

Questions to Ask the Officiant



1. Can you give us the ceremony we want?

Find out if the officiant will marry you if you write your own vows and design your own ceremony, and if he or she can help—suggesting readings, music, and so on. Make sure the officiant will perform an interfaith wedding (if needed) or will allow photography or videography. Basically, ask about all the particulars that apply to your case. Get a feel for the officiant's manner, tone of voice, and spiritual nature. Also, find out what the ceremony will entail, as well as its estimated length (a piece of information your caterer may ask for).

2. What's your experience?

You will want to know how many weddings this person has performed, especially weddings like yours. Ask for referrals from satisfied customers (five is a fair request, even if you don't contact them all).

3. Are you flexible?

Find out if the officiant is willing to travel to your venue. Also make sure that the officiant has a contingency plan in case he or she cannot make it.

4. What are your credentials?

Ensure that the officiant is licensed or registered to perform a wedding in your state by contacting the city clerk. You can also ask the officiant which seminary he or she was ordained

through, then contact that seminary. Alternatively, the National Association of Wedding Officiants, www.nawoonline.com, can check to see if the officiant is licensed (for free). Years down the road, you wouldn't want to discover that your marriage is not legal.

5. How often will we meet?

Do you want an officiant who will consult with you or simply show up to perform the ceremony? Most marrieds-to-be want the officiant to run the rehearsal. Is he or she available by phone or e-mail if you have questions? Some members of the clergy require couples to have counseling before they will marry them. If that's the case, make sure you are given a clear schedule that isn't overwhelming.

6. How much do you charge?

Know what, exactly, you will be paying for. Talk about deposits and types of payment, as well as cancellation and refund policies. Inquire about fees for traveling out of town, which include transportation costs, hotels and meals, and costs of (commuting) time. The wedding officiant is the person who typically must fill out the wedding certificate and send it in, so it is good to confirm that your officiant will do this as well.

7. Will you be joining us at the reception?

Be sure to plan for an extra meal if the officiant agrees to attend.