

Vow writing 101

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There are no hard or fast rules about writing your wedding vows, and perhaps that makes it even more daunting to do. Writers through the ages have wrestled with getting the feelings of love onto a page without being clichéd or making everyone reach for the sick bucket (or both) so, if you're feeling stuck, be cheered by the fact that you're in the company of the greats.

That said, I've got some guidelines which I hope will be helpful as a starting point for you to get going with. Don't forget I'm here to help – that's my job! So call me, text me, email me or send a carrier pigeon with your ideas, thoughts or questions and I'll get right back to you.

Here goes:

- Remember you are making promises to each other, not entertaining an audience. Speak from your heart to the one you're marrying and don't worry about anyone else. Nobody will be judging you (or if they are, what the hell are they doing on your invitation list?!)
- Your vows can be traditional, quirky, funny, serious or a mixture of all of these – there is no 'should', except that they 'should' reflect who you are and how you feel.
- A good place to start is having a conversation where you tell each other what you would like them to promise you. Have a think about what's important to YOU about marriage, and what you would like to hear in his/her vows – then share! Knowing what your partner would like included will help you enormously when you come to writing your vows.
- As you're being married by a celebrant, not a registrar, remember you don't need to include any contracting words or bits of legalese.



- You can write your vows together or do it separately. If you do it separately, decide on a 'tone' and agree a max word count (say, 150, but they can be as long or as short as you want), so they're not miles apart. I can check they're not off-key with each other if you would like me to.
- If you are writing them together, you can mirror them completely or change some or all of it – it's totally up to you.
- When saying your vows, you can choose to:
 - repeat them after me (good for being able to look each other in the eye all the way through),
 - memorise them (scary pressure!),
 - read/sing/rap them (it's important to practise looking at the words but knowing it well enough to look at your partner too),
 - or do them completely off the cuff (if you're feeling super-brave)
- You might want to consider writing your vows on a theme – possibly shared interests – there's a skiing example further down.
- Sometimes, it helps to start with a template, so use one of the simpler ones below or try this: I, N, take you, N, to be my partner and love for the rest of our lives together; I promise; I promise; Even when you..., I promise to....; I will..., I will...; I face the future with hope and happiness, knowing I'm going to spend it side by side with you.
- Some things you might want to include: something about being there through thick & thin, loyalty, being a parent, shared passions/dreams etc. You can also add things you want to do to improve your relationship, be they silly (like in the one about picking socks up) or more serious (like the one about endeavouring to turn towards, not away, in times of trouble).
- Use the answers you gave in your questionnaire to give you ideas about what to include in your vows too.

- Don't edit your vows too much to start with. It doesn't matter if they're too long at first; it's better to let your ideas flow and then you can discuss/edit/cut later.
- Also think about the declarations of intent (I will/I dos) – these can be personalised too (but, like most things, you don't have to have them at all if you don't want to). You might want to put content in there that doesn't 'fit' in your vows, for example.

A typical declaration of intent:

N, will you promise N that you will stand by him/her always? Will you have faith in him/her and encourage him/her? Will you be there to listen to him/her, to laugh with him/her and to hold him/her? Will you strive every day to make your relationship stronger? And will you be his/her friend, his/her love and his/her partner for the rest of your lives together?

You could personalise this in all sorts of ways, just as you can with the vows. I say it all and you just say 'I will' at the end!

These are the traditional Church of England vows. Lots of people use these as a base, as they are so familiar:

*I, N, take you, N,
to be my husband/wife,
to have and to hold
from this day forward;*

*for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
till death us do part;
according to God's holy law.
In the presence of God I make this vow.*

Here are another two sets of vows that are totally useable as they are or can be easily 'pimped':

*N, I have no greater love than you.
In becoming your husband/wife, I promise to stand by you
in happiness and in adversity,
in riches and poverty,
in sickness and in health.
I promise to love, support and respect you,
and to be faithful to you and our marriage,
for all our tomorrows and beyond.*

*I, N, take you, N
To be my husband/wife
I promise always to be there for you
Sharing in both the good times and the bad*



I will love you, cherish you and be loyal to you

For the rest of our lives together

You are my soulmate, husband and friend.

A short but beautiful vow:

I promise to love you, to trust you, to be honest with you,

I promise to respect you, to laugh with you and to grow old with you

My Love; You complete me

And, just for the contrast, a really long vow:

N,

I don't 'do' getting stuck for words as you know, quite the opposite in fact, but I found writing these vows very hard indeed. Simply because I cannot find words that describe how you make me feel, how deeply I love you and how honoured, humbled and joyful I am that you have chosen me to spend and make your life with.

So let me just make these promises to you:

I promise to love you for the girl that you were, the woman that you are and the person you will become.

I swear to give you, N and N (their children) all the love, support and encouragement that I can.

I promise that I will try not to use excessive chilli in my cooking and I won't mind if you make me watch horror films on my own or sleep through stuff.

I swear that I will be your biggest fan, your cheerleader and most fierce supporter.

I vow that we will travel together, through both the world and life and that we will find the most exciting experiences to share.

I swear that I will be with you for the highs, the lows, the good times and the bad times. I will mourn with you, cry with you, laugh with you and at you and jump for joy with you.

I promise that I will hold back the crowds so you can get the best reductions at the supermarket and the pick of the goods at jumble sales.

I vow not to judge you when I find you drinking double cream straight from the carton.

I will never take you for granted, I will never stop finding new reasons to fall in love with you even more, I will never stop being thrilled that you chose me and I will always try to be worthy of that choice.

You amaze me, beguile me and enchant me. You are my best friend, my family, my partner and my soul mate.

I love you; now what say that we go and have us some married adventures?

A very thoughtful vow:

I promise to always love and care for you, and to nurture and tend to our relationship.

I commit to sharing my inner world with you always, and to listening when you share yours.

I commit to making time for relaxation, play and intimacy in our life together.

I will endeavour to turn towards not away from you during difficult times.

I vow to make time for the joy of being with you.

I will strive to live from the unit we have created because it is our home, and to wear our love like a second skin.

A set of vows which mixes up the funny and the serious to good effect and covers lots of bases:

I promise to love you for the woman you are and the person you will become

I promise to love you through the good times and the bad.

To share in your happiness and take every opportunity to laugh, celebrate and have fun with you.

To look after you when you're sick, cheer you up when you're sad and support you when you're anxious.

I promise to tidy my shoes away rather than leave them in the middle of the floor and to remember to hang my towel up after having a shower.

We've had some truly amazing adventures in our years together. I promise that we will continue see new places and share unique and exciting experiences together as long as we live.

I will strive to create and support a family with you, in a household filled with laughter, patience, understanding and love. I promise to be the best father I can be.

You are my best friend and I can't wait to spend the rest of my life with you. I promise to never take you for granted and be ever grateful that you chose to spend the rest of your life with me.

A vow based on a shared love of skiing:

My darling N, I have travelled the world with you and I see the world in you. Take my hand as my wife, and let's set off down the black run of our future together. Whilst we cannot predict the twists and turns that our journey will take, I promise to be there to share the thrills and the beautiful views as well as the inevitable tumbles with you. I'll be the soft snow for you to land on when you fall, the lift to pick you up when you're tired and the cheeky après-ski that brings the colour back to your face at the end of a rough day. I love you.

The purpose of this information is to inspire, not to overwhelm, so please don't panic. Remember that I'm here to help, just a phone call (07929 764162) or an email (claire@creatingceremony.com) away.

Looking forward to hearing about how you're getting on soon.

Good luck!

C xx