

all about *your* vows



OUR PRO

Jemelle Wooten, a licensed officiant, ordained minister and certified premarital coach, specializes in working with nontraditional couples.

WHAT WE LOVE

Jemelle allows couples to lead the way in customizing their ceremonies and making new tradition.

DISCOVER

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When should couples book their officiant, and how can they find the right one?

I recommend booking your desired officiant a year in advance, though I've learned it can take even more time for nontraditional or LGBTQ+ couples. Too often, couples select their officiant based on who offers the lowest fees. Instead, look for a professional with experience and a great presence, but most of all, find someone you can relate to and who makes you both feel comfortable. If the vibe is off, move on.

What type of services are included in the cost of an officiant?

I create a custom ceremony to reflect your relationship and vision for the day. The wedding rehearsal and unlimited contact are included in my fee, but I also offer premarital counseling and can officiate nationwide as needed.

What are some creative ways couples can personalize their ceremony?

Use your imagination! Couples can do something as simple as following a "traditional" format or order, but with nontraditional dialogue. They can think big and incorporate their passions or interests, from nature and travel to their favorite comic books and movies. I've even officiated a wedding on a plane—yes, they said their vows in-flight!

What are some nontraditional ceremony venues for couples opting to try a new space?

There are so many options, from parks and museums to unusual Airbnbs. I recommend checking out all-inclusive event spaces where you have venue, food, cake and any other necessities in one place. That results in less work and worry. The possibilities are endless.

How can officiants and couples work together to make sure the ceremony feels authentic to them?

Communication is key. Couples should tell their officiant if there are any traditions dear to them they would like done or things they would like mentioned. I send my couples questionnaires to help prepare for their ceremonies. I also ask them a mix of both standard and more personal questions to learn more about them. Those things really help customize the ceremony accordingly.

What shifts or "trends" do you see coming for wedding ceremonies in 2020?

I've absolutely loved seeing nontraditional wedding parties. Brides are opting to have a man of honor, grooms stand alongside a best woman and grandma takes a starring role as the flower girl. I think over time, more and more people are going to embrace the idea of marriages as celebrations of love, which doesn't always require a traditional or religious component to validate a union.

How can couples get over pesky writer's block when writing their own vows?

First, this is normal. So many of the couples I marry run into this issue. I always tell them to remember that their vows are promises to their fiancé. Ask yourself what's important to the love of your life and promise to do or value those things. Also, it doesn't hurt to pay attention to meaningful lines in movies or books or to check out quotes on social media. We are constantly surrounded by things that inspire us.

Last but not least: How can couples calm those preceremony jitters?

Unfortunately, nerves come with the territory. That said, if I have a nervous couple, I like to tell a joke to calm their nerves. A little chuckle or two never hurt anyone.

●● WHEN PLANNING
YOUR CEREMONY, GET
COLLABORATIVE. IT'S FUN
TO COMBINE AND
SHARE IDEAS WITH YOUR
FUTURE SPOUSE. ●●