

Wedding Rehearsal Information

Who will lead the rehearsal?

A rehearsal is not part of the standard fee charged by Tom for weddings. The time and travel in leading a rehearsal is about the same as the ceremony itself. On a Friday or Saturday, the charge is the same as for the wedding ceremony. On a weeknight or day, the fee is less.

However, you can conduct the rehearsal yourself and save the extra cost. At many locations, the wedding coordinator, or other experienced staff, lead the rehearsal. Tom doesn't need to do a rehearsal for his part in your ceremony. Once the detailed ceremony is prepared – back and forth with e-mails and phone calls – Tom knows what to do.

Once you have finalized the ceremony wording, you can call Tom to go over everything in detail, movement-by-movement, and have all your questions answered. Even before the ceremony is finalized, you can always call Tom anytime. Well, not at 2:00 a.m., Central Standard Time, but during the day and evening is okay.

As your wedding day gets closer, you will have questions you have not even thought about yet. After over 4,855 weddings, Tom can give you answers. Getting married is not something you want to get good at – that takes experience gathered from many weddings. Tom felt he was an expert after performing 500 weddings, but he still keeps learning.

How to conduct a Rehearsal.

What is a wedding “rehearsal?” It's when you get everyone together who is involved in the wedding. This should include the Bride and Groom, all the Bridesmaids, Groomsmen, Flower Girls, and Ring Bearers. It is helpful to have the readers and parents there. It's usually not necessary to have the musicians or DJ there. However if the musicians, or

DJ, are family members or friends, not experienced with weddings, then, if possible, have them attend the rehearsal.

The rehearsal is really a "walk-through" of what will happen during the ceremony. If you have readers or musicians, they don't need to take up everyone's time by practicing at the rehearsal. You don't want Judge Armstrong or the Coordinator reading the entire ceremony. The Bride and Groom should practice their vows on their own.

Is a wedding "rehearsal" necessary? About 60 to 70% of all weddings do not have a rehearsal. If you have a large Bridal Party you may want a rehearsal sometime before the wedding. Most rehearsals take about 40 to 50 minutes. It takes longer than the actual ceremony because you should run through the movements at least twice and talk through each part. Your Bridal Party needs to know when to walk in, how to walk in, where to stand, which way to face, what to do during the ceremony, and when and how to walk out. A rehearsal is to show people where they fit in and what they do, so they will know their roles on the day of the wedding.

Preparation

1. Have the written ceremony completed and have one or more copies with you. Tom will have prepared your ceremony based on your selections. Several hundred pages of samples are on his website www.tgarmstrong.com
2. Select a "Coordinator" who is not in the wedding party. You need a strong willed woman to do this job – no meek wallflowers. Someone who can act like a Sergeant Major when she needs to get everyone's attention and have everyone line up. You may want a Coordinator who can also help with the flowers, candles, and dresses on the wedding day – so don't ask a man to do this job unless you have someone else for the flowers, candles, and dresses. The Coordinator can stand in Judge Armstrong's spot and lead the rehearsal.

3. Set the date, time and location. Usually it's best to have the rehearsal at the same site as the ceremony, but it can be done somewhere else if that's not possible. A backyard or driveway can work too - somewhere with a little moving space. A chalked in "aisle" in a driveway has worked well in the past. The night before is traditional, but if it's a Saturday or Sunday wedding, the location may not be available. Thursday or even Wednesday evening is a good time for a rehearsal, but if members of the Bridal Party are coming from out of town this may cause problems and some may be absent.

4. If a few can't make it, don't be upset. Leave a space where that person will stand. A trained partner - the person standing next to them or walking in with them - will get them through. If only half of your Wedding Party knows what they're doing, you are better off than the vast majority of weddings. The "trained people" will get the others through. Remember that about 60-70% of ceremonies don't have any rehearsal and just wing it. When it's over they will be just as legally married as all the couples who had rehearsals.

5. It can take 40-50 minutes to do a rehearsal if everyone cooperates and someone is in charge and prepared - Judge Armstrong or your Coordinator.

Which side is which?

With Judge Armstrong facing the guests, the Groom is on his left and the Bride is on his right. As you are looking down the aisle from the point of entry, the Groom's side is to the right and the Bride's side is to the left.

