct the project. Comments in **Blue Ink** are cues and instructions intended to make our actions clear. **Red Ink** are parts I edit. Throughout, I need your input and decisions to make your ceremony uniquely yours.

Welcome

It's traditional to open by welcoming the people you've invited. We set your stated intention of marrying in this part. With a wedding being both a legal and spiritual agreement, the welcome begins us on the right track.

Assent

This section is required by Washington State law.

Washington Law requires both parties in a marriage to affirm they are marrying of their own free will. We meet this requirement by asking a question, like, "Are both of you willing to give your hand to the one whose heart you hold?" You respond, "Yes, I am," or similar words. If either of you respond negatively, then I stop the marriage until we resolve the problem. I probably don't need to say it, but this is not the time to make a joke.

Reading

Even elopements should be unique to the couple. To give you a little more than a copycat, “read from the manual” experience, I’ve included a book of readings. Find a poem or reading that speaks to both of you, and tell me the reference number.

Wedding Vows

This section is required by Washington State law.

Washington law requires both parties to swear an oath. It’s main purpose is to show you understand what’s required of you in a marriage partnership. We do this in one of two ways.

I Do Vows

“I do” vows are the one’s you are familiar with from books and movies you’ve seen throughout your life. I ask each of you a series of questions and you respond “I do” or “I will” appropriately. The church started using “I dos” in the last century to make it easy for young, nervous “to-be-weds.” Their simplicity is ideal for English Language Learners who are concerned about following Repeat After Me vows.

Repeat After Me Vows

I favor this technique of exchanging vows, as it allows you to take part. In turns, I give each of you a few words to say to your partner, promising your love and support in your future together. Since you’re actively listening to, and repeating, what I say, you are fully engaged in your marriage.

Explanation Of The Rings

Since at least the late Middle Ages, rings and other tokens have been part of the legacy of a wedding. Rings symbolize a promise of commitment to a special person. Ninety-nine out a hundred weddings that I've solemnized include a ring or other token.

This optional part takes place in two sections. First, I'll explain the history and symbolism of your rings. In the second part, below, you'll actually exchange rings.

If you are exchanging tokens other than rings, please let me know. Tell me the story behind your choice, and what the emblem symbolizes to you.

Likewise, if you choose to skip a ring exchange, please let me know.

Ring Exchange

During the ring exchange, I'll be your guide. I'll have you take turns and repeat a few words after me that speak to the commitment your rings represent.

Pronouncement

This section is required by Washington State law.

Pronouncement and presentation are the final legal parts of your wedding. In this section, I summarize the proceedings for your witnesses. I'll note the formalities of assent, vows, and rings that you've exchanged. Then we get to the part everyone is waiting for: your first kiss as a married couple. The kiss is a simpler, "family-safe" version of a tradition going back thousands of years.

Presentation

This section is required by Washington State law.

Formal presentation, besides its legal requirement, is another traditional touch. This is the last step in solidifying your marriage in front of your witnesses. You'll choose the form of address, and I'll include it in your ceremony.

Closing Words

Another tradition I like to observe is saying some closing words. Just as we open with the welcome and statement of intent, I believe it's important to take a moment to receive the best wishes of your witnesses and guests. This is another opportunity to make your elopement unique by choosing a reading from the "Blessings and Benedictions" book I've included.

Before the reading, I'll take a moment to let your guests know what you have planned next. For example, you might plan to share a cake or go to a restaurant. No matter what, we'll make sure they know.

If you choose to forgo closing words, I'll let your audience know the next step just before the pronouncement.