



Guidance for Civil Partnership Ceremonies

Your Civil Partnership is a special occasion and the Somerset and North Somerset Registration Service is privileged to play a part in what will be a memorable and happy celebration. Whether you choose to have a private ceremony or to celebrate with friends and family, we aim to make your day truly special.

We hope this guide will answer all your questions. If there is anything else you want to know or unsure of please do not hesitate to contact us.

Our main office is in Taunton, but we have offices across Somerset and North Somerset where you can have your ceremony. Please visit the website to find your nearest location. Use our central phone number and email address to get in touch with any of our offices.

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Taunton
Somerset
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SomersetRegistrations@somerset.gov.uk

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Giving Notice

You will both need to give Notice of Civil Partnership. This is the legal and public declaration that you intend to form a civil partnership, and that you are both free and able to do so.

This must be done no more than 12 months and no less than 28 days prior to your partnership date. However we recommend that you give notice at least 12 weeks before your ceremony date. Visit our website for up to date information on what details you will need to provide.

Ceremony Options

Basic Ceremony

You can have a Basic Ceremony for just yourselves and two witnesses, also known as a “2+2”. This will be held in a small private office. Please see our website for a list of available venues. The Basic Ceremony is the easiest to plan, as there are limited choices to make. We will need to have your choices at least **1 week in advance** to prepare your ceremony. If we haven't heard from you, we will prepare a ceremony using the first option for each element. Let us know your choices on your Pre Ceremony Check form.

Full Ceremony

If you would like to share your commitment with friends and family, you will need to book a Full Ceremony at one of our Taunton, Yeovil or Weston venues, or a licensed ceremony venue. Browse our Venue Directory to help you choose. You can include readings, music and personal vows if you wish. You will need to let us know your choices at least **4 weeks in advance**, so we have time to check and personalise your ceremony.

Payment

If you have chosen to have a **Full Ceremony** at a larger venue, your ceremony fee is payable **8 weeks** prior to your ceremony date. The exact cost will depend on where and when you wish to formalise your partnership.

If you have chosen to have a **Basic Ceremony**, you may pay your fee the day itself, or in advance if you prefer.

You can pay by card at our offices or over the phone if that is more convenient. We can only accept cheque payments at least 4 weeks before your ceremony. Visit our website for up to date information on the costs for giving notice and ceremonies at our various locations.

Certificates

The cost of one certificate is included in your payment to the Civil Partnership Registrar. Although certificates can be applied for at any time, the cost increases after the registration. If you feel you may need more than one certificate, please inform the Civil Partnership Registrar as soon as possible in advance. Your certificate(s) will be sent to you immediately after the registration.

Witnesses

You will be required to provide two witnesses who could be, but do not need to be, friends or relatives. We ask that they are at least 16 years old and must be able to understand the ceremony and their role within it. Your witnesses will be asked to sign the Civil Partnership Schedule after you. Give us their details on the Pre Ceremony Check Form.

Enhancing the Ceremony

If you are having a **Basic Ceremony**, please choose from the options provided at the end of this guide.

If you are having a **Full Ceremony** in one of our larger venues or an approved ceremony venue, you may wish to personalise the registration with music, readings and personal vows. This is often a good opportunity to include friends and family into your special day. Please provide all the details on your Pre Ceremony Check form and submit copies of readings and vows to the Registrar at least four weeks before your celebration.

Music

Music can be played at appropriate times during the **Full Ceremony**. We recommend the following:

- ❖ Background music as your guests arrive
- ❖ Your Entrance
- ❖ Signing the Schedule
- ❖ Exit music

If you have a special piece of music or song, or even live musicians, please discuss this with the venue and include the information on your Pre Ceremony Check form. Do remember your choice of music must be of a non-religious nature.

The Entrance Party

If you are having a Full Ceremony, you will need to think about how you will enter the ceremony room. Would you like to enter together, or separately? Would you like to walk in accompanied by a family member, friend or on your own? Please let us know your plans on the Pre Ceremony Check form.

