

# Ten Tips for Planning a Non-Traditional Ceremony

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## 1) Color outside the lines

If you are having a non-traditional ceremony, especially in the beginning stages of planning, give yourself permission to think outside the box. Get together with your fiancé for a brainstorming session, lock up your inner critic and let your imagination run wild. If you've always dreamed of riding up to your wedding on a white horse, or sashaying down the aisle in a red dress a la Scarlet O' Hara, write it down. One of these ideas may either end up in the ceremony or inspire something that does.

## 2) Draw on cultures and family traditions

Research wedding customs from the cultures represented in each of your families and also any family wedding traditions. You can choose to include a custom in your ceremony to pay respect to your heritage, - for example breaking the glass under the groom's foot, jumping over a broom, wearing wedding crowns, family blessing with rosemary. - Your officiant should be able to supply some suggestions for you.

## 3) Adopt and adapt

You can also choose to borrow customs and traditions that appeal to you without having to be a card-carrying member of that culture! Another idea is to take existing traditions and adapt them to reflect your own personalities and tastes. For example instead of just feeding each other something sweet, a couple might choose to include something bitter (like herbs, or a lemon,) and something sweet (like wine and chocolate) to represent staying together through good times and bad.

## 4) Involve children

If one or both of you have children from this or a previous relationship, consider having an additional part of the ceremony to mark and honor the creation of a new family, some step parents say vows to the children and give them gifts, alternatively the new family can be symbolized by putting flowers in a vase, or gemstones in a silver box to be engraved.

## 5) Involve the congregation

Think about how much audience participation you might like. Are the people there just as witnesses or would you like more involvement? One idea is to have everyone be asked whether they promise to support this marriage and answer “we do”. Other creative ideas might include having 8 – 12 individuals each come and place a rock in a circle to create a sacred space for the wedding to take place in, they can each offer a word of blessing as they place their rock. Use indelible pens to record these on each rock and keep in your home or garden after the ceremony.

## 6) Equal Aisle Opportunities

Just because it is traditional that only the bride walks down the aisle doesn't mean the groom (and his mom/dad or both) should miss out the opportunity to walk down too. It's a great moment to take in everyone who's there and let them see you too.

## 7) Can you hear me now?

When considering the venue, particularly if it is outside, please bear in mind the acoustics. Your DJ should be able to advise on amplification if needed. After all, if you only wanted each other to hear your vows you could be getting married in your kitchen.

## 8) Vows

Even in a non-traditional ceremony you can use traditional vows if you prefer. If you do write your own, some couples like to work on these together, others prefer a surprise approach. You may want to agree on length at least though. On the day I suggest you have the officiant read them for you to repeat rather than try and read or worse still remember them yourself.

## 9) Music

The music you use can reflect your individual tastes; deliver a message or simply what is inspiring to you. These days anything goes, - I walked down the aisle to The Beatles- All You Need is Love.

## 10) Let the ceremony reflect your spirituality

Discuss with your fiancé, how you define your religious and spiritual beliefs and what are those of the family and friends attending. Strive for a balance, which is true to you and also is comfortable for your guests too. There are many creative ways to handle this arena, for example having prayers, which are not addressed to a specific being.