

SOLEMNIZING MARRIAGES

Before the ceremony, one of the parties to the proposed marriage must have applied to the town clerk of the town where either party resides or, if neither is a resident of the state, to any town clerk to obtain an application for a license. The application must be signed by one of the parties to the proposed marriage. Vermont law does not require a medical certificate, blood test or a waiting period. Once a license is obtained, the marriage can be celebrated anywhere in Vermont. 18 V.S.A. § 5145.

The marriage must be completed within sixty days of the issuance of the license or certificate. If the ceremony is delayed for more than sixty days, a new license must be applied for and issued.

An official who solemnizes marriages must complete a section on the form and return it to the town clerk who issued it within ten days of the ceremony. 18 V.S.A. § 5131. The official must sign the form and include his/her official title (i.e. Justice of the Peace, Minister, Temporary Officiant).

State law is silent on the mechanics of wedding ceremonies. Some authorities say that a minimum ceremony could be as short as saying, "By the authority vested in me by the State of Vermont, I now pronounce you husband and wife" (or some variant of that phrase) or "By the authority vested in me by the State of Vermont, I hereby join you in civil marriage." By signing the license the official is certifying that the parties entered into the marriage with mutual consent. Parties are free to discuss with the officiant their own ideas of what they want in a ceremony.

For those wanting a more formal civil marriage ceremony, a possible ceremony could include the following:

Officiant: We are here to join _____ and _____ in civil marriage. *(Then to each in turn, giving names as appropriate)*

Will you ____ have ____ to be united as one in your civil marriage?

Response: I will.

Officiant: *(Then to each in turn, giving names as appropriate)* Then repeat after me: "I ____ take you ____ to be my spouse in our civil marriage, to have and to hold from this day on, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, to love and to cherish forever."

(Then, if rings are used, each in turn says, as the ring is put on)

"With this ring I join with you in this our civil marriage."

Officiant: By the power vested in me by the State of Vermont, I hereby join you in civil marriage.