Readings and Poetry

You are welcome to add up to 3 readings to personalise your **Full Ceremony**. We will need to see them first to make sure they are appropriate. You don't need to include readings if you don't want to. Do try to find readings that are personal or meaningful to you both, and will reflect your love and commitment to each other. Please provide us with copies of your readings and the names of the readers, and if you are choosing an extract, please supply the full title of the piece. Please remember, all readings must be of a non-religious nature.

Exchanging Rings or Tokens

If you would like to exchange rings or tokens with your partner, your Civil Partnership Registrar will be happy to incorporate this into the proceedings. You may wish to add some words to the ring exchange which can be chosen from the list attached or you may prefer to make up your own.

You may like to consider whether you would like the rings or tokens to be handed to you at the appropriate time by one of your witnesses or guests, or if you would like them to be placed on a cushion or tray.

Photographs and Videos

There isn't space for a professional photographer at a **Basic Ceremony**, though both you and your witnesses are welcome to take photographs at appropriate stages of the ceremony. If you are having a **Full Ceremony**, you are welcome to involve a photographer or videographer in the proceedings. Do remember that this shouldn't detract from the solemnity of the occasion.

On The Day

If you have having a ceremony at a Register or Registration office, we ask that you arrive around 10 minutes before your booking. You will have a brief meeting with the registrar to check your paperwork and the details to be entered in the civil partnership schedule before the ceremony begins.

If you are having a ceremony at one of our approved venues, you can build the ceremony into the rest of your celebrations. However, we do ask that you are ready to begin proceedings at the appointed time and that your guests are seated in plenty of time.

We have a busy ceremony schedule and are frequently required to travel to several locations on one day. If there is a delay, please let us know as soon as possible. We may have to postpone your ceremony until later in the day, or even to another date if necessary.

Order of Ceremony

Depending on the personal decisions you make about your Civil Partnership registration, your day could include some or all of the available options. This is our suggested order of ceremony:

Full Ceremony

Welcome
Introduction
Reading 1 (Optional)
Pledges (Optional)
Reading 2 (Optional)
Exchange of Tokens (Optional)
Reading 3 (Optional)
Signing of the Schedule
Announcement
Photographs

Basic Ceremony

Welcome
Introduction
Pledges (Optional)
Exchange of Tokens (Optional)
Signing of the Schedule
Announcement
Photographs

The Civil Partnership Ceremony

There is no legal requirement for either of you to repeat any words during your Civil Partnership Registration. You may simply sign the schedule without making any verbal declarations to each other.

However, if you feel that you would like to exchange vows or pledges with each other, we are happy to include this in your partnership ceremony. If you are having a **Basic Ceremony**, please choose 1 of the follow pledges. If you are having a **Full Ceremony**, you may also submit your own pledges to be included.

'I take you to be my Civil Partner. To love, respect and cherish you as long as we both shall live.'

Or

'I pledge to share my life with I promise to care for you, honour and encourage you; to respect you and be true to you through good times and bad as long as we both shall live.'

Ring Vows

If you are exchanging rings or other tokens, you may wish to choose one of the following vows. The first option will be used if no alternative is requested. If you are having a **Full Ceremony**, you may also include a Personal Vow. Please indicate your choices on the form and submit a copy of your vow so we can include it.

Standard

I give you this ring as a symbol of our love and trust.

Ring exchange one

I give you this ring as a token of my love and affection.
Please wear it with a feeling of warmth and pride.
I will love you / and remain faithful to you now and always.

Ring exchange two

I give you this ring as a sign of our love.
I promise to be faithful, loving and loyal for always.
To cherish you through good times and bad and to respect and honour you.

Ring exchange three

I promise to give you my love and friendship.
To be there for you when you need me the most.
To laugh with you, to cry with you, and to confide in you,
To trust you, to comfort you, to support you,
All that I have I share with you,
I promise to respect you, and be faithful to you always.
These promises I make for the rest of my life
And I give you this ring as a token of our love

Ring exchange four

This ring represents our love. I vow to love you and care for you.
I shall spend my life with you and share everything I have with you.

Signing of the Schedule

The signing of the Civil Partnership Schedule is the act which binds you in law as Civil Partners. You will be given the option of repeating the words on the schedule as shown below:

'I declare that I know of no legal reason why we may not register as each other's Civil Partner. I understand that on signing this document we will be forming a civil partnership with each other.'