# Add-On parts to a Wedding Ceremony

**The Unity Candle:** one of the most common ceremonies. The bride and groom each take a lit candle and simultaneously light a third larger "unity candle." They may blow out their individual lights, or leave them lit, symbolizing that they have not lost their individuality in their unity. Variations: The couple’s parents or children can light a smaller candle symbolizing each family, and the bride takes the flame from them and the groom takes his flame from them. This can also be done with the couple’s children symbolizing the union of children. A larger more elaborate ceremony can be done when all guests are given a candle, and the first guest's is lit and then passes the flame until all are lit, and then the bride and groom together light their unity candle. This variation typically includes a proclamation that this ceremony represents the unity of friends and family supporting the couple in their marriage.  
  
**Rose Ceremony:** A simple unity ceremony where the bride and groom exchange roses. Then the bride and groom present their mother-in-law with the roses.  
  
**Wine Ceremony:** The bride and groom each take a carafe of wine and pour it into a single glass, which they both drink from. Typically a red and white wine is used to create a new color symbolizing the new union in marriage.  
  
**The Scottish Loving Cup:** In a more romantic spirit, a toast to your love. King James VI of Scotland, on his marriage to Anne of Denmark in 1589, presented her with a quaich or "Loving Cup", as a symbol of his devotion. Quaichs are often used in Scottish wedding ceremonies. Sometimes the newly married couple may hold the quaich for each other while they take a drink to symbolize their love and togetherness or, the couple might pass the quaich around the wedding party to reinforce the love, trust and happiness of the newly wedded couple. Modern day couples will do this with a shot of whiskey.

**Water Ceremony:** The couple each pours different colored water into a single glass, creating a third color.   
  
**Sand Ceremony:** the wedding sand ceremony expresses the coming together of two people or two families into one new family. Typically, each person has different colored sand and takes turns pouring it into one clear vessel, forming a layered effect. Sometimes just the couple participates, and sometimes the couple's children and/or parents join in with their own colored sand by adding to the layers of colors, and expressing the harmony of the entire family.

**Salt Ceremony:** Indian weddings often include a salt ceremony, where the bride passes a handful of salt to her groom without spilling any. He then passes it back to her and the exchange is repeated three times.

She then performs the salt exchange with all the members of the groom's family, symbolizing her blending in with her new family.

**Breaking Bread Ceremony:** The bride and groom tear off pieces of bread, and then each eat a piece. Sometimes the bread is also shared with family and friends. It symbolizes their future as a family together.  
  
**Garland Ceremony or Lei Ceremony:** The bride and groom exchange garlands of flowers. This is a common part of Indian weddings, where the ceremony is called varmala or jaimala, and represents a proposal by the bride and acceptance by the groom. It also represents their new unity, blessed by nature. In Hawaiian weddings, the bride and groom typically exchange leis. The families may also exchange leis with the couple. Leis represent the love and respect you have for the person you are giving it to, and the unity of the new family.

**Love Letters and Wine Ceremony:** A Love Letter Wine Box exchange is a romantic ceremony that will enhance your wedding and serve as a lasting reminder of the commitments made to one another. Heartfelt letters, encapsulating your thoughts and feelings are locked away to be revealed several years into your marriage. A distinctive way for a couple to, celebrate love for one another.  
  
**Circling:** In Eastern European ceremonies, the bride and groom circle the altar or officiant three times, which are their first steps together as husband and wife. In Hindu ceremonies, couples circle the fire seven times, sealing their bond. The unbroken circle represents the unbroken commitment to each other.

**Ring Warming:** Before you say your vows and exchange your rings, the Wedding Officiant will ask everyone, including your wedding party to participate in a ring warming. The ring warming is an opportunity to send the bride and groom good luck and love through a silent wish to the rings when passed to them.

**Broom Jumping:**

**Eastern Europeans,** The besom ceremony has been performed for centuries throughout Eastern Europe, including among the Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Celtic, Druid and Roma communities, which have each put their own twist on the tradition. Referred to as *over de bezem trouwe*n (marrying over the broomstick) in the Netherlands, the ritual is believed to have originated with the Romani in Wales, who jumped over a flowering broom shrub to symbolize their spiritual union.

**In Scotland**, the *Reiteach* was part of the engagement festivities that required the suitor and his friends to light-heartedly barter with his true love's father for her hand in marriage. Once satisfied with the offer, the men are permitted to cross the threshold, and the deal is sealed with a shot of whiskey.

