

# Wedding Traditions For All Faiths and Cultures

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# Wedding Traditions For All Faiths and Cultures

## Catholic Wedding Traditions

In many cases a marriage is recognized both by a church and the state. While the legal requirements for a wedding are established by the state, many couples wish to follow certain religious traditions to have their marriage recognized in their church as well. In the Catholic religion marriage is considered sacred and is one of the sacraments of the faith. The Catholic Church puts forth their own requirements for a marriage to be recognized in the eyes of the church.

One of the most important aspects of a Catholic wedding is the location. Many couples may wish to be married in an outdoor ceremony but it is important to realize that an outdoor wedding would not be recognized by the Catholic Church. The purpose of holding your wedding ceremony is to demonstrate that you are seeking God's blessing and influence in your marriage. For this reason the Catholic Church does not recognize any marriage ceremonies that are held outside of a church. While you will still be legally married in accordance with all state guidelines your marriage will not be recognized by the church.

A Catholic wedding does not have to include a Mass as part of the wedding. The church will recognize a union that is performed in a church and by a priest without the full Mass. Many couples will opt for a full Mass to have the opportunity to receive additional blessings during their wedding. A wedding that includes a full Mass can be slightly over an hour long in terms of length. A wedding that does not include a Mass can be approximately 20 minutes long and usually includes readings, hymns and psalms as well as blessings from the priest but does not include a celebration of the Eucharist.

Another Catholic wedding tradition requires that previous marriages receive an annulment before the couple can be married in the church. Even if the previous marriage was not held in the church or recognized by the church, they still require an annulment before they will perform a marriage ceremony. In this situation a divorce decree is not enough. The previously married party will have to seek an annulment that verifies that the previous marriage was not valid.

The music of a Catholic wedding also holds quite a bit of tradition. While religious music is encouraged, many churches will allow secular music as long as it is approved by the priest prior to the wedding. Although there are many beautiful love songs that have been written over time, it is important to understand that since a Catholic wedding takes place inside of God's domain, many priests are hesitant to allow any music that might be offensive. They take extra precautions to ensure that the music will be appropriate and that guests will not be offended. The easiest way to avoid this problem is to not include secular music in a Catholic wedding.

One additional tradition of the Catholic Church is requiring the couple to attend pre-marital counseling sessions, sometimes called Pre-Cana. These are extremely worthwhile because they give the couple the forum for talking about various serious issues. This time honored tradition of the Catholic Church goes a long way in ensuring that the couple is right for each other and

that their marriage will last. These sessions are usually hosted by a priest and can also include young married couples who testify to the joys and tribulations of marriage. These can be either individual or group sessions and include weekly or monthly sessions or may be one intensive weekend of counseling.

Both parties do not have to be Catholic in order to have their wedding recognized by the Catholic Church. It is required, however, that at least one member of the couple be an active member of a Catholic Church. The non-Catholic party, however, is required to participate in the required pre-marital counseling in order to ensure that the church will recognize the union. Additionally, if either party was married previously, they would have to seek an annulment before they could be married in the church.

In order for a marriage to be recognized by the Catholic Church it is important to adhere to certain traditions. These traditions include location, music selections, seeking annulments for previous marriages and participating in church sanctioned counseling sessions.

## **Irish Wedding Traditions**

Many nationalities have their own wedding traditions. The people of Ireland have their own distinct traditions that make it easy to distinguish an Irish wedding from weddings of other cultures. The traditions include Claddagh rings, superstitions, a special toast, as well as kilts and bagpipes.

The Claddagh ring has a special meaning in a traditional Irish wedding. The Claddagh ring is a traditional ring that looks like two hands holding a heart that is adorned with a crown. Tradition holds that Claddagh rings be passed down from mother to daughter. As these rings are meant to be passed down for generations, it is not considered proper to buy a Claddagh ring for yourself. Yet another tradition involving the Claddagh ring relates to how it is worn.

An engaged or married woman or man would wear the ring with the tips of the crown facing towards their fingertips. In this position the ring is considered to be turned inward and symbolizes that the heart of the person wearing the ring is taken. A man or woman who is not involved in a romantic relationship would wear the ring with the tips of the crown facing towards their wrist. This outward position of the ring symbolizes that the person wearing the ring is reaching out for companionship.