So, as the Groomsmen come down the aisle, they go to their right. The Bridesmaids go to their left. Luckily there are no ups and downs, just rights and lefts. Sometimes this is reversed for good reason. See Wind and Veils - after Step 5.

Ushers

Some weddings have ushers to help with the seating, run out the white aisle runner, and release the guests after the ceremony. During the ceremony, an usher may stay toward the back to quietly seat the late arrivals. As the last of the wedding party is recessing after the ceremony, one or two ushers can come to the front, or they have been seated at the front, and they release the guests row-by-row.

Seating of Parents, Step-parents, and Grandparents

Usually the Grandparents are seated by the ushers just before the Processional. Right after the Grandparents the Parents are seated. Sometimes the Groom seats his parents. He takes his Mother's arm and his Father follows. Sometimes with a wide aisle he has a parent on either side or his Mother is in the middle. Then the Groom can stay at the front.

Traditionally, the Bride's Mother is the last to be seated. If the Bride's Father is walking the Bride down the Aisle – that's how he gets to the front.

What is the order of Entry?

Groom First the Groom goes up to the front. He may seat his parents as he goes up. Sometimes the Groom seats Grandmothers too. The Groom can also seat the Bride's Mother – it's however you like.

Groomsmen Sometimes the Groomsmen come from the side, or down the aisle, and stand with the Groom at the front just before the Processional Music starts, or as the beginning of the Processional if they are coming down the aisle. The Best Man stands closest to the Groom. The Groomsmen line up in the order that matches the Bridesmaid with whom they will make the Recessional.

Bridesmaids Sometimes the Groomsmen come down the aisle with the Bridesmaids – *OR* - The Bridesmaids come down the aisle one at a time. The Maid of Honor is last and stands closest to the Bride.

Ring Bearer and Flower Girls The Ring Bearer/s may come down the aisle on his own followed by the Flower Girl/s. They can also all walk together.

It depends on their age, etc. There is no right way. Remember, children are in weddings for comic relief – don't expect perfection.

The Bride The Grand Finale is the Bride. Sometimes with her Parents, Father, Brother, or by herself.

How to do a Rehearsal

Step 1

Position the Wedding Party as they will stand during the ceremony.

Line everyone up exactly as they will be standing during the ceremony. Don't start out with the Processional – no one will know where to walk to and where to stand. The Wedding Party should first know where they will be standing during the ceremony. The Processional comes later in the rehearsal.

Have the Coordinator stand where Judge Armstrong will be standing with a copy of the ceremony in her hand.

Do the Bride and Groom face the guests or have their backs to the guests?

The traditional way is to face Judge Armstrong, with your backs to the guests. You will shortly be facing each other and be holding both hands for the last half of the ceremony.

If you decide to face the guests, you don't want Judge Armstrong to stand between you and the guests – blocking their view. And you don't want him speaking to the guests with his back to them. His voice will project the wrong way if there is no microphone, but even if there is a microphone – it's not polite. The solution is to have Judge Armstrong stand to the side with the congregation on his right or left and you on his left or right.

For about half the ceremony, whichever way you choose to face at the beginning, you will be facing each other and holding both hands – so the guests will be to the Bride’s right and the Groom’s left.

The Bridal Party usually faces toward the Bride and Groom – at about a 45 degree angle toward the crowd. You don’t want a 90 degree angle. If you have forgotten what 45 degrees means, or are mathematically challenged, for help with the angles, go to www.math.com and search Geometry and then classifying angles. You can find everything on the Internet – sometimes even a spouse.

Depending on their age and personality, the Ring Bearer and Flower Girl may stand with the Wedding Party or sit with relatives at the front. In 90% of wedding they are seated with relatives. Once upon a wedding, a flower girl got bored and did a very good handstand – she was a very young and very good gymnast. As ladies know, a handstand doesn’t look good when you are wearing a dress, and it also upstaged the Bride – who couldn’t do a handstand.

Step 2

The Ceremony Movements

The Coordinator should then talk through the ceremony – not all the words, but all the movements and the words just preceding the movements - and tell everyone what to do. The Coordinator must carefully study the ceremony in advance.

