
Wedding Customs

Marriage is an ancient religious and legal practice celebrated around the world. Although the reasons that people marry are similar in many places, wedding customs vary from country to country.

The Wedding Dress

5 In many countries, it is customary for the bride to wear a white dress as a symbol of **purity**. The tradition of wearing a special white dress only for the wedding ceremony started around 150 years ago. Before that, most women could not afford to buy a dress that they would only wear once. Now, bridal dresses can be bought in a variety of styles and **fabrics**, and many brides have their dress specially made. In some countries, colors other than white are worn by the bride or used as part of the wedding ceremony. In certain Asian countries and in the Middle East, red and orange are considered symbols of joy and happiness. In Asia it is not uncommon for the bride and groom to change clothes more than once as the ceremony **progresses**.



The Wedding Veil

15 As part of many traditional wedding ceremonies, a bride wears a veil. Wearing a veil that covers the head and face is a tradition that is over 2,000 years old. Veils were originally worn as a sign of secrecy and **modesty** and could only be removed by the husband after the ceremony. Today, many brides wear a veil, but only for decoration. In some countries, a veil is placed between the bride and groom during the wedding ceremony so that they cannot see or touch each other until they are married.

The Rings

25 In many cultures, couples exchange rings, usually made of gold or silver, during the marriage ceremony. The circular shape of the ring is symbolic of the couple's **eternal union**. In Brazil, it is traditional to have the rings **engraved**, with the bride's name on the groom's ring, and vice versa.¹ The wedding ring is usually worn on the third finger of the left or right hand, because it was once believed that a vein² ran directly from this finger to the heart.



Flowers

30 Flowers play an important role in most weddings. Roses are said to be the flowers of love, and because roses usually **bloom** in June, this has become the most popular month for weddings in many countries. Ivy is also used in wedding bouquets³ because in early Greek times it was thought to be a sign of everlasting love. After the wedding ceremony, it is customary in many countries for the bride to throw her bouquet into a crowd of well wishers—usually her single female friends. It is said that the person who catches the bouquet will be the next one to marry.