Traditional Irish weddings also adhere to several unusual superstitions in an attempt to ward off bad luck. A rain or overcast day might be cause for concern at a traditional Irish wedding. This is because one of the strange superstitions is that the sun must shine directly on the bride to ensure that the couple will be blessed with good luck.

Birds also factor into some of the traditional Irish superstitions. Hearing a cuckoo bird or seeing three magpies are also considered to be signs of luck for the couple. Yet another final superstition relates to offering well wishes to the bride. At a traditional Irish wedding it is considered bad luck for a woman to be the first one to congratulate the bride and wish her well.

For this reason a close friend or relative of the groom will also take it upon himself to ensure that he is the first to congratulate the bride.

A traditional Irish wedding usually concludes with a toast that has been recited for many years. At the end of the reception the guests will gather around the couple for the final toast. The couple will begin the toast by saying, "Friends and relatives, so fond and dear, 'tis our greatest pleasure to have you here. When many years this day has passed, fondest memories will always last. So we drink a cup of Irish mead and ask God's blessing in your hour of need."

The guests then respond to the toast with the following answer: "On this special day, our wish to you, the goodness of the old, the best of the new. God bless you both who drink this mead, may it always fill your every need." "Friends and relatives, so fond and dear, 'tis our greatest pleasure to have you here. When many years this day has passed, fondest memories will always last. So we drink a cup of Irish mead and ask God's blessing in your hour of need." The guests respond: "On this special day, our wish to you, the goodness of the old, the best of the new. God bless you both who drink this mead, may it always fill your every need."

Of course, no traditional Irish wedding complete without the presence of bagpipes and kilts. It is customary for friends and family members to bring along their bagpipes and pipe the couple into the mass and into the reception. They may also continue to charm the guests with an assortment of bagpipe tunes suitable for dancing. Not only do friends and family members enjoy performing for the couple and the other guests but they also enjoy taking the opportunity to dress in traditional kilts for the occasion. The look and sound of the bagpipers creates the feel of a truly traditional Irish wedding.

A traditional Irish wedding is a festive occasion filled with good friends, food and music. In addition to these traditional elements the Irish people also have traditions regarding the Claddagh ring and standardized toasts that are used to wish the new couple well. Superstitions also play a role in a traditional Irish wedding. Many of the traditional superstitions relate to objects or occurrences that are thought to bring the couple good luck.

## **Italian Wedding Traditions**

Couples who are of Italian descent may choose to incorporate a variety of Italian traditions into their wedding even if they have never even set foot on Italian soil. This is a fun way to honor your ancestors with a nostalgic glimpse into the past. The religious aspects, dances and food at a wedding may all hold traditional values.

The dominant religion in Italy is Roman Catholicism. Therefore a traditional Italian wedding would also be linked to a traditional Catholic wedding and would include a full Mass with the ceremony. Although, not all Italians are also Catholics and if you and your future spouse are not Catholic you can still have a traditional Italian reception to celebrate your marriage. Immediately after the wedding ceremony the couple may release a pair of white doves. These doves symbolize the love and affection that the couple hold for each other.

There are a few other small traditions that apply to the ceremony. One of these traditions is to adorn each entryway that the couple will pass through with elaborately tied ribbons. These ribbons are symbolic of the unity of the couple. It is also customary for the groom to carry a small piece of iron in his pocket during the wedding ceremony. This piece of metal is said to ward off evil spirits and ensure a happy future for the couple. The bride may also rip her veil slightly. This is said to bring good luck to the couple.

The reception that follows the wedding ceremony is where the majority of Italian traditions take place. It is customary for the guests to assemble in the reception room before the bride and groom arrive. You should arrange for your guests to be served alcoholic beverages during this time. The women are traditionally served sweet liquors while the men are served stronger drinks. It is important that these drinks be served before the couple arrives at the reception because tradition holds that the guests offer a toast to the bride and the groom the moment that they arrive at the reception.

There are a few traditional dances that are typically performed at traditional Italian weddings. The Tarantella is one example of these dances. There are several different stories on the origin of this dance but most of the stories revolve around a spider bite. In just about every version of the story, la tarantella was a dance that was performed either to counteract the venom of the spider or as an uncontrollable response to the venom.

