



*Rev. Ann Fuller*

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## Exchange of Vows

**I encourage you to choose your vows carefully as they should be a meaningful pledge you honestly believe you will make every effort to fulfill. Your vow expresses your feelings for your partner, indicates your intention to make a lifelong commitment and makes realistic promises defining your primary responsibilities as a spouse.**

**You can exchange your vows in any number of ways. Ad lib and say what comes off the top of your heads—always good for a laugh. Memorize your vows and recite them to one another. Write down your vows and read them to each other during the ceremony. Due to the nerves associated with weddings, most couples do tend to choose vows they “repeat after me” or to which they respond, “I do.” I am seeing more couples combine vow formants and opt to say a few words to one another and then finish their pledges with a more traditional “repeat after me” or “I do” vow.**

### 1. Choosing Your Vows

Your first step is to decide on the format that best suits your personalities. Painfully shy individuals should never be forced to memorize their vows, and likewise, the romantic extrovert who wants to express himself or herself with self-written vows should not be constrained to simply respond, “I do.” While most couples use the same format, you do not have to exchange your vows in the same way. It is perfectly fine if one recites from memory while the other “repeats after me.”

2. The next thing is to decide what is important to you. What aspects of marriage do you want to emphasize in the context of your vows? What can you realistically promise one another within the marriage bond?

- Friendship
- Loyalty
- Respect
- Love
- Permanency
- Fidelity
- Companionship
- Responsibility
- Compassion
- Trust
- Encouragement

3. Finally you want to decide on the type of language to use in your vows. Are more traditional or contemporary words important to you. Do you want a formal or casual tone to your vows?



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## Vow Formats

**You may find a marriage vow you feel is appropriate, but want to convert it into a different format. Any vow can be changed to suit the way you want to exchange your pledges to one another.**

**Recited:** “(Name), please share with us your pledges to (Name).” with the couple then reciting or reading their previously memorized or written vows.

**Responsive:** “(Name), please look into (Name’s) eyes as I ask you; “Do you / Will you....” to which the couple responds “I will” or “I do.”

**Repetitive:** “(Name), please look into (Name’s) eyes as you repeat after me, ...” prompting the couple in a series of easily repeated lines.

**Combination:** The couple may opt to combine two of the above vow styles. This first example was written by a couple I married in June 2006. Their vows begin in the repetitive style and then transition into responsive.

*(Name), you are my one true love,  
my best friend, my soul mate.  
You complete my spirit  
and compliment my soul.  
Today, before our family,  
our friends and the heavens  
I pledge my love to you,  
And promise to share  
the rest of my life with you.  
(Name), I will honor these promises  
until the end of time.  
When two souls believe their love is forever,  
the heavens make it so.*

Do you (Name) and (Name) promise to trust, respect and celebrate each other? Grow together by unselfishly encouraging, appreciating, nurturing and supporting each other? Laugh, play and enjoy the simple pleasures together? Help each other stay focused on the important things in life and not sweat the small stuff? Be there and comfort each other always? Be faithful to each other? Begin and end each day with the words, “I love you?” ~ *We do.*



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**The following vow is presented in three different formats.**

**Recited:**

I, (name), in the presence of our families and friends, take you, (name) to be my lawfully wedded husband / wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health. I will love and honor you, offering my friendship and trust in you, promising to be faithful and understanding as long as we both shall live.

**Responsive:**

(Name), in the presence of your families and friends, do you take (name) to be your lawfully wedded husband / wife? Do you promise to be true to him in good times and in bad, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health? Do you vow to love and honor him, offering your friendship and trust in him, promising to be faithful and understanding as long as you both shall live?

**Repetitive:**

In the presence of our families and friends,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you, \_\_\_\_\_  
to be my lawfully wedded husband / wife.  
I promise to be true to you  
in good times and in bad,  
for richer and for poorer,  
in sickness and in health.  
I promise to love and honor you  
offering my friendship and trust in you,  
promising to be faithful and understanding  
as long as we both shall live.

## **Vow Language**

**You may stumble across a vow containing the sentiments you wish to express, but find it either too stilted or too casual. By altering a few words, using full names or nick names, you can easily change a vow to suit your personalities and the tone of your wedding. The vows below say essentially the same thing, but I think you'll agree convey a different tone.**

I, (name), take you (name), to be my lawfully wedded (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better and for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, keeping myself only unto you until death we do part.



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I, (name), take you, (name), to be my beloved (wife/husband), to honor and treasure, to be at your side in times of sorrow and in times of joy, to love and comfort you always, pledging my faithfulness to our union, for all the days of my life.

