



The Stress-Free Guide to Crafting Your Wedding Vows





Hello soon-to-be-wedded couple,

Are you ready to write the most important words you'll ever say to another human being?

Um....suuuuuure.

Most couples wait until the last minute to write their vows. And it's no wonder. It seems so freaking daunting! Where to start?!?

I'm here to tell you that it's actually simpler than you think.

Your wedding vows are your mission statement in marriage. They are based on your values - what you personally believe partnership is all about.

When done right, your vows are a living testament to what matters most to you as a couple. They are the core principles that guide how you speak and act with one another. They are guideposts that help you remember what's important in marriage when life gets hectic.

From this perspective, your vows are less about saying something flowery or cute just for the sake of it. Instead, your vows are so simple and meaningful that you can recall them at will - **because they are that meaningful to you.**

When approached in this way, your vows become a decision-making filter for how you spend your time, resources, and energy as a couple. For example, if you both love the outdoors and enjoy taking hikes in new places together, you value adventure. One of your vows may sound like, "I promise to satisfy our thirst for adventure by continuously seeking epic experiences together." Knowing that adventure is a core value for you both, you'll make sure to prioritize excursions to new places throughout the course of your marriage because you know that's what makes you both happy.



So...which values should you choose?

In the pages that follow, you will find a list of marriage values to choose from. The values listed are inspired by insights from the science of relationships and the field of positive psychology. Decades of research on couples has shown that there are certain core practices and beliefs that lead to a happy and successful marriage. Those practices and beliefs are embodied in the values listed in this guide. They include:

- Gratitude and Appreciation: expressing fondness for one another
- Presence: being attentive to your partner
- Forgiveness and Compassion: seeing your partner for the human being he or she is
- Mutual Support: encouraging one another
- Open Communication: speaking truthfully and in a forthright manner
- Spirituality: finding deeper meaning in life together
- Curiosity: continuously wanting to know your partner better
- Clean Agreements: keeping commitments
- Passion: exploring desires together
- Growth: continuously learning how to be better together
- Personal Responsibility: owning one's own happiness
- Dreams: fulfilling lifelong pursuits
- Cooperation: working together as a team
- Connection: taking time to check in with each other often
- Service: offering your gifts to the world together

To illustrate what is meant in each of these values, I have provided examples in the guide below.

And, of course, this is not an exhaustive list. I highly recommend that couples consider any additional values not listed here that may be important in their own lives.



How to Use the Guide

As a rule, I recommend that couples write their vows together. In this way, couples are united on the common principles of their partnership in advance of their wedding.

Here are some simple steps on how to get the best use out of this guide.

Step One: Place a star next to the values that you resonate strongly with.

Step Two: Consider any additional values not listed here and add them into the handout.

Step Three: In your own words, write a statement that embodies this value as you see it. Use specific words or phrases that touch your heart and make you smile. Consider this your first draft of your vows. If it helps, you can use some of the examples as inspiration.

Step Four: Come back to this guide after a few days to take another look at what you wrote. Feel free to finesse as you see fit until it lands perfectly for you both.

After you have completed your final version, write the vows on note cards so that you have them handy for your wedding ceremony. You may wish to read them together during the ceremony for maximum impact.

After the ceremony, you may also wish to have your vows printed and hung on a wall in your home. I've also included a "Vow Check-In" conversation guide that you can use on a regular basis with your partner.

If you benefited from this guide, I highly encourage you to sign up for the Epic Couples salon, "Crafting An Epic Wedding Ceremony." In this salon, you'll learn how to create a ceremony that touches the hearts of all, with step-by-step handouts for planning and logistics.

Heartfully yours,
Shannon Hall, Ph.D.

Your Turn

Below is a list of marriage values. For those values that are most meaningful to you, place a star next to the value. In the space provided, write a sentence that begins with "I promise to ____" and include a statement on you will live this value together.

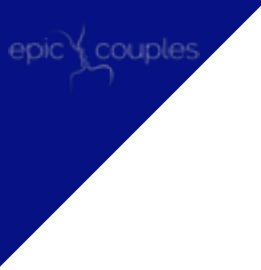
Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values
Gratitude and Appreciation	
Presence	
Forgiveness and Compassion	
Mutual Support	
Open Communication	

Your Turn

Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values
Spirituality	
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Your Turn

Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values
Personal Responsibility	
Dreams	
Cooperation	
Connection	
Service	



Your Values and Vows

Feel free to select any values of your choosing here!

Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values

Examples of Vows

As inspiration for your vows, here are some examples. Each statement reflects a core principle from the science of relationships.

Feel free to personalize these examples so that they resonate strongly for you and your partner. Make sure to use words and sentiments that feel authentic, powerful, and unique to you as a couple.

Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values
Gratitude and Appreciation	I vow to think highly of you and appreciate you for who you are.
Presence	I vow to be present for you, emotionally, mentally and physically, when you reach for me for in times of need.
Forgiveness and Compassion	I vow to treat you with dignity, thoughtfulness and compassion, especially in your moments of weakness.
Mutual Support	I vow to celebrate your successes, big or small, and to continuously encourage you to be your best possible self.
Open Communication	I commit to speaking and living my truth. I commit to full expression, to holding nothing back as I share my fears, dreams, needs, and wants.

Examples of Vows

Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values
Spirituality	I vow to honor the sacred in each of us as human beings having a spiritual experience.
Curiosity	I promise to remain intimately curious about who you are and what you desire in life.
Trust	I vow to keep my agreements with you impeccably, consistently and reliably to the best of my ability.
Passion	I vow to do my part to keep our lives exciting, adventurous, and full of passion.
Growth	I vow to support your personal growth, as well as my own, so that we continuously evolve as individuals and as a couple.

Examples of Vows

Marriage Values	How You Will Live Your Values
Personal Responsibility	I vow to honor your freedom as a choice maker. Even though we are in partnership, your choices are ultimately your own to make.
Following Dreams	I vow to pursue my full potential as a human being, as well as inspire you to fulfill your life's wildest dreams and aspirations.
Cooperation	I vow to seek common ground and to yield when necessary for the good of our partnership.
Connection	I promise to make connection with you a daily priority, no matter what comes our way.
Service	I commit to honoring and celebrating the gift of my life by offering my greatest talents in service to you, our family, and the world.



The Vow “Check In” Conversation

To keep your vows alive in your relationship, you may wish to meet monthly to focus specifically on your relationship. This can be 30-60 minutes of uninterrupted time (with phones turned off).

To begin, you may wish to light a candle and put on some soft music in the background. You can also take a few deep breaths together and do anything you need to do to relax and be present with each other.

Here is the structure of the conversation:

1. Read your vows aloud together, looking into each other’s eyes the way you did on your wedding day.
2. Afterwards, go through each vow one-by-one and ask each other for feedback on how you are each fulfilling that vow.
3. For vows that your partner is fulfilling wholeheartedly, make sure to express appreciation.
4. For vows that your partner may not have fulfilled, make sure to inquire about why that might be so in a compassionate and loving way. Ask if there is anything that you can do to help your partner fulfill that vow.
5. As needed, recommit to any vows that have not been fulfilled by stating how you would like to keep that vow moving forward.
6. Complete the conversation in a loving way - by kissing, snuggling quietly, looking into each other’s eyes, or whatever lets you close this time in a connected way.