The ceremony should already have most of the movements listed. For example:

The Bride hands her flowers to the Maid of Honor.
The Bride and Groom face each other and hold both hands.
The Best Man hands the Bride's ring to the Groom.
The Maid of Honor hands the Groom's ring to the Bride.
The Maid of Honor returns the flowers to the Bride.

The ceremony should also have all the events requiring movement marked – First Reading, Second Reading, Presentation of Flowers, Unity Candle, Pouring Sand, etc. Each of these events should be noted and the Coordinator should explain what everyone does at that point.

Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor

The Best Man and the Maid or Matron of Honor should be within reaching distance to the Bride and Groom. Practice passing imaginary flowers and rings. The Best Man should have the Bride's ring in his pocket and pass it to the Groom. Judge Armstrong will look at him at the moment he needs to do this. If it's in a box, he should take it out and keep the box.

The Maid of Honor has no pockets – this is not a problem. She usually has a thumb or two and the Groom's ring will fit on her thumb – if not select another Maid of Honor – or use another finger. She should curl her finger to be sure the ring doesn't fall off.

Before the Bride passes her flowers to the Maid of Honor, the Maid of Honor may want to pass her own flowers back to the next Bridesmaid. If there isn't one, she needs to be prepared to hold both bouquets. When it comes time to pass the Groom's ring, the Bride can simply take it off the Maid of Honor's thumb while the Maid of Honor still holds the two bouquets.

If the real rings are on the Ring Bearer's pillow, the Best Man will remove them and give them to the Groom and Bride, one at a time with the Bride's ring first; or deliver both at the same time. This should be noted in the ceremony.

The Maid of Honor should return the flowers to the Bride after the couple kiss. This point will be marked in the ceremony. The most common mistake at weddings is the Bride going back down the aisle without her flowers.

It's details like these that need to be discussed at the rehearsal. Judge Armstrong will also go over this again when he arrives just before the ceremony.

Readings

The reader should be shown where to stand. Will there be a microphone? Will Tom be passing the microphone to the reader? Microphones are not always necessary, but that depends on the location and the strength of the reader's voice. Outside locations with traffic noises, or fountains or waterfalls - that can't be turned off - require a microphone. Judge Armstrong will introduce the reader as is shown in the prepared ceremony.

Unity Candle or Sand

Where will the Unity Candle or Sand be located and who has to move at that point? Will it be located off to the side, or behind Judge Armstrong, or behind the Groomsmen or the Bridesmaids?

If it's an outside ceremony, have hurricane lamps for each candle. Test them with the candles to be sure they are the right size. There was once a wedding where the side candles were two inches taller than the hurricane lamps - they don't work then to keep the wind away from the flames. There have also been very decorative Unity Candles too wide to allow the hurricane lamp to fit over the decorations. Don't discover these problems ten minutes before the ceremony starts. Be Prepared - it's not just the motto of the Boy Scouts.

There should be room enough, if possible, for the Bride and Groom to go behind the table with the Unity Candles or Sand, or to the side of the table, and light the Unity Candle or pour the Sand so the guests can see them do it. You don't want the guests just to see your backs. If Parents are lighting the Side Candles, this also applies to them. Stand behind or to the side of the Unity Candle.

Be sure the sand doesn't overflow the unity container. If the Bride and Groom pour the sand and the center container is too small or too

large it doesn't look as nice as when everything works out. Test the containers before the day of the ceremony. You can use water to test everything.

Presentation of Flowers

If you are presenting flowers to Mothers and/or Grandmothers - where will the flowers be located? Will the Best Man hand the flowers to the Bride and Groom? Will the flowers be in a vase? Usually Presentation of Flowers takes place right after a Unity Candle Lighting or Sand Ceremony and the flowers can be ready on the same table. Grandmothers should be seated in the front row, if possible, or in the second row if that won't work.

Exchange of Roses

If the Bride and Groom are exchanging roses during the ceremony, who will have the roses - the Mothers? What will you do with the roses after the exchange? Go back down the aisle with the flowers - hand the two flowers to the Best Man?

Ring Bearer and Flower Girl.

