

## Tips for Inclusive Wedding Ceremonies

From the staff of InterfaithFamily.com

As interfaith weddings are becoming more common, cultural differences can add more stress to the occasion, especially if couples seek to honor both religious traditions. In fact, how to make wedding ceremonies inclusive and comfortable for the families, friends and guests is one of the most frequently-asked questions we get at InterfaithFamily.com. We compiled tips and sample prayers into a booklet, “Wedding Ceremony Ideas for Interfaith Couples” based on contributions from InterfaithFamily.com’s members.

1. Involve family and friends in the planning. They will be more connected to the wedding if they have been a part of making the day a special one.
2. Provide a program with definitions and explanations of the various traditions and rituals represented in the ceremony, and ask the officiant to explain them during the ceremony.
3. Acknowledge the couple’s two faith backgrounds at various points during the ceremony.
4. Choose readings that either are common to both traditions, or do not offend either one. Many wonderful readings used by interfaith couples do not come from any religious tradition, while other readings and prayers that do come from one religious tradition are not inconsistent or off-putting to participants from another faith. Consult with clergy over any questions or concerns you may have.
5. Similarly, include rituals that are common to both traditions, or do not offend either one, for example blessings over wine, or lighting a Unity Candle, a traditional part of a Christian wedding.
6. Create an interfaith ketubah, the Jewish marriage contract, now often a work of art couples frame and display in their homes.
7. Involve both families and traditions with the chuppah, the Jewish wedding canopy, representing the home that the couple will build together, that often consists of four poles and a cloth covering.
  - Have the parents who are not Jewish make the chuppah covering.
  - Have members of both families decorate and/or hold the chuppah poles.
  - Have the chuppah covering reflect the tradition of the family that is not Jewish. One couple with a Chinese background had guests sign a red silk piece of material that was then used for the chuppah covering (in the Chinese culture red symbolizes joy and features prominently in wedding clothing and ritual objects).

8. Choose seven friends and family members from both sides to offer either the original or alternative versions of the “sheva b’rachot,” the seven blessings traditionally recited during a Jewish wedding.
9. Be sure that anything said in Hebrew--and any other language incorporated into the ceremony--is translated so that everyone present can understand.
10. Include inclusive activities such as the handshake of peace, passing around a challah, or joining hands to sing a song together or to wish the couple well.

For more information visit [www.interfaithfamily.com/weddingresources](http://www.interfaithfamily.com/weddingresources).

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