



Rev. Ann Fuller

Marriage License



You cannot avoid dealing with the Clerk of Courts office if you want your marriage to be recognized legally. The good news is that it isn't difficult at all. The marriage license could very well be one of the easiest things you have to arrange while planning your wedding. However, you cannot delegate this particular task. You have to do it yourselves.

Licenses are issued by county, but are valid throughout the state. For example, if you are having a beach wedding and live in Orlando, you can still obtain your license at a courthouse convenient to your home.

Requirements and Application Process

To obtain a license in Florida you do not need to be a resident. You do not even have to be a U.S. citizen. To apply in person, present yourselves together at the Clerk of Courts office and have photo i.d. with you. There are no blood tests, witnesses or other paperwork required. If a previous marriage ended in death or divorce you must simply attest to that so it is noted properly on the license. Your license is issued on the spot. I rarely encounter much in the way of lines, so you are likely to be in and out in about fifteen minutes. The hardest part of the whole process is handing over the \$93.50 for the state to recognize the legal benefits you will enjoy as husband and wife. Payment may be made by cash, cashier's check, certified check, money order, or some credit cards.

In Brevard County, you can save a little time by providing your information online. Complete the simple form, receive a confirmation number and take that number to the courthouse. The clerk will pull up your application already filled out rather than having to type in the information while you are standing at the counter.

From the Brevard County Clerk of Courts Website: *All that is required for single adults to obtain a marriage license is for them to come in person to the Clerk's office, bring their driver license or other acceptable identification card and be prepared to pay the fee. A recent change in the law also requires both applicants to provide either their Social Security number, naturalization number, immigration number or passport number.*



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Valid Dates and Timing Your Application

If both parties reside in Florida and have not completed a marriage preparation course in the last twelve months there is a three day waiting period before the license becomes valid. However, a hardship waiver can be issued if necessary. If either party resides outside of Florida and/or both parties have taken a marriage preparation course in the last twelve months, there is no three day waiting period. The license is valid for sixty (60) days from the date it becomes valid. Your wedding ceremony must take place within the valid dates.

My advice is to not get it too far in advance in case you misplace it and don't wait too late in case emergencies arise. Pick a date approximately two to four weeks before your wedding and go get it done. Put the license in a safe place you will remember so you can bring it with you to your wedding or submit it to your officiant for safe keeping until the ceremony.

Marriage Preparation Course

The state offers a discount and waives the three day waiting period if you both participate in a four hour marriage preparation course within the last twelve months. I absolutely believe premarital preparation is beneficial in its own right and well worth the investment in both time and money. Marriage faces an unprecedented number of challenges these days. A good marriage education course can help a couple anticipate the realities of marriage and provide them with the communication skills necessary to resolve inevitable conflicts with respect and compassion.

Keep in mind:

- If you are simply choosing this option to save \$32.50, understand course providers typically charge for their services. My fees for a secular Marriage Education Class are considered quite reasonable yet are more than the savings for your license.
- Many course providers are clergy and might have a specific religious perspective on marriage preparation.
- The county does include a list of marriage course providers on their website, but does not necessarily verify their credentials. I highly recommend you inquire about training and ask for references before you begin a marriage preparation course.





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Filing the License After the Wedding

Anyone may return the license after the certificate of marriage portion of the document has been completed. This is done following the ceremony and I always offer to return it on behalf of the couple. If you choose to return the license yourself, the clerk will hand you the certified copy on the spot. This process takes a matter of minutes, but does require another trip to the courthouse.

Although the state grants ten days, I submit all licenses within the first few business days following the wedding. I prefer to return the license to the Clerk of Courts office in person, but if not (a license from a Florida county other than Brevard for example), I mail the license immediately and include a stamped return envelope so they can mail your certified copy directly to you. It may very well be waiting for you when you return from your honeymoon.

You receive a photocopy of your license with an official stamp (often not even a raised seal) indicating it is a certified copy of your license. The clerk of courts keeps the original. The certified copy is all that is required for official name changes, but it is not very pretty so I do provide every couple with a more attractive keepsake Marriage Certificate.



Important Note

If a valid marriage license is not presented prior to the ceremony, I cannot perform a legally valid marriage ceremony. In the absence of a valid marriage license, the couple may sign a waiver stating their understanding that any ceremony performed without the presence of the license will be symbolic and will not result in their legal status as husband and wife. (Pssst, I have had to do this. Don't forget the license!)