

Have the most amazing ceremony and avoid these common mistakes advises Dublin-based Certified Celebrant and Humanist Celebrant Lucie O'Sullivan.

Many brides seem to think that their wedding ceremony has to be the same as everyone else's... but why? There is so much scope to express your creativity and YOU-niqness with a well-crafted ceremony. Secular or non-religious ceremonies allow a couple a huge amount of flexibility to put "their personal stamp" on what can be the best part of the overall wedding day. Working as a Celebrant I have noticed a seismic shift in ceremonies over the last five years. So what is this big shift? The ceremony itself, is becoming part of the overall entertainment. In the past, the ceremony was just a formality but that is changing fast. Here are my top FIVE tips for creating an amazing ceremony on your big day...



5 Don't's for your I Day

1 Don't forget the ceremony is centrepiece of the day

If you neglect the ceremony and just worry about the party/food/dress, then you have lost a crucial opportunity to create a memorable emotional experience for both yourself and your guests. During a ceremony we get to say the things we don't normally say to one another...particularly in front of our family and friends. Life is too short not to tell our loved ones how we feel about them! Remember; the ceremony is what distinguishes your wedding day from just any old gathering with family and friends...so make it count! As the ceremony is the Main Event it should be given as much planning and thought as the dress, photography and food. You must think about the logistics and stage management of the ceremony so guests enjoy it and don't view it as 'just a formality' or something to be "gotten over with" before cocktails! Everything from seating arrangement of the couple to social media aspects must all be given thought in order to have a successful ceremony.

Don't make the ceremony too long
Absolutely, your ceremony should be personalised and reflect who you are as a couple but you must keep your guests ENGAGED. Your guests

honour you with their attendance. Believe me; no one ever wants a speech or ceremony to go on longer! LESS is MORE. With a well timed and paced ceremony an audience should experience a complete emotional experience. The ceremony should end on a high energy moment, leaving you (and your guests) feeling uplifted and satisfied and not bored and wishing it would end already. Remember people might not remember what was said but they will remember how they felt during your ceremony.

2 Don't keep your guest's guessing

Audiences love surprises and like to be engaged but don't like guessing games. Guessing games are great but not for a wedding ceremonies or any speech for that matter. There is a rule for presentations and speech. Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them and tell them what you've told them. A well-crafted ceremony is no different. Make sure the ceremony is well scripted: beginning, middle and end. Tell the audience the running order or what's coming up. Don't keep them in the dark e.g 'we will have readings, music and exchange of rings...'

3 Don't neglect the music

In the property industry; a realtor will tell you location, location. LOCATION. In the wedding industry it's music,

music, MUSIC. Preferably, live music instead of iPod if your budget allows. If you do decide to use an iPod make sure to appoint someone to cue up the songs and operate the ipod... don't just leave it to chance on the day. During the ceremony there is generally 3 pieces of music: Processional, Signing of Registry and Recessional so make it count and select pieces that are really meaningful to you.

4 Don't forget to research the Celebrant

Meet with your Celebrant and ask questions. A good Celebrant will ask to meet with you and should discuss all the issues. You must 'click' with your Celebrant as you will share some very intimate moments together. Ask for references or speak to couples they have married. Ask the Celebrant how much editorial input you'll have into the script? It should be a co-creation. Good questions to ask are as follows: Can we write our own vows? Can you legally solemnise the marriage? How long will the ceremony be? (under 30 minutes I hope!) Will a copy of the Final Script be available before the wedding date? Would you like to stay after for the reception? (nice to ask, but generally they won't stay). Your wedding day should be one of the best days of your life and many of you will only get the chance to do it once. You should enjoy it all, especially the ceremony and all it's planning. Good luck and enjoy!
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