
14 Creative Ways to include Friends and Family in your Wedding Ceremony

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Sharing your Happiness

Do you love the idea of family and friends playing a big role in your big day?

If you've downloaded this guide, you must be planning a wedding – congratulations!

Your wedding ceremony will be a defining moment. It's a chance to celebrate the love and commitment between you both as you look forward to sharing a lifetime of adventures together!

First, to introduce myself. I'm Jennie, a fully accredited humanist wedding celebrant. My own humanist ceremony 15 years ago was the cornerstone of our happy, heartfelt wedding day. In 2016, I became a humanist celebrant myself, so that I could help couples tie the knot in a way that is natural, joyful and feels true to them.

I craft bespoke ceremonies that do justice to each couple - two unique individuals, taking on life's biggest adventures together.

But in truth, no partnership exists in isolation. Your marriage will be at the centre of a network of relationships. Friends and family also have important roles in our lives. And these wider bonds will surround and support your marriage.

I know how special it feels to gather all these people to witness the promises you are making to each other for your lives ahead. And your wedding will share this happiness with all the people you love. It's the best feeling - for everyone involved!

A WEDDING DAY MARKS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU AS A COUPLE, BUT IT ALSO CEMENTS NEW BONDS BETWEEN FAMILIES, AND REAFFIRMS FRIENDSHIPS.

I'm so pleased to be able to share 14 creative ways to reflect the importance of these wider bonds of love and support by including friends and family in your ceremony.



Photo: Cotswold Wedding Photography

1. Arrival

An arrival is the first stage of a wedding ceremony. Traditionally this is a moment of hushed anticipation, awaiting the bride. But depending on the location of your wedding ceremony and your own personal style, you might not want to follow convention.

How about processing to your ceremony area with a band of friends, or with all your wedding guests? You could all be making lots of noise with drums and instruments, or have some upbeat music playing on a portable speaker. You could choose to lead or follow the procession, to arrive together as a couple, or in separate parties!

2. Gathering a Bouquet

This lovely little ritual actively involves friends and family at the very start of your wedding ceremony. Instead of arriving with a bouquet the bride or brides, or indeed any floral-loving grooms, gather flowers from guests as they arrive.

You could ask a select group of friends and family to present you with blooms before you go down the aisle. Or guests at the end of each aisle could give you a flower as you walk past. When you've gathered up all your flowers from your guests, a couple of helpers from the wedding party can tie the posy for you before we start the wedding ceremony.



3. Creating the Space

You could ask all your guests to bring a pebble, pine cone, or a flower to the front of your ceremony space and create a circle of love for you to stand in during your ceremony. Using natural elements works very well for an outdoor wedding, as they can be left in place at the end of the ceremony.

But there is no reason why you couldn't use other man-made objects that you love – for example, if you're musical, how about a circle of instruments, or if you love sports, you could ask guests to make the circle from equipment like

tennis rackets or hockey-sticks.

Any type of object that resonates with you could be used to define the space. So, feel free to think more eclectically... if you love a good cup of tea, how about a circle of colourful teapots - it would create a completely unique style and look amazing in your photographs. At the end of the ceremony, your friends and family simply retrieve the object they loaned to the circle. And as an added bonus, they will probably always remember your wedding when using that teapot or tennis-racket in the future!

4. Readings and Poems

Asking friends and family to do a reading for you is the traditional way to include them in your ceremony. For a slightly more creative take on your wedding readings, you could ask friends or siblings to take on readings as a pair or even a trio, alternating lines or verses.



Photo: Louise Wildren Photography

5. Music

It's always uplifting to include music in a wedding ceremony. If you have talented friends, you should definitely consider asking them to play or sing for you. Another great option is to include a song for everyone to sing – a classic pop song works really

well and gives a really fun way for everyone to feel united by singing together! You could ask a friend with a guitar or perhaps any musicians you're hiring for your reception if they could help leading this singalong in the ceremony.

6. A Game

If you want to add some audience participation to your ceremony then this fun game might be just the ticket. Before the ceremony you ask your guests for some advice for a good marriage - one piece of heart-led advice such as: 'never go to bed on an argument', and one piece of head-led advice, such as: 'use a rota to divide and conquer household chores.'

Their advice is written on contrasting coloured slips for 'head' or 'heart'. To play the game, these advice slips are drawn at random and guests all have to try and predict whether the next advice will be head or heart. Everyone stands up and shows their guess by putting their hands on their heads or their hearts. All those who get it wrong sit down each round, until only the winner is left standing. They could win a round of applause, or something a bit more like a bottle of fizz!

7. Ring-Warming

A ring-warming is a lovely way to recognise that you'll rely on the love and support of friends and family in your marriage. Your wedding rings are passed through the hands of all the guests before you exchange them with each other.

