

The basic marriage ceremony:

A legal marriage ceremony is simply made up of:

1. an exchange of vows or promises (facilitated by an authorized officiant, unless the ceremony is self-solemnizing)
2. a pronouncement from the officiant
3. a valid, state-issued marriage license that has been completed and signed.

While no specific words or phrases are legally required to be used in the wedding ceremony, couples still must make / exchange their Declaration of Intent, and the officiant must make the Pronouncement.

The Declaration of Intent is the part of the ceremony where the couple verbally declares that they wish to enter into the marriage contract and intend to legally commit to one another.

This is often heard in the form of, "Do you take _____ as your lawful/wedded _____?" and "I do," but can be worded any way the couple prefers.

The Pronouncement or Proclamation is the part of the ceremony where the officiant pronounces the couple as officially and legally wed.

This is often heard as, "And now, with the power vested in me by the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I pronounce you..." Again, this official proclamation can be made in any way the couple wishes.

After the ceremony, the couple's marriage license must be completed, signed, and returned, so that the marriage can be officially recorded.

With a regular marriage license, an officiant must preside over the marriage ceremony. This person must be qualified under 23 PA CSA §1503. After the ceremony, the license is signed by the officiant. It must be returned to the Marriage License Department within 10 days.

Your marriage certificate comes in three sections.

Top section: Stays with officiant who married you for their records.

Middle section: Stays with you for a keepsake (it's not the official marriage certificate).

Bottom section (Duplicate license): Send the duplicate back with the officiant's signature to the Register of Wills. This is what makes your marriage official and legal with the government.