**The Welsh** *priodas coes ysgub*ceremony involved wedging a birch broom into a doorway at an angle. After the groom jumped, the bride followed. If either one knocked it down, legend said the marriage was doomed to fail. The marriage could be dissolved within a year of the wedding date by simply jumping back out the door over the broom.

During the mid-18th century in England and France, the term "broomstick wedding" became associated with elopements and marriages that were not legally binding. This was most common in rural areas where traveling clergymen only occasionally passed through the countryside.

**African Cultures** From Africa to the Caribbean to the United States, jumping the broom has remained an important tradition in the African Diaspora. As one of the 12 Symbols of Life, the broom represents cleanliness and spiritual well-being.  Slaves brought the broom traditions to the British Isles, West Indies and Southern U.S., adapting the customs to fit their evolving spiritual beliefs. Over time, the handle of the broom has come to represent God, the straw symbolizes family and the knotted ribbon is a metaphor for the couple's newly forged bond. Once marriage rights were granted in the U.S. after the Civil War, the practice fell out of favor among African Americans until the 1970s when cultural pride surged.

**Hand Fasting Binding Ceremony:** Lasso or rope is placed around the bride and groom's shoulders, usually by the officiant. Sometimes rosary beads or orange flowers are used instead of rope. It can also be placed around the couple's necks, or wrists. Most ancient cultures had some sort of "binding" ceremony for weddings. Cord Binding was traditionally a very simple ceremony – the bride and groom faced each other and joined right hand to right hand and left hand to left hand and Knots were tied over and around the hands of the couple, thus ensuring them health, happiness and fertility. The expression "Tie the Knot" came from this early Celtic marriage ritual.

**Arras (coins) Veil & Cord/Rosary Ceremony:** Ceremonial traditions that honor the arras unity ceremony vary widely between cultures. The officiant, who is typically a priest, explains the ritual to the guests then bestows a blessing upon the coins and couple. The pledge typically includes the groom's promise to financially provide for his family, but many modern couples are opting for unity vows that celebrate a mutual giving and receiving of responsibility.

**Sea Shell Blessing:** Each member of the wedding party is given a sea shell to hold representing their unique individuality and their presence at the wedding. During the ceremony, the Officiant will ask each person to make a special silent blessing or wish over the shell after which the shells are collected into a decorative container symbolically joining family and friends, through the couple, into one.

**Celtic Oath Stone**: Vow Oath Stone Embrace this old European tradition. The Bride & Groom place their hands upon a special & decorated stone while saying their wedding vows vows to "set them in stone".

**Guests Blessing Stones:** Each of your guests can select a small smooth river stone to offer a blessing or wish over & then place in a container for the couple, you’re your blessings & to display as a keepsake.

**Heart Love Locks:** No one knows how or when this ancient Chinese custom began. Locking your love is the ancient custom of symbolically locking one's love on a never-ending chain. You can forever lock your love with beloved. For those who wish to symbolize their enduring love. Each one locks their heart padlock to the other's and slips the locks onto a chain or ribbon that creates a never ending circle. Then tie the keys to a separate ribbon attached to 2 helium filled balloons to be released into the sky, thus uniting your love for eternity.

**Truce Bell**: A bell is rung on the wedding day, the happiest day of the couple's lives and then is placed in a central location in the home. If the couple starts to argue, one of them can ring the truce bell, reminding them both of that happiness and hopefully ending the disagreement quickly.

**Breaking of the Glass:** The Breaking of the Glass symbolizes the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.  Couples include this tradition in their wedding ceremony as it symbolizes the absolute finality of the marital covenant. Just as the broken pieces of glass can never be put back together and returned to its former state, so the covenant of marriage irrevocably binds the new husband and wife in their new state of marriage.

**Exchanging the Peace**: One of the simplest ways to get your guests involved, and is also one of the nicest. Towards the end of the ceremony, each guest will turn to their neighbors, say hello and shake hands. They might say "Peace be with you," or "Peace and love." Though exchanging the peace is not directly asking for their support, it is helping to form community and human interaction. And ultimately, that community is what will support you, for many years to come.

**Wedding Unity Tree Ceremony:** Celebrate your marriage with an age old tradition! Couples often planted a tree where they watched it grow over the years. There still remains wedding trees older than 70 yrs. Include your children or parents in this delightful ceremony. The unity of the family is seen as your loved ones add soil to the potted tree & you finish the ceremony by both watering the tree together. The officiant explains to your guests how the tree & the essence of your marriage must remain strong, & flexible, & deep rooted. Using the metaphor of the growing tree to your marriage is perfect.