In modern times this dance is performed as a way of wishing the couple good luck in their future together. La Tarantella is a group, circle dance where the participants dance in a clockwise direction until the music speeds up and then they reverse directions. These tempo changes occur several times and each time the tempos speeds up the group changes direction again. This continues until it is impossible to keep up with the tempo of the music.

No authentic wedding would be complete without a scrumptious feast featuring several courses. A traditional Italian wedding reception begins with an antipasto course that features olives, pickled sweet peppers, mushrooms and cheeses. That is followed by many other courses that include pastas, meats, soups, salads and desserts that are each accompanied by free flowing wine.

There are certain foods that have symbolic meanings. For example guests are usually presented with an odd number of almonds. The almonds represent the fact that marriage is often bittersweet. They are presented in odd numbers that have different traditional meanings. For example three almonds wish the couple luck with children while five almonds wish the couple monetary wealth.

Another Italian wedding tradition is to have the couple break a glass or vase at the conclusion of the reception. The Jewish faith has a similar tradition where the groom will break a wine glass at the conclusion of the ceremony but these traditions vary in their intentions and symbolism.

Jewish couples break a glass as a symbol of human frailty and the hardship that their ancestors have endured because of their faith. An Italian couple, however, breaks a glass or vase for a completely different reason. According to Italian tradition the number of pieces that the glass breaks into represents the number of happy years that the couple will enjoy together.

It is fun for couples of Italian descent to incorporate traditional elements into their wedding. Even if the couple only has distant relatives that originated from Italy and have never even been to Italy, it is still acceptable to follow these traditions. Couples of other nationalities may also choose an Italian themed wedding just for the enjoyment of trying something different.

## **Jewish Wedding Traditions**

The Jewish faith is one that is deeply ensconced in tradition. A traditional Jewish wedding follows a number of beautiful traditions that date back for thousands of years. The traditions include the signing of the Ketubah, the use of the chuppah as well as traditional dances that are performed at the wedding. The rings exchanged during a Jewish wedding also have traditional connotations.

The signing of the Ketubah is the traditional start to a Jewish wedding ceremony. The Ketubah is a written agreement that not only asserts that the bride is not already married but also outlines the expectations that the couple hold for each other in the marriage. This ornate document can later be framed and prominently displayed in the couple's home as a reminder of their commitment.

After the bride and groom have signed the Ketubah, the groom takes one final look at his bride before lowering her veil and beginning the wedding procession. This tradition has biblical roots and recalls the story of Jacob who married the wrong woman because she was veiled and he did not realize his mistake in time.

The wedding party traditionally precedes the couple in the wedding procession. The bride and groom then proceed down the aisle together accompanied by both of their parents to symbolize that their union includes the union of both families and not just the bride and the groom. The couple ends their procession under a traditional canopy called a chuppah. This canopy symbolizes that God is present and that he is sheltering and protecting the couple.

After the couple exchanges their wedding vows, a rabbi reads 7 traditional blessings. After the blessings the groom steps on a wine glass to break the glass in a symbol of human frailty and the suffering that members of the Jewish faith have endured and this with a final blessing from the rabbi concludes the ceremony. Unlike other traditional weddings, there is usually not a receiving line at the conclusion of a Jewish wedding.

Tradition holds that the couple spends a few minutes alone immediately following the wedding so many members of the Jewish faith honor this tradition by leaving the ceremony immediately and waiting until the reception to offer their well wishes to the couple. This togetherness time was traditionally an opportunity for the couple to consummate the marriage but in modern times it is more of chance for the couple to reflect on their wedding ceremony and the start of their life together before the chaos of the wedding.

Even the rings that a couple exchanges during a Jewish wedding have traditional values. Tradition holds that the couple exchange very simple rings that are devoid of gems, engravings

or other distinguishing marks. With nothing to distinguish the beginning or the end of the ring, it is a beautiful symbol of a love that endures forever with no clear beginning or end. This symbolizes both the couples' love for each other as well as God's love for his people.