Remember - children are in a wedding for comic relief - don't expect perfection - no one else does. It's the imperfection that is adorable. If the Ring Bearer hesitates, or refuses to walk down the aisle, have matchbox cars, or other trinkets, in the pocket of a Groomsman and let the child know there is a prize at the end of the aisle. Bribery works - that's why there are so many corrupt governments in the world.

For very young children, the parent or another person close to the child should be ready to walk the child down the aisle.

Flower Girls are usually more cooperative, but bribery can be used if necessary. Flower Girls can be shown how to drop flowers along the way by cutting up papers and then letting them practice. This is best done at another time and not at the rehearsal.

Very young children can be pulled along in a decorated wagon by older siblings or cousins. This is also a guaranteed crowd pleaser.

The Rings

Pillow – 95% of the time the rings on the pillow are fake. Once, in Woodbury, at a backyard wedding, before the ceremony even started, the three-year-old ring bearer lost the Groom’s ring from the pillow. Another ring was borrowed from a male guest. After the ceremony the guests lined up in a row and searched the backyard for the missing ring. What a great icebreaker for the reception!

Pockets and fingers work best as places for the rings. Judge Armstrong has also kept the rings in his pockets.

The wedding ring goes closest to the heart, so what about the engagement ring?

Here are the options:

1. Give both rings to the Best Man.
2. Put the engagement ring on the Bride’s other hand. She can then transfer it back once the wedding ring is on.
3. Just put the wedding ring on with the engagement ring closest to the heart and switch it later.

What if the ring won’t go over the knuckle – should I twist and push real hard?

NO – do not – never, never push or use force to get a ring on. Let your partner get the ring over his or her own knuckle.

Remember: Broken fingers ruin receptions. Blood dripping down on a wedding dresses don’t look good. Doesn’t feel good either – but “It is better to look good than to feel good.”

Musicians, DJs and CD Player

It's usually not necessary to have the DJ or Musicians present for a rehearsal. If you have a friend running a CD Player for the music, or a family musician who has never played for a wedding, that person should be present for the rehearsal. The prepared ceremony should list when music is played and, if possible, the name of the selection. You need to decide in advance where the musicians will be seated during the ceremony. Experienced musicians will know where to set up and they probably have been at the location before. You need to determine if there is an electrical outlet for the DJ or the CD player.

Usually you shouldn't overlap music and talk. If there is music for the Unity Candle it should be played while the candles are being lit – but not when Judge Armstrong is speaking. Yelling over the music doesn't sound good. The only exception to this is very quiet background music – like a harpist playing very softly. However, you don't want to have background music, no matter how soft, during the entire ceremony. This only works for a very short time period, otherwise it is very distracting.

The Kiss

After the kiss, the Bride gets her flowers back from the Maid of Honor.

Introduction of the Couple

Judge Armstrong formally presents the couple to the guests. The Bride and Groom turn toward the guests at this point. Then the recessional music begins and the couple walks back down the aisle.

Step 3

The Recessional

Everyone leaves in reverse order of the Processional as to how they would have come in. The Bride and Groom first, followed by the Best Man and Maid of Honor and so on. Sometimes the Flower Girl and Ring Bearer stay with their families and don't participate in the recessional – it's up to

you to decide based on the age, personality of the children, etc. If they do participate in the recessional they usually go last – just ahead of Judge Armstrong.

The pace is quicker than the Processional. Don't walk very slow and with pomp – walk happy and at a normal pace.

Judge Armstrong will introduce the Bride and Groom and they should turn toward the guests at this point. Everyone applauds after the Introduction, the Recessional music starts, and the Bride and Groom walk down the aisle. The Best Man and Maid of Honor wait for the first few steps and then stand together facing down the aisle – usually right in front of, and with their backs to, Judge Armstrong.

The Bride and Groom are given the full length of the aisle, and even around a corner, or out of the room, before the Best Man and Maid of Honor start down the aisle. The next couple waits for the first few steps and then stands together facing down the aisle – right in front of, and with their backs to, Judge Armstrong. When the Best Man and Maid of Honor are about half way down the aisle, then the next couple steps off, and so on, and so on, and so on.

The photographer may want each couple to pause for a picture. Explain to the Bridal Party that this might happen and the photographer should also remind them on the day of the ceremony.

