

# YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE

by Rev. Cindy Riggs

**Everything you need to know about obtaining your marriage license.**

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ongratulations on getting married! What an exciting time . . . and potentially overwhelming.

As you dive into all the details of venue, flowers, cake, attire, music, décor, etc., consider topping your to-do list with the single most important item of all: your marriage license.

## **What is marriage, really?**

There are many wedding traditions in many cultures, and it is interesting that the marriage license isn't always the #1 priority on the wedding planning list. To be legally married, your officiant witnesses your vows, and signs your license. That's technically all that is required. The rest of the pageantry fulfills your vision of how you want to celebrate it with your family and friends, whether religious beliefs are included or not.

## **Where to obtain a marriage license, and how?**

Getting married in the state where you reside?



Begin with a web search of the probate court in the county where you live. Most counties now offer online application to begin the process; some require an appointment. By law, both parties must appear in person at the courthouse, and must provide a valid ID, social security number (if you have one), and proof of residence, such as a utility bill, lease agreement or bank statement.



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Each county has unique requirements, so read it all carefully. The fee may differ too. Here are two examples for Ohio: In 2024, the fee for obtaining your license in Franklin County is \$65.; in Licking County it's \$70. Franklin County does not require an appointment, and if you arrive before 4:00 pm with all of the required documents, they will issue it on the same day; Licking County requires an appointment. In larger cities such as Columbus or during inclement weather, allow extra time to find (and pay for) parking.

Getting married out of state? You'll need to locate the Probate Court of the county where the ceremony is taking place and meet their requirements.

A marriage license is good for 60 days from the date it's issued and is good anywhere in that state. If your ceremony is rescheduled outside of that timeframe, it will need to be reissued.

You'll receive two items that day: a marriage license (good for 60 days), and a marriage certificate, which your officiant will sign on the day of your wedding and mail it to the Probate Court so it can be filed with the state.

### **Who can marry you?**

Make sure that your chosen officiant has both a minister's license and – most importantly – a License to Solemnize Marriages in the State where your wedding ceremony is taking place. (If your officiant does not have the license with the State, it won't be legal.)

Interview officiants to ensure you choose one who will deliver your ceremony exactly as you want it to be (not how they want it to be). Provide them with information about your religious/spiritual beliefs, your personalities, your hobbies, your careers, and other interests so it can be extra relevant and special.

Don't know where to begin with your ceremony? Your officiant ought to offer ideas and a basic rundown. I have many couples say to me: "We just want something simple," however your family and friends want something memorable, and so will you when it's all said and done.

### **What happens with the license the day of the wedding?**

Remember that it's literally the most important thing on your list? Make sure it's there on your wedding day!

I ask my couples to bring their license packet to me at their rehearsal, and I keep it in my care, so it doesn't get lost in the shuffle. Or you may appoint a responsible family member or friend to bring it and give it to your officiant before the ceremony begins.

Remember that you received two items? Your officiant will sign both immediately following the ceremony. You might want to have your photographer(s) plan to take photos of the signing. There's nothing you are required to sign that day. You already signed your names at the courthouse.

Your marriage license is yours to keep. Your officiant takes care of the certificate – he/she is required by law to keep a copy of it and mail the original to the courthouse. Witness signatures on the license used to be a thing; however, I'm noticing that they have been omitted from marriage licenses in many counties. The license is the one you keep anyway.

### **How to accomplish a name change?**

You will not receive anything from the courthouse after the wedding. Your officiant should mail your certificate to the courthouse on the first business day after the wedding. Franklin County has told me that it is entered into their system the day they receive it.

Inside the packet you originally received the day you went to the courthouse together, there is an application for a certified abstract of your marriage certificate if one or both of you wish to change your last name (this may also be done online if your courthouse offers that option. Franklin County does, and the fee is a whopping \$2. – probably the least expensive item of your entire wedding!).

Once you receive your certified abstract, take it to your local Social Security office first. Once your new Social Security card is issued, you may then take that to the BMV to have your license/photo ID updated, and then your bank and other accounts, your job, your utilities, etc.

Happy wedding planning!



Rev. Cindy Riggs specializes in customized, on-location ceremonies and is licensed in the state of Ohio. Visit [RevCindy.com](http://RevCindy.com)