## Sample Vows

**The following list of vows is far from exhaustive, but hopefully will give you some ideas. It does not begin to touch the creativity we can bring to your own ceremony. You can find more vows at other sites on the internet and in wedding planning books. I am always happy to help you craft your own unique vows if you would like some assistance.**

1. I, (name), take you (name), to be my lawfully wedded (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better and for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, keeping myself only unto you until death we do part.
2. I, (name), take you, (name), to be my beloved (wife/husband), to honor and treasure, to be at your side in times of sorrow and in times of joy, to love and comfort you always, pledging my faithfulness to our union, for all the days of my life.
3. I, (name), take you (name) to be my husband./wife. I promise to be true to you through the inevitable changes life brings. I will remain by your side in times of want and times of plenty. When we are ill and when we are well, when we grieve and when we rejoice, I will love and honor you all the days of my life. I offer my trust in you, vowing to be faithful and understanding from this day forward.
4. (Name), I give to you everything I am and everything I will ever be. I value our friendship beyond measure. I promise to share your dreams and help you achieve your goals. I will never stand behind you or in front of you but always beside you. I will listen to you with an open heart and an open mind pledging my honesty, compassion, fidelity and forgiveness. I promise to love you no matter what tomorrow brings. I will always be your most loyal friend and your loving husband/wife because you are my heart and my soul now and forever.
5. (Name), you are the person I want to share my life with. I want to be the one to give you warmth when you are cold, comfort when you are in pain, joy when you are sad. I will care for you as you care for me, sharing equally in the responsibilities we both bring to our marriage. I will support you in all your endeavors. I give you my trust and promise to be worthy of your trust. I will remain by your side now and forever as your husband/wife.
6. I, (name), vow to love you, (name), and care for you as long as we both shall live. I take you, with all your faults and your strengths, as I offer myself to you with my faults and my strengths. I will help you when you need help, and will turn to you when I need help. I choose you as the person with whom I will spend my life.



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7. I, (name), am proud to marry you, (name), the woman/man I want by my side for the rest of my life. I promise to give you all the love, courtesy, respect, and attention a good union demands. I dedicate myself in mind, body, heart and soul to bring you happiness and comfort from this day forward.

8. (Name), you are the love of my life, the inspiration I have always sought. I pledge my dedication to you for the rest of my life. I love you with all of my heart and soul. I will do everything within my power to ensure your happiness and well-being. I, (name), take you, from this day forward, to be a part of me, and promise to look upon you forever with dedication, understanding, and unconditional love.

9. (Name), I love you with all my heart and soul. You are everything I could hope to find in a woman/man. You are loving, thoughtful, caring, smart, and beautiful/handsome in my eyes. Your love always makes me feel like the happiest and luckiest man/woman alive. I am proud to have you as my life's partner and promise I will always be at your side.

10. (Name), I love you. You are my best friend. Today I, (name), commit myself to you. I promise to encourage and inspire you, to laugh with you and comfort you. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, when life seems easy and when it seems hard. When our love is simple, and when it is an effort. I promise to cherish you, and to always hold you in highest regard. These things I give to you now and forever.

11. Today I marry my best friend, the one I will live with, dream with, and love. I (name) take you to be my husband/wife/partner. From this day forward I will cherish you, looking with joy down the path of our tomorrows knowing we will walk it together side by side, hand in hand and heart to heart.

12. (Name), I pledge my heart, body and soul to our union. I promise to support you in your endeavors and counsel you when you need my guidance. I will accept your counsel with an open heart and open mind. I will share my thoughts, dreams, hopes and fears with you. I will hold you close when you laugh and when you cry. I vow to be a strong individual within a solid union so we may both grow in love and wisdom for the rest of our days.

13. I, (name), take you, (name) to be my husband/wife/partner. I pledge myself this day to trust and appreciate you. I promise to respect and cherish your uniqueness and to support, comfort and strengthen you through life's joys and sorrows. I promise to build a life together based upon mutual concern, compassion and honor. I will be faithful and loving, in good times and in bad, from this day forward.

14. I, (name) give to you, (name) my vow of sacred matrimony. I acknowledge our individuality and respect the natural space that will reside comfortably between us. I promise to bridge that space with open communication, silent understanding and heartfelt compassion. I promise to act loving so as to be loving. I promise to love passionately, argue fairly and support you unfailingly. I gladly accept the responsibilities that come with our relationship. I love you and pledge my fidelity all the days of our lives.