Once the Bridal Party is down the aisle, Judge Armstrong can then give an Announcement – if you need one, and it's in the prepared ceremony. Here he does speak over the music – the musicians momentarily cut their volume or the DJ or CD Player cuts the volume during the Announcement.

An Announcement

The Announcement explains what is happening next. John and Mary will greet you in the entryway. Please remain seated, the ushers will release you row-by-row. **OR** Please proceed to the reception site at such

and such location. John and Mary will greet you there. **OR** Please remain seated. John and Mary will return to greet you row-by-row.

In the *Ceremony Library* on Tom's Website, there is a sample *Announcements* section.

Then Judge Armstrong walks down the aisle followed by the parents and family. The ushers should be at the front, right behind Judge Armstrong, releasing everyone row-by-row. Sometimes the Bride and Groom return to act like ushers and they then greet and release everyone row-by-row. This takes care of the receiving line. There should be an announcement to this effect so everyone remains seated and knows what comes next.

The Receiving Line

At the rehearsal figure out how you will be doing the receiving line, where it will be located, and who will be in it.

The usual line up is the Bride's mother first, the Groom's father second, the Bride, the Groom, the Groom's mother and last the Bride's father.

Or do a Wizard of Oz ending. The Bride and Groom get into a hot air balloon, waive to the crowd, and, with the balloon "pilot" beside them, disappear into the sky. Yes, all these examples and suggestions have actually happened. We don't know when or where they landed, or how, or if, they got back to the reception - they may be in somewhere other than Kansas. It was at an outside wedding in Afton. If you happen to see a Balloon in the sky with a woman in white in the Gondola - it could be them.

Step 4

The Processional

This is the time to discuss seating.

Who will be ushering in the Grandparents and Parents and in what order?

Before the Processional, immediate family members are seated (usually parents and grandparents). If you are going to do formal seating, those family members to be ushered in should remain in the "staging area" until everything and everyone is ready and all the other guests have been seated.

Assign specific ushers to escort specific family members. Introduce the usher/escorts to the family members each will be seating, to be sure the ushers know who each of them will be seating, and vice versa.

The order of seating is usually:

1. Groom's Grandparents
2. Bride's Grandparents
3. Groom's Parents
4. Bride's Mother – or both Parents if the Bride will not be escorted by her Father. The Bride can also come down the aisle with both her parents.

Prepare a written list of the relatives to be escorted showing the order and who will escort each. If possible, have relatives escort relatives. For instance, if the Best Man is the Groom's Brother, he should escort his Parents – or the Groom may escort his Parents and Grandparents. An Usher or Groomsman or the Groom may return to the back and escort a second or third person. If possible they should return by a side aisle. Let each Usher and Groomsman know who it is they are escorting and where to go after an escort is completed.

The Grandparents usually are escorted first. Then the Groom's Parents and finally the Bride's Parents are escorted down the aisle. If the Bride's Father is escorting her down the aisle, only the Bride's Mother is seated. The tradition is that the Bride's Mother is seated last. Sometimes both parents escort the Bride.

On the day of the wedding, this list should be in the hand of the Coordinator who lines up the Grandparents, Parents and the Ushers and Groomsmen in the right order to be escorted.

When the escorting of the Parents and Grandparents is done, the Ushers will normally come to the back to be ready to help seat late arriving guests. These guests should be quietly seated near the back so the ceremony is not disturbed. Late arriving relatives have forfeited their choice front seats. There is no need for the Ushers to escort late arrivers to a seat. The Ushers usually stay in the back until they return to the front – using side aisles if possible – for their assigned tasks after the Recessional.

Groomsmen may return to the back to be ready for the Processional, or if the Bridesmaids are coming down the aisle alone, the Groomsmen may remain at the front and stand where they will be standing during the ceremony.

If the Groom has escorted his Parents he may remain at the front or return to the back and walk in separately or walk in with Judge Armstrong just before the ceremony is about to start.

You may want to practice this at the rehearsal.

How does the Groom come down the aisle?

There are several ways. There is no “right way” just “your way.” It can be done as part of the Processional or just before the Professional begins.

1. Just before the Processional, the Groom and Judge Armstrong walk in together from the side – or down the aisle. The Groomsmen can also come in at this time if they are not walking down the aisle with the Bridesmaids.