A traditional Jewish wedding reception features many dances. An energetic dance called the Hora is performed at many traditional Jewish weddings. In this dance the bride and groom hold a handkerchief between them while they are seated in chairs and hoisted into the air by their guests. This dance is a celebration of the bride and groom and recognizes the significance of their union. If this wedding represents the last son or daughter of one of the parents to be married there are a few more traditional dances that may take place.

If the bride was the last in her family to be married, she and her sisters may honor their mother in a tradition known as Krenzi. The mother is crowned with flowers and her daughters honor her in the form of dance. Also, if either the bride or groom was the youngest to be married both of the parents will be honored through the Mizinke dance. In this tradition all of the guests circle the parents and shower them with flowers and praise.

The Jewish faith is a faith that is full of history and tradition. Many couples and their guests choose to honor these traditions by incorporating them into their wedding ceremony and reception. Many of these traditions are the defining moments of the celebration and they lend an atmosphere of historical significance to the wedding.

## **Multi-Cultural Weddings**

While many different religions and nationalities have their own well-established traditions, it is becoming increasingly common for couples of mixed ancestry to marry. Interracial couples are marrying more and more often and with this increase in inter-racial marriages comes a need for weddings that have a multi-cultural feel. With so many wonderful traditions that hold a great deal of importance to many families it is important to plan a wedding that will celebrate the cultural diversity rather than spotlight one of the cultures while neglecting the other.

Even if the couple themselves do not feel strongly about having their heritage represented, it is important to consider the feelings of family members as well. While the wedding is for the couple and in general they should plan it as they see fit, this should not be done at the risk of hurting the feelings of family members by neglecting their culture in the ceremony and reception.

One of the easiest ways to handle a multi-cultural wedding is to allow one culture to dominate the wedding ceremony while the other culture dominates the wedding reception. At the ceremony care could be used to ensure that the attire, words, music, decorations and procedures adhere to the culture of either the bride or the groom. If the culture of the bride dominates the ceremony then you could allow the culture of the groom to dominate the reception. This could be done by providing food, entertainment and toasts that reflect on the time-honored traditions of the groom's cultural background.

While the preceding solution of having one culture control the ceremony and another culture control the reception is one way to plan a multi-cultural wedding, many couples choose to blend both of the components of the wedding instead. While this can be more difficult, it may be a better solution because neither family feels left out of a party of the wedding. There are countless variations for blending the traditions of two cultures into the wedding ceremony. For example you might want to consider having both the bride and the groom dressing in the traditional attire of the one of the families but having them enter the ceremony to traditional music of the other family.

Another variation on this idea is to have the bride dress according to her cultural customs while the groom dresses according to his cultural customs. This would symbolize the joining of the two cultures with the union of the individuals. You could even consider having the bride and the groom dress according to each other's cultural customs as a symbol of their being willing to embrace the other culture in their union.

Cultural weddings can also be blended at the reception in a number of ways. A simple way to do this is to serve foods that relate to one culture and provide entertainment that relates to the other culture. This separation may seem too harsh for some couples and they may want to blend their cultures in a more subtle way. One way to do this is to serve a buffet style dinner that serves cultural favorites of both heritages.

Also, if you budget a significant amount of money for entertainment, you could consider hiring two bands so that you can have one band that specializes in the cultural heritage of the bride and one to represent the groom's heritage. This could not only serve to unite the families but can also serve to ensure that the entertainment never ceases. Many live bands play for only about 20 minutes at a time and then take a break. The two bands could alternate playing their music so that there is never a dull moment at the reception. If budget constraints do not allow hiring two separate bands you might want to consider hiring a band to play the music of one culture and consider hiring dancers to represent the other culture.

Multi-cultural weddings are on the rise. As the number of inter-racial couples increases, there is also an increased need for creative ways to blend two different cultures into a wedding ceremony and reception that will be enjoyed by all the guests. Careful considerations should be made to ensure that neither culture is offended by the festivities and that they are both prominently displayed and celebrated.

### **Non-Denominational or Mixed Religion Weddings**

Couples of mixed religions or who come from families that do not have a strong religious background may choose to have either a non-denominational wedding or a wedding that blends two separate religions. This can be tricky however because many religions may not honor or recognize a wedding unless it is performed according to their own unique guidelines. For this reason it is very important to check with potential officiants and church leaders to ensure that your wedding plans will result in a union that is recognized by both churches.