Your guests all have a moment to hold the rings, reflecting on their hopes and wishes for you both. This symbolically warms the rings with their love. For practical reasons, the rings should be tied securely together with a ribbon or placed in a little bag or pouch so that they can be easily passed from guest to guest.

8. Pass the Heartbeat

Another symbolic action with a similar intent to a ring-warming is called 'pass the heartbeat.' All the ceremony guests stand up and join hands with each other until there is one continuous chain of handholding linking all the guests and the couple. One of the wedding couple starts the 'heartbeat'

by squeezing the hand of the family member next to them, who passes it to the next person, and so on along the line until it comes back to their soon-to-be spouse. It's all done without words, so the moment is full of anticipation and everyone gets a little thrill when the heartbeat reaches them!

9. Well-Wishing Pebbles

In this symbolic act each guest chooses a pebble to hold throughout the ceremony. Then, at the close of the ceremony, guests bring their pebbles forward with their good wishes for the couple. You can give your guests the chance to write their well-wishes on the pebbles, or they can write their wish on a little card.



10. Family Candles

In this practice you each ask a family member to light a candle at the start of your wedding ceremony. The flames that burn throughout your wedding ceremony are used to represent the role of your families that raised and guided you.

The lighting of the family candle can also provide an important moment to remember relatives who are no longer with you but are in your hearts and minds on your wedding day.

Later in the ceremony you use the flames of the family candles to jointly light a final candle that represents your lives joined together in marriage.



11. Handfasting

Handfasting is an ancient Celtic tradition symbolising the commitment and connection of two people in marriage. This is where the phrase 'tying the knot' originated and it's a great practice to involve friends or family. Mothers are often chosen to wrap or knot the cords. Or you can involve more people to bring up coloured ribbons. Each colour is chosen to represent a different quality you want to bring into in your marriage.

12. Sandblending

You'll need some coloured sand – one colour for each individual and a decorative glass vessel (ideally with a stoppered neck). Separate layers of coloured sand are poured by each person - representing their unique set of talents, experiences, and potential. A final layer can be made by everyone pouring their colours together. The layers of sand symbolise the unit of a marriage and a family: each coloured sand is distinct, but once poured, the different sands could never be separated back out again.

Photo: Kerry Schofield Photography



A sand-layering is lovely symbolic way to represent how separate individuals come together to make a couple, and a family – and it's a fun way to involve children.

13. A Toast

Taking a drink from a two-handled quaich is a Celtic tradition, still popular in Scottish weddings. Sharing a drink from the same cup was seen as sign of trust and the two handles also make the cup more symbolic of unity and sharing. You hold a handle each as you both take a sip. The quaich can also be used to symbolise the hospitality and bond between families. So, each of you could offer the quaich to their partner's family to take a sip. Or pass the quaich around the bridal party to seal the deal!

14. Departure!

Leaving the ceremony as a newlywed couple is a great moment to involve everyone. Why not play with the idea of a traditional guard of honour of crossed military swords and adapt it to reflect your own interests? If you love canoeing, how about a guard of honour made from paddles, or you could also use hockey sticks, rowing oars, flags, or long-handled gardening tools like pitchforks, rakes and hoes. It's a fun moment, a chance to be a bit playful and involve the friends or teammates who share your passions. And of course, you'll get some great photos!

Photo: Sam Jayne Photography



Like these Ideas & want to find out more?

If these creative ideas have inspired you, I'd love to chat with you about how I can help create the relaxed but heartfelt wedding ceremony that would feel just right for you.



Send me a DM:
[@TheNaturalCelebrant](https://www.instagram.com/TheNaturalCelebrant)

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About Me

I help couples tie the knot in relaxed, true-to-them wedding ceremonies that are naturally joyful. So they can share their happiness with all the people they love most in the world.

I married my husband in a humanist wedding ceremony in 2005, and we live in Herefordshire with our two energetic growing boys. I love big scenery, wild places and nature, as well as cake, castles and real human connections. I lead wedding ceremonies and vow renewals across Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Powys and Monmouthshire.

I'm a fully accredited [Humanists Ceremonies](#) wedding celebrant with [Humanists UK](#).

Humanist Weddings

The words in a humanist wedding ceremony are not determined by religion or a legal contract. Instead, they are built around the love between two people. I create wedding ceremonies that reflect the things that matter most to couples – their love for each other, the values and passions they share, and all their hopes and dreams for married life together. And I always love to lead ceremonies in beautiful outdoor locations.

[Humanists UK](#) is a charity that promotes humanism to create a tolerant society where rational thinking and kindness prevail. They have been the leading provider of meaningful, personalised, non-religious ceremonies for over 120 years.