2. Judge Armstrong comes in first then the Groom walks in escorting his Parents. Depending upon how he wants to do it, and on the width of the aisle, he can be between his parents or escorting his Mother with his Father walking just behind. Usually this is just before the Processional.
3. The Bride and Groom come down the aisle together.

How does the wedding party come down the aisle?

Decide before the Rehearsal if Bridesmaids and Groomsmen are coming down the aisle together or if Groomsmen are all waiting at the front and only the Bridesmaids walk down the aisle. The width of the aisle and style of dress should be taken into account when you decide what to do.

Here are some options.

1. The Groomsmen and Bridesmaids come down the aisle together.
2. The Maid of Honor comes down the aisle alone and the Best Man and Groom come in together and are waiting at the front. All the other Bridesmaids and Groomsmen come down together.
3. All the Groomsmen and the Groom come in together just before the processional starts. Judge Armstrong usually comes in with them. The Bridesmaids then come down the aisle alone.

The men follow, in order, with the Groom either first or last in the lineup – depending on which side they are coming from. If they are coming down the aisle, the Groom should be last.

They go to their places and stand as you have already rehearsed. If possible, the DJ, musicians, or CD player operator should be able to see the wedding party and Judge Armstrong.

When the men are in place, the Groom's attendants are facing the Groom and the guests. The Groom should have his back to Judge Armstrong, watching the aisle where the Bridesmaids and Bride will enter. At this point the Processional music begins.

The Bridesmaids will need to be ready and listening for their "cue" when Judge Armstrong and the Groom and Groomsman go to their places. When the Bridesmaids hear the Processional music, they should begin the Processional.

The last (outside) Bridesmaid enters first, followed by the other Bridesmaids, if any, at intervals of about half the length of the aisle; then the Maid of Honor.

The Bridesmaids should notice the placement of the Groomsmen, and "mirror" them. The Groomsmen should notice the placement of the Bridesmaids, and "mirror" them. It works both ways.

How do the Flower Girl and Ring Bearer come down the aisle?

Just before the Bride, the Flower Girl drops her flower petals – or just walks down holding a basket of flowers. The Ring Bearer can walk with her or before her. Many times, based on age and personality, it's best to have them come together.

The Ring Bearer has a pillow with rings attached to it. 95% of the time these are fake rings. Usually the Best Man has the Bride's ring in his pocket and the Maid of Honor has the Groom's ring on her finger. It may be difficult to untie the knot holding the rings during the ceremony. If you decide to tie the real rings on a pillow, use a slip knot so you just pull the loose end and the ring is untied. Practice this in advance until you get it right.

Most times, depending on their age, the Flower Girl and Ring Bearer sit with family members in the front or second row. Sometimes they stay standing during the ceremony with the wedding party.

How does the Bride come down the aisle?

The Bride is the Grand Finale. When she comes down the aisle everyone stands. If you have arranged with the musicians, or DJ, to play a different processional piece for the Bride, wait for the music to change.

Here are the options for a Bride to come down the aisle.

1. The Bride comes with both Parents - walking between them - if the aisle is wide enough. The Bride's style of dress also has an effect on the aisle width needed for the processional. When the aisle is narrow, the Bride's Father or both parents may walk just behind the Bride.
2. The Bride is escorted by her Father, her Mother, or a Brother, or her Son, or her Father and Step-Father both escort the Bride. In one wedding the aisle was narrow and one escorted her half-way and then the other the rest of the way.
3. The Bride walks down the aisle by herself.
4. The Bride and Groom come down the aisle together. For a small wedding with no Bridal Party, this works well.
5. The Bride comes down the aisle with her two dogs on leashes - eagerly pulling her along. "Love me, love my dogs." The Bride arrives by horse and carriage, side saddle on the back of her Father's Motorcycle, or in the front seat of a 1946 Chevrolet pick-up truck - this works best for an outside wedding. Yes, there have been weddings with these methods of arrival. There is no need for Tom to make things up - reality is always better than fiction. It's your wedding - you do as you like.