This is significant because you would not want to invest time and money on a marriage that will wind up not being recognized by the church and possibly not even recognized by the government. Whether a couple decides to have a non-denominational wedding, incorporate aspects of both religion into a ceremony that will not be recognized by either faith or participate in two separate religious ceremonies, it is important to remember that their love for each other and their love of their faith are equally important.

If both the bride and the groom have very strong faith backgrounds and wish to have their wedding recognized by their respective churches, they may have to take a few extra steps to ensure that their union is recognized by their churches. Sometimes the only way to do this is to have a wedding ceremony in both churches.

This may seem like an unnecessary step but one of the defining criteria of having your marriage recognized by your faith, for many religions, is to have your wedding ceremony in the church. It is simply not possible to do this unless the couple takes the extra steps of having two wedding ceremonies to ensure that they will be both be accepted as a married couple into their faiths.

Another alternative to participating in two separate ceremonies in order to have the union recognized by both churches is to have a non-denominational wedding that is only recognized by the government. Couples may choose this option if they do not have the time or money that would be required to have two separate wedding ceremonies.

A couple may choose a compromise that results in neither church recognizing the union. The theory behind this type of choice is that the couple decides that their love for each other is strong enough to survive and that they do not need to have the approval of their churches in order to have a successful and lasting marriage.

Still another alternative is to have a non-denominational wedding ceremony at a location in a natural setting. At this type of ceremony the couple has no restrictions and can choose to incorporate either religion into the ceremony in any way that they see fit. They may do this by using traditional prayers and religious songs during the ceremony. While this type of ceremony will not be recognized by the church it does offer the couple the opportunity to incorporate some of the religious traditions of both of their faiths into a beautiful ceremony that successfully blends two religions.

A final alternative is to incorporate one faith fully into the wedding ceremony and incorporate the other faith fully into the wedding reception. This option results in the marriage being recognized by one of the religions but does not allow the other family to feel neglected because their faith is well represented in the traditional activities of the wedding reception. This option is only feasible if the member of the couple who will not have their church recognize the union, is completely accepting and understand of this fact. This is important because the resentment and jealousy that could result from this could be very detrimental to the couple.

Inter-faith couples are on the rise. Years ago it was unheard of to marry someone outside of your faith but this is no longer true and many couples today are inter-faith couples. It is difficult but not impossible to integrate the two faiths in a way that is satisfactory to all of those involved. While the faiths can be blended to create a beautiful wedding, the problem is that

many churches will not accept this blended wedding as a union. Sometimes the couple decides that their happiness together is more important than having the church recognize the union so they opt for a non-denominational wedding that is completely devoid of any religious traditions.

### **Russian Wedding Traditions**

Russia has a long history of wedding traditions. The traditional Russian wedding ceremony does not have many traditions and many couples opt for a simple civil service that is not widely attended by their friends and relatives. The wedding reception however is a very important part of Russian tradition. Perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of a traditional Russian wedding is that it lasts for at least two days.

Russian law does not recognize church weddings so couples wishing to marry must have a civil wedding ceremony. At the conclusion of this ceremony the couple is given bread and salt, which represents health and prosperity. This civil ceremony is considered unimportant by family members and many of them do not attend. In the Russian culture the wedding reception is a two day extravaganza that is considered to be more important than the ceremony itself.

The first day of a Russian wedding ceremony is filled with a series of events that includes the civil ceremony, a tour of the city and the start of the reception. The wedding day begins with the bride and groom in separate locations each accompanied by their own friends and family members. The groom will arrive at the bride's location well before the two of them need to arrive at the civil service. This is necessary because the bride's friends and family members make it difficult for the groom to reach his bride.

For example, if the bride lives on a high floor of an apartment complex, the groom will be detained by friends or family members at each floor and asked trivia type questions about his bride. If he answers incorrectly, he must pay cash to advance to the next step. Once he arrives at his bride's side, the two of them travel by train, in separate cars, to the location of the civil service. Only their closest friends and family members accompany the bride and groom to this ceremony as it is not considered very important. It is viewed as merely a way to have the union recognized by the government.

