

Wedding Processional Order

Catholic/Christian Wedding Processional Order

1. The priest, groom, and best man enter through a side door and wait at the altar.
2. The groomsmen and bridesmaids walk down in pairs, starting with the two who will stand farthest from the bride and groom, and ending with the best man and maid of honor.
3. The ring bearer and/or flower girl.
4. The bride escorted by her father, or other close family member. The bride walks on the left side. If the bride's escort is her father, he leads her to the front of the aisle, then takes his seat next to the bride's mother.

Jewish Wedding Processional Order

1. The Rabbi and/or cantor
2. Grandparents of the bride, who are then seated in the first row
3. Grandparents of the groom, who are then seated in the first row
4. Groomsmen, walking in pairs
5. Best man
6. The groom, who is escorted by his parents.
7. Bridesmaids
8. Maid or Matron of Honor
9. Ring bearer and/or flower girl
10. The bride, escorted by her parents

Protestant Wedding Processional Order

1. The mothers of the bride and groom are seated after all guests are seated, and immediately before the start of the processional music. They are usually escorted to their seats by a brother of the bride or groom, or by another usher.
2. The officiant, groom and best man enter by a side door and wait at the altar.
3. Groomsmen may also enter by a side door, or can escort the bridesmaids.
4. Bridesmaids
5. Ring bearer and/or flower girl

6. Maid or Matron of Honor
7. The bride, escorted by her father or other close male family member or friend. At the front of the aisle, her escort can remain standing with her until the minister asks "Who gives this woman in marriage?" to which he responds "I do," or "Her mother and I do." However, some people feel this tradition is old fashioned and sexist, and choose to forgo it. In such a case, her escort walks with the bride to the front of the aisle, and then takes his seat in the front row.

For a **non-denominational ceremony, a secular ceremony, or a non-traditional ceremony**, you can either borrow liberally from one of these traditions, or make up your own rules.

In all cases, the bride traditionally stands on the left, and the groom on the right. This dates back to medieval times when the groom might need to defend his bride in the middle of the ceremony, and wanted to leave his right hand, his sword hand, free. While few grooms even carry a sword anymore, the tradition has lasted.

A Wedding Processional Using Two Aisles

People tackle the problem of two aisles in a variety of ways. You can choose to only use one aisle, but this means that many of your guests will feel far from the action. I often advise couples to do the processional up one aisle, and the **recessional** down the other. Another alternative is to have bridesmaids walk up one aisle, and groomsmen up the other. The bride and groom can then each choose an aisle to enter through.

A Wedding Processional With a Small Bridal Party

If you only have a few people in your bridal party, it's a good idea to send them up one by one. For example, if you had a best man, maid of honor, flower girl, and ring bearer consider this order.

1. Groom takes his place at the front
2. Best man enters
3. Maid of Honor walks up aisle

4. Ring Bearer
5. Flower Girl
6. Bride, with escort if she has one.
7. With such a small wedding party, it's probably not formal enough to warrant a formal seating of the mothers and grandmothers. However, if you still want to do this, let the best man seat the grandmothers and the groom seat the mothers as part of their entrances.

Wedding Recessional Order

The recession of the wedding party occurs after vows are made and rings are swapped and the officiant presents the newly wedded couple. One recession option is to stop to greet parents and grandparents on the way out, a thoughtful gesture of love and appreciation. Some brides offer a single rose or other flower from their bouquet to the mothers. The couple greets the bride's family first. While you're greeting the parents, the rest of the attendants are pairing up and lining up to walk back up the aisle.

The basic recession order, especially for Catholic/Christian weddings is as follows:

1. Bride and groom
2. Flower girl and ring bearer
3. Maid or matron of honor and best man
4. Remaining bridesmaids and groomsmen in the reverse order of how they walked in during the processional
5. Parents of the bride, followed by parents of the groom
6. Grandparents of the bride, followed by grandparents of the groom.

Jewish recessional are similar, but the parents and grandparents follow the bride and groom. The rest of the bridal party follows in the same order, with the cantor and rabbi at the end.

After the wedding party has exited, two ushers can dismiss your guests, from front to back. The ushers stand at the end of each row facing the back of the site, and step forward to the next row when the one in front of it has emptied. Both sides exit at the same time, with guests waiting patiently until it's their turn to leave.

You may choose to release the guests yourselves. To do so, you simply return to the front of the church after the recessional and briefly greet your guests as they exit their rows. This activity takes place of the traditional receiving line.