Walk slowly down the aisle - it's a procession - slower than a normal pace. Some weddings have everyone do the "slow step." One foot forward, bring feet together, one foot forward, bring feet together. This is

not a preferred method, but some couples like this. Only about 1% to 2% of weddings use this “slow step.”

The Bride comes in with her escort on her right. The Bride should wait until the all other members of the wedding party are in their places before starting down the aisle. Sometimes the music changes at this point. It’s a good way to signal the guests to stand for the Bride.

Presentation of the Bride

If you have chosen to have a Presentation – about half of all weddings have a Presentation – it will be written in the Ceremony and you should practice the response.

The Bride and her Father stop just after the front row of seats – a few steps away from where the Groom is standing. The Groom steps forward and shakes her Father’s hand. The Bride hugs and kisses her Father and then takes the Groom’s arm and they step forward together and stop in front of Judge Armstrong.

If the Bride is wearing a veil over her face, her Father lifts the veil. Her Father can also place her hand in the Groom’s hand. When the music stops, Judge Armstrong will ask “Who gives Mary in marriage to John.” - or whatever words you have chosen. Then the Bride’s Father makes his response – see *Presentation of the Bride or the Couple* in the *Ceremony Library* for examples.

The Guests are Seated

Judge Armstrong will say “Please be seated.” to the guests right after the Presentation. Or, if there is no Presentation, right after the music stops.

The Bride and Groom face Judge Armstrong for the initial portion of the ceremony, then face each other and join both hands for the vows and rings. If the Bride has not already given her flowers to her Maid/Matron of Honor, do it before joining hands.

Step 5

Practice it all again

Twice is usually enough, but redo the previous steps as necessary – especially if any of the wedding party are “matrimonially challenged.”

Other Important Considerations

Wind

If the ceremony is outside, and the Bride has a veil that will blow in the wind, you may want to reverse the side the Bride stands on so her veil blows behind her and not into the Groom’s face. This should be decided right before the ceremony – see how the wind blows that day – or somehow tie down the veil.

Unity Candles also need protection from the wind. Use hurricane lamps on each candle – as explained above.

The Aisle Runner

About 30% of ceremonies have a white aisle runner made of paper or plastic. This can be placed after the guests are seated and used for the entire bridal party, or it can be run out after the last Bridesmaid and used only for the Bride. Sometimes the runner is placed before the guests arrive and the guests are seated from the side. You don’t want everyone walking on the aisle runner before the ceremony starts.

If the Flower Girl is dropping petals, she should do so after the runner is in place. If she just has a bouquet or basket of flowers it doesn’t matter if she comes down before or after the runner is placed.

The ushers usually roll out the aisle runner. There is a trick to it. It takes two ushers. The strings must be pulled out and kept to the right and left of the runner roll. If the ushers pull from the middle, the string catches on the two sides of the roll and begins to roll itself into the

runner. Then it is stuck and must be rolled back to get the strings out. Aisle runners have been torn doing this.

At one wedding, two ushers made such a mess of the paper runner that they finally picked it up, made a large ball of it, and then threw it in a heap to the side and behind the Bridesmaids. This got a great laugh from the crowd, including the Bride, who was waiting for it to be run out before she came down the aisle. Judge Armstrong had given them instructions about how to do it, but they didn't understand until it was too late. "You cannae break the laws of Physics, Captain."

If you don't want this to happen at your wedding, Tom can explain and demonstrate the procedure to the ushers. *OR* Don't have a runner.

Aisle Runners at Outside Weddings

Using an aisle runner at an outside wedding requires a completely windless day - can you predict that? The other option is to have button nails - with one-inch plastic disks around the heads. Green is the best color to buy - unless you can find white. Since it is an outside wedding the green nails will be color coordinated with the grass. Menards carries them in several lengths. Get at least two and a half-inch or longer nails. Then use these nails every few feet to hold down the runner. This requires placing the runner first, before the guests arrive, and then seating the guests from the sides, but with an outside wedding you should have more space. It would take too long to place it after the Bridesmaids have come down the aisle.

The easiest option for an outside wedding is to have no aisle runner.

Questions - Additional Information

This Rehearsal Guide continues to be a work in progress. If you have questions, ideas, or additional concerns about rehearsals, please contact Tom at Tom@tgarmstrong.com