Immediately after the civil ceremony the couple takes a tour of the city to visit memorials of those who have died. This tour is usually two to three hours long and during this time the couple honors those who were killed in wars by laying flowers at their memorials. The couple is usually only accompanied by the two witnesses to their wedding on this journey. Sometimes a few other close friends will come with the couple but family seldom partakes in this tour because they are busy making preparations for the reception.

After the tour of the city the couple arrives at the reception and this is where the true celebration begins. The reception always starts with a toast and usually the parents are the first to toast the bride and groom. The rest of the guests then offer their toast. Following the toast is the most prominent Russian wedding tradition. The guests drink wine after each toast

and after they sip the guests will begin to shout, "Gorko" which means bitter. The couple then has to kiss in order to sweeten the wine. The guests will continue this tradition after each toast requiring the couple to kiss after each toast.

The rest of the first night is filled with dancing and another Russian tradition of playfully "kidnapping" the bride. The groom's friends will take advantage of the chaos that ensues as all the guests start to dance and "kidnap" the bride. They will then demand the groom pay a ransom for her return. The bride's friends also get in on the good natured fun by "stealing" the bride's shoes. Again the groom has to pay a ransom before her shoes are returned. This first day of the reception continues on late into the night leaving the guests exhausted.

The second day of a traditional Russian wedding is usually held at the house where the couple will begin their lives together. This is a more relaxed day and although anyone from the first day is invited to attend, usually only the closest friends and family members attend this second day of festivities. Day two of a traditional Russian wedding usually begins in the late afternoon or evening. The guests all enjoy a meal together and after the meal comes another Russian tradition of having the bride clean the floor.

The guests will litter the floor with currency and the bride has to "clean" the floor by picking up the money. The guests can continue to litter the floor with additional currency while the bride is "cleaning" and are particularly fond of coming to the festivities with a large amount of coins to make the bride's job as difficult as possible. This tradition gives the guests the opportunity to make a contribution to the new couple.

Traditional Russian weddings are essentially two fun days of food, drink and friends. The ceremony itself is not viewed as the highlight of the wedding. The government will only recognize a marriage that is verified through a civil service and the church will not perform a church wedding unless a civil service has already been performed so couples often participate in both types of ceremonies separately. It is instead the reception that is the focal point.

### **Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue**

The old saying that a bride should carry or wear something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue is a time-honored tradition that is supposed to bring the bride good luck. Each of these items represents something different and can be incorporated into the bride's attire in several different ways. This fun tradition dates back for centuries and is still honored by many modern day brides who are interested in ensuring a little bit of luck for themselves or simply honoring a tradition that has been passed on in their family for years.

Choosing to wear something old expresses a desire to retain your connections with your family after you enter into your marriage and begin your own family. You may choose to wear a locket with a picture of your grandmother on her wedding day inside to express this sentiment. This old picture reminds you of your family and keeps them close to your heart.

You may also wish to incorporate something old into your attire by having a handkerchief used by one of your ancestors sewn into the lining of the skirt of your wedding dress. Incorporating this item into your wedding dress as a permanent feature is a special way to ensure that you will always remember your family and that they will always be a part of the new family that you and your husband create.

Wearing a new item on your wedding day conveys the message that you and your husband are creating a new union that will endure forever. There are countless ways to incorporate something new into your attire. If you opted to include a picture of your grandmother on her wedding day into a locket that you wear on your wedding day, you might want to consider putting a photo of you and your husband into the other side to represent your new item. Another new item to consider is a piece of jewelry, besides your engagement or wedding ring that was given to you by the groom such as a necklace or bracelet. This is a special way to wear something new because it expresses the love that you and the groom have for each other.

Wearing a borrowed item on your wedding day is used to symbolize your love and admiration for the person from whom you borrowed the item. Wanting to wear something that belongs to a loved one lets them know that you want to include them in your wedding in a very special way by wearing something that either is held very dear to them or is something that represents them symbolically.

One nice way to express this sentiment through a borrowed item is to wear your mother's wedding ring on your wedding day. Doing this lets your parents know that you admire their marriage and their respect for each other and that you hope to have an equally satisfying marriage. It also lets them know that you will be thinking of them on your wedding day and that you want them to be with you in a special way.

Another way to incorporate a borrowed item into your wedding day attire is to borrow a friend's signature piece of jewelry. If you have a close friend who has worn the same necklace for as long as you have known her, you might consider borrowing this particular necklace for your wedding day as a reminder of your friendship.

