

Officiant & Ceremony Preparation Guide

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Officiant & Ceremony Preparation Guide

Everything the person performing the ceremony needs — from ordination to returning the signed license

■ Officiant Information

Officiant Full Legal Name: _____	Ordination Type: _____
Ordination Organization: _____	Ordination Date: _____
Phone: _____	Email: _____
Couple's Names: _____	Ceremony Date/Time: _____
Ceremony Location: _____	State: _____ County: _____

■ ■ Is Your Ordination Valid in This State?

Online ordinations (ULC, American Marriage Ministries) are recognized in most states but NOT all:

Category	Recognized States (Online Ordinations)	States with Issues
ULC / AMM Online	CA, TX, FL, GA, TN, IN, NV, NC, IL, KY, CO, AZ, MD, and ~40 others	VA (inconsistent), OK (disputed)
Judges / Magistrates	All 50 states	—
Notary Public	FL, ME, SC only for marriage ceremonies	Not valid elsewhere for marriage
Self-Solemnization (no officiant)	Colorado only	Not valid in any other state

When in doubt: contact the county clerk in the ceremony state before the wedding day.

■ Witness Requirements by State

Requirement	States
2 witnesses required	CA, CO (non-self-solo), FL, GA, NY, TX, WA, WI — and others
1 witness required	IL, MA, PA, VA — check your state's specific statute
No witnesses required	IN, NV, NC, TN — officiant + couple only
Witness age minimum	18 in most states; witnesses must be present — cannot sign after the fact

■ Legally Valid Ceremony Script (Minimum Required)

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This script fulfills the legal minimum in all U.S. states. Personal vows, readings, and rituals can be added anywhere.

OFFICIANT :	We are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the marriage of [PERSON 1] and [PERSON 2].
OFFICIANT :	[PERSON 1], do you take [PERSON 2] to be your lawfully wedded [spouse/husband/wife], to have and to hold from this day forward?
PERSON 1:	"I do."
OFFICIANT :	[PERSON 2], do you take [PERSON 1] to be your lawfully wedded [spouse/husband/wife], to have and to hold from this day forward?
PERSON 2:	"I do."
OFFICIANT :	By the power vested in me by the State of [STATE], I now pronounce you married.

■ ■ Signing the Marriage License — Do This Immediately After

The marriage license must be signed immediately after the ceremony — not days later. Both the officiant and any required witnesses must sign before leaving the ceremony location.

■ Officiant signs the 'Officiant' line on the marriage license

Include full legal name, title, and date

■ Officiant prints name and title legibly

Use: 'Ordained Minister, Universal Life Church' or 'Judge, [Court Name]' etc.

■ Witness 1 signs (if required in this state)

Print name and address clearly

■ Witness 2 signs (if required)

Must be present at ceremony — cannot sign after the fact

■ Both parties sign (where required)

Some states require the couple's signatures on the license

■ Check all fields are complete before anyone leaves

Missing fields require a correction process

■ Returning the License — Timeline & Method

State	Return Deadline	Where to Return
Florida	10 days	County Clerk of Courts that issued license
Texas	30 days	County Clerk that issued license
North Carolina	10 days	Register of Deeds that issued license
Nevada	10 days	County Clerk (Clark County Marriage Bureau)
Illinois	10 days	County Clerk that issued license

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Indiana	30 days	County Clerk that issued license
Most other states	10–30 days	The issuing county office

Return the original signed license — not a copy. Send certified mail with tracking if mailing. Failure to return on time doesn't void the marriage, but causes problems when the couple orders certified copies. Confirm with the couple who is responsible for returning the license — you or them.