



# Civil Ceremonies

## How old do you have to be?

- You can marry from the age of 16 in the UK.
- If you are aged 16 or 17, you will need your parents' approval in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, but not in Scotland, where it is legal without consent providing there are two witnesses.

## Giving notice at your local register office

### England, Wales and Northern Island

- If you are having a civil ceremony then you must give at least 28 days' notice to your local Register Office. You can find your local Register Office [here](#).
- You can only give notice at a register office if you have lived in the registration district for at least the past 7 days.
- You must get married within one year.
- You may also need a licence if you are not a British citizen or you live outside of the UK.

### Scotland

- In Scotland, you are required to give 15 days' notice with the local registrar.
- You must get married within 3 months of giving notice.
- You do not have to have lived in the registration district at all to give notice.

## Documents to take to the register office

- When giving notice you will need to take proof of name, address, age and nationality.
- If you have changed your name, you must take proof – e.g. a copy of a deed poll.
- If you have been married or in a civil partnership before, you need to take either a decree absolute or death certificate of your former partner.

## Venues

- You can have a civil ceremony at:
  - A register office
  - Any venue approved by the local council, e.g. a stately home or hotel
  - Some religious premises where permission has been given by the organisation and the premises approved by the local authority.
- The Home Office has a list of [all approved civil marriage venues](#).

## Vows

- You must exchange some formal wording but you can choose to write your own vows.



- Civil ceremonies can include readings, songs or music, but must not include anything that's religious, e.g. hymns or readings from the bible.

## Signing the register

- You must have at least two witnesses at the ceremony.
- You, your partner and your two witnesses must sign the marriage register.

You can find your local register office here <https://www.gov.uk/register-offices>

The Home Office has a list of [all approved civil marriage venues](#).