Wearing something blue on your wedding day is a symbol of the couple's fidelity to each other. It may sound as though incorporating blue into your wedding attire is a difficult task but it really is much easier than it sounds. One simple tip for wearing blue on your wedding day is to wear a necklace with a blue stone. This is a beautiful yet inconspicuous way to wear blue on your wedding day to ensure fidelity.

Another way to wear something blue is to include blue flower in your headdress. Some brides also opt to wear a blue garter under their wedding dress to represent their blue item. If you choose this option you might want to consider wearing two garters if you plan to follow the tradition of having the groom remove your garter and toss it to the single men in attendance. If you plan to do this you might want to wear a blue garter and a white garter and instruct the groom to remove the white one so that he is not tossing away your garter that symbolizes faithfulness.

Brides have been honoring the tradition of wearing an old, a new, a borrowed and a blue item during their wedding for centuries. Although wearing these items is supposed to symbolize luck

for the bride, they are also just a fun tradition that gives the bride an opportunity to express her admiration for a few special people in her life.

### **Civil Service Weddings**

A civil service wedding doesn't have to include just the couple, an officiant and state provided witnesses anymore. Many states offer the option of a civil service wedding in small conference rooms that can accommodate as many as 50 guests. A civil service wedding is ideal for a couple that wants to be married but doesn't want to deal with all the hassle and stress of planning an elaborate wedding.

A civil service wedding is also an ideal alternative for couples who have different religious backgrounds and want to eliminate religious connotations from their wedding rather than trying to plan a wedding that blends the two religions. Some couples may also opt for an affordable civil service union and use their wedding savings for other options.

Civil service weddings are extremely affordable and convenient. In many states you can plan your entire wedding for you and a small number of guests for under \$1000. If you budget correctly this fee could include the use of a decorated wedding suite or chapel, an officiant to perform the ceremony, a notary public who is capable of obtaining and filing your marriage license and even certified copies of your license that can serve as official proof of your marriage. You may also be able to use the suite or chapel for a limited time to host a small reception following the wedding ceremony.

A bride and groom who come from different religious backgrounds may opt for a civil service wedding. While there is an increasing trend in multi-denominational weddings that do an excellent job of creating a ceremony that blends the two religions beautifully there are some people who would rather have their religion not be a part of the ceremony than be compromised in a blended ceremony.

While the issue of how a couple intends to deal with their religious differences in their married life is nobody's business but their own, there are many friends and relatives who would be offended by a wedding ceremony that is not true to their religion. In this situation a couple may choose to have a civil wedding that is devoid of religious connotations in the effort to not offend any family members or friends.

Of course the couple should not compromise their beliefs and if they desire a wedding with blended religions then they should go ahead and have their wedding exactly as they had planned. However, if the couple does not feel strongly about having a wedding that blends their religious beliefs then it might be wise to opt for a simple civil service wedding.

Another reason that couples may opt for a civil service wedding is to use their wedding savings for another cause. Although some couples may have saved for over a year to host an elaborate wedding, they may decide that they would prefer to invest their savings in a dream honeymoon or a down payment for a new home or even making a donation to a charitable cause.

A couple that spends months or even years saving up for an elaborate wedding may decide in the end that they don't think wasting their entire savings on a one night wedding extravaganza is such a good idea. If the couple makes this decision before the planning has gone too far they may be able to scrap their wedding plans without too much of a financial loss and choose to have a civil service wedding and use their wedding savings for another purpose.

The connotation of civil service weddings being strictly for couples needing to get married quickly for either citizenship reasons or due to an impending pregnancy is a thing of the past. Couples are beginning to see the value of a civil service wedding and are opting for these simple unions for a variety of reasons. The affordability and convenience that a civil service wedding offers is very appealing to couples who either do not have a large savings or the time required to plan an elaborate wedding. Religious differences also drive many couples to opt for a religious ceremony.

Couples who come from vastly different religious backgrounds may opt for a wedding that is devoid of religious elements in order to not offend any of their friends or relatives. Couples may also choose to have a simple and inexpensive civil service wedding so that they can splurge on their honeymoon or on a new home instead.