

Running the Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal... All eyes on you. Are you ready to get things in line?

My approach is this. I want to make the bride and groom feel very comfortable with the ceremony. At this point their stress levels are maxed out. You need to reassure them you have the ceremony under control. I often tell them "You are in good hands up there. This ceremony is designed to take care of you. I'll be doing all the hard stuff, you just relax, answer a few questions, and repeat a few things after me, I'll do everything else"

The other part of the rehearsal is making sure the bridal party and parents are in the right places at the right time.

I start off by getting everyone lined up.

Typically this is the line up:

Grand parents

Parents of the groom

Officiant

Mother of bride with usher escort

Bridal party starting with who is on the end working your way to best man and Maid of honor.

Flower girls and Ring bearer

Bride and whoever is walking her down the isle

This can ultimately be in any order the couple chooses.

If this is at a venue, there will most likely be a banquet manager there to assist with the rehearsal. If this is an outdoor/ backyard type ceremony, you will have to discuss this ahead of time with the bride and groom, and you will be running the rehearsal 100%.

Quick tip - Once everybody is lined up. Do a quick shout out to make sure the bridal party attendants introduce themselves in case they have never met.

It's time to walk in: this part of the rehearsal is to show the attendants where they will be standing. Tell them they can start their walk when the couple in front of them hits the halfway point. (or pick a spot so they know when to begin their walk) Tell them to walk nice and slow. (but not step, pause, step, pause, step, pause... nobody likes that)

Once they are up there you can guide them to stand in better lines or in a nice half circle. Think of it from the photographer's point of view. How would the pictures look?

Quick tip – When the bride and who is walking her down are a few feet from the front row of chairs, take a walk with the groom to meet them. Ask the man and the groom to shake hands, then have the bride and him hug and kiss. Then a quick touching moment is when you ask the man to place the brides hand into the grooms hand... say “that represents the giving of the bride”. Brides and Dads love that part.

Once everyone is set in the right place you can move onto the ceremony part.

You can quickly run through the bullet points of the ceremony, no need to read every word.

Let the couple know you are directing them through the ceremony. You will let her know when to pass the bouquet, when to turn and face each other and things like that.

Readings: you will most likely do them. But it is nice when someone else is called up to read them. Introduce them by name and hold the microphone exactly where you want them to stand. (Usually in front of the groomsmen) Be sure to thank them when they are finished

When it comes to the rings part. Ask the best man or ring bearer to place the rings in your hand.

Quick tip – Ask them in the rehearsal to remove the rings from the bag or box and place them in your hand. You will be holding a book and a microphone, it makes it hard to fumble with a box.

Let the couple know that guests want to see this part and they should be aware of how they are standing. Maybe guide them to turn out their shoulders so everyone can see this moment.

Quick tip – I like to start with the groom, I will point to the bride's left hand so he doesn't have to think of which hand to put on here finger. I know this may sound silly, but remember, they are super nervous up there, don't make him look foolish. Same with the bride. Point to his left hand to help her out too.

Vows - When they are repeating them after you, you must break them down in small parts. 3-4 words or find a nice voice cadence to make it easy to repeat them back.

Finish going through the rest of the ceremony.

Quick tip – Actually PRO TIP - When you get to the part when you say “You may kiss the bride”, start walking away, go walk by the groomsmen... You must be out of the way of all pictures when they kiss. It's a classic rookie move when you see ministers standing there... Don't be that person.

To finish up the rehearsal, talk about the introduction of the new couple. Have them practice NOT walking out... HUH? Yes, When you say “Ladies and Gentlemen, It's my honor to introduce you ... The new Mr and Mrs John and Mary Smith.... The guests applaud and the couple walks out. No, don't let that happen. The music hasn't even started yet and they are half way down the aisle, they didn't get to enjoy “The Moment”. This is important, they need to stay up there for a few more seconds and take in what just happened. At the rehearsal I say “After the introduction, take the applause and soak up the moment together. This is what we are all here for.... You put all this time, effort and money into this day, please don't miss this precious moment”

Now you practice with everybody and introduce them with some excitement behind you voice. Everyone will clap and cheer. Then once the applause has subsided, now they can walk out down the aisle. This makes a big difference.

Ok, the rehearsal is done. Feel free to walk out and walk back in and out one more time if you think it's necessary. You don't have to go through the ceremony part, this is just to pace the bridal party one last time.

Quick tip – Planning a wedding is not easy, there is a chance the couple forgot to tell all the bridal party the morning plans. So before you practice walking out, do this... you'll be a mini hero. Turn to the bridesmaids and ask them if they all know where to be in the morning and what time. The bride will jump in and say "9:00 at the hotel for hair and makeup" (Or whatever needs to happen) then turn to the groomsmen and ask the same. "11:00 at the hotel lobby" (Or whatever the plan is) This is important in case someone didn't get the message and they end up an hour late for something. "Getting ready" pictures are planned to be at a specific time. Being off could delay the rest of the day. It's difficult to catch up. Hope that makes sense and helps keep everyone on the same page.

Quick tip – If they seem like a "party" type, remind them the big day to celebrate is tomorrow, please go easy tonight on the drinks. A lot is riding on everyone being in tip top shape for the wedding day.

Hope this helps you run a successful rehearsal. Good luck!

- Rev. Dan