

# HOW TO MARRY IN Suffolk

Step-by-step guide to organising  
your civil ceremony at an  
approved venue in Suffolk



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ON LOCATION AT: FOREST LODGE, BRANDON, [www.forestlodgeweddings.co.uk](http://www.forestlodgeweddings.co.uk)

**C**ongratulations – you've chosen to marry in Suffolk in a civil ceremony at one of more than 100 approved venues in our beautiful county. Now's the time to start the planning in earnest. But before you get carried away in a blur of bridal boutiques, cake-tasting and decoration-crafting, make sure you have completed the legal formalities and most importantly, booked your registrar – without them there may be a big party but you won't be legally married. So, where to start?

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

With the wide range of approved venues in Suffolk the hardest part of planning your wedding is choosing the perfect place. From barns to stately homes and everything between, Suffolk has some of the most varied settings. Once you've chosen a venue you'll need to set a date and time – booking a registrar to perform and register the marriage for you. While many couples still favour the traditional Saturday ceremony, Sundays and bank holidays are also popular. Be flexible and have more than one date and time in mind as ceremonies are booked on a first come first served basis. Your venue should be able to help you with which office you need to contact to book a registrar. See the guide to your local register office on page 23.

## THE LEGAL BITS

Date, time and venue booked, you'll both need to give your notice of marriage for the ceremony to take place. If you are British

or EU citizens, you will give notice in the district(s) in which you live. You should do this no earlier than 12 months before the date of your wedding and no later than 29 days before your chosen date. The rules regarding notice of marriage have changed and once you have both given notice there is no need for you to remain at the address you were living at when you gave it.

This won't affect the waiting period (28 days), during which your notices will be displayed on a public notice board in a register office or via the certificates for a marriage, which are issued when the notice comes down from the board. We would recommend giving notice around 10 months prior to the ceremony.

Some register offices are booked weeks in advance for these appointments so it is advisable to secure your date as soon as you are able. At your notice of marriage appointment you will be asked to bring documents to confirm your identity.

When you book your appointment the register office will go through what is required but this is likely to include passport, birth certificate, decree absolute,

death certificate of a former spouse, change of name documents and a current proof of address. If you are a non-EEA citizen or subject to immigration control you will need to arrange your notice of marriage appointment with either the Ipswich or Bury St Edmunds office and the waiting period could be extended to 70 days. The current fee for giving notice of marriage is £35 per person.

## THE CEREMONY

A civil marriage ceremony in an approved venue can be as traditional, grand or simple as you wish. There are the legal words you have to say but you can personalise the ceremony by writing your own vows and promises to each other. Legally, you need two witnesses to sign the register with you – a nice way of involving friends and family – and you can bring in more special people by asking them to read poetry or prose.

You can have music for the ceremony and during the signing of the register. This can be recorded or live musicians but poetry, prose and music must not have religious content. ▶

## FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Suffolk Registration Service has its own Facebook page. The page is available for couples to ask questions about any aspect of the service and we try to answer questions promptly. Every week we like to publish photographs of our couples' ceremonies and the venues, as well as some interesting wedding and registration facts. So add us as a friend on Facebook and share your special day with us.  
[www.facebook.com/suffolkregistrars](http://www.facebook.com/suffolkregistrars)





## OTHER CEREMONIES

As well as weddings Suffolk Registration Service offers additional ceremonies that can be held at any register office or approved venue in the county. These are:

### DOUBLE CELEBRATION CEREMONIES

A legal and non-legal ceremony on the same day at a licensed venue. This option is for couples who wish to marry at an approved premises where there are rooms licensed for marriage but who also want to hold a ceremony elsewhere at that venue in an area that is unlicensed. The option is to hold a non-legal ceremony in the unlicensed part of the premises and follow that immediately afterwards with a short legal ceremony with witnesses. Or you may prefer to hold your legal ceremony first followed immediately by the non-legal ceremony.



### RENEWAL OF VOWS

A renewal of vows ceremony is for any couple wishing to renew their marriage or civil partnership commitment. This is ideal for celebrating a special anniversary, or if you married abroad and want to celebrate with friends and family who couldn't be present.

### CONVERSION OF A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP INTO A MARRIAGE

It is now possible to convert a civil partnership into a marriage. The conversion is a simple, administrative process for which you can choose to have a celebration ceremony afterwards. ♥

### MARRIAGE CELEBRATION CEREMONIES

Also known as garden ceremonies, a marriage celebration ceremony mirrors the actual marriage ceremony but without legal words being spoken. This means the ceremony can almost take place anywhere special to you: a woodland, a beach or perhaps a friend's garden. You may also like to combine this ceremony with your legal ceremony either in the week before or earlier on the same day.

### DEPOSIT REQUIRED

All deposits for your ceremony, be it at an approved venue or register office, now need a 50% deposit to secure the date and time for the registrars to attend. All balances must be paid three months prior to the wedding date. If the fees are still outstanding within three months of the ceremony date, your booking can no longer be guaranteed and may be cancelled. If the ceremony is within three months then the full amount will have to be paid when booking. Suffolk Registration Service will not take responsibility for failure to give notice or pay the balance of fees, which will result in the ceremony not going ahead as planned.

For further information see [www.suffolk.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-ceremonies/ceremonies](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-ceremonies/ceremonies)

## FEES

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2020

#### LOCAL AUTHORITY ROOMS

(available Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings)

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £260

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £290

#### APPROVED PREMISES

Monday to Saturday

9am-5pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £460

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £480

5pm-8pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £560

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £580

Sundays & Bank Holidays

9am-5pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £560

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £580

5pm-8pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £595

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £615

#### DOUBLE CEREMONIES

(held at a licensed premises and including legal ceremony)

Monday to Saturday

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £580

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £601

Sundays & Bank Holidays

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £680

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £701

#### CELEBRATION/ GARDEN CEREMONY

(including legal ceremony in local authority room)

Monday to Saturday

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £580

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £601

Sundays & Bank Holidays

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £680

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £701

#### CELEBRATION/ GARDEN ONLY OR RENEWAL OF VOWS

Monday to Saturday

9am-5pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £460

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £480

5pm-8pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £560

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £580

Sundays & Bank Holidays

9am-5pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £560

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £580

5pm-8pm

From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019: £595

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020: £615

\*Plus £75 inspection fee for an unlicensed premises. Please note that approved venues have their own schedule of fees in addition to Suffolk County Council's attendance charges, which will need to be taken into account.