

The Official Business that Goes Along with Weddings

Contributed by Yehiel Carter
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Weddings are many things. They're fun, they're expensive, they require a lot of planning, but a wedding is also first and foremost a legal matter. And as such, there are steps the couple must take so that the union is recognizable in the eyes of the law. They'll need a marriage license, but before that, the bride must make an important decision ? to take her future husband's surname or continue to use her maiden name.

You'd think that a name was just a name and changing it wouldn't be such a big deal, but it really is. During previous generations whether or not a woman changed her last name was something that wasn't given a second thought.

The woman took her husband's name and that was that. But recently, women have challenged this tradition. There is no law that says a woman's last name must change in marriage, so really this decision is a matter of personal choice.

For those women who do opt to change their last names, the process to change isn't difficult, but it can be time-consuming. Besides making the change with the federal Social Security Administration, which really where it all begins, a woman must also change the name on her driver's license and registration, her credit card accounts, her bank and other financial/insurance related documents, utilities, property deeds, clubs at which she is a member, and at her place of employment ? not only for Human Resource and income tax purposes, but so that a new email address and new business cards can be created.

And while you're going through the process of changing your name, you might want to consider changing your address, too. You've just got to double-check the timing. If it doesn't work out right, you can pick up a change of address kit easily enough and complete this when you return from the honeymoon. It's not really necessary to begin the process of changing your name until about 2 weeks before your wedding, so do whatever makes most sense.

One other aspect of the name change process that requires careful timing is planning your honeymoon. You might be better off making your reservations using your maiden name if you won't have official identification (or an updated

passport) with your new name ready before you leave. You don't want to experience any unnecessary delays.

When dealing with the marriage license, be sure to check the requirements in your state of residence ahead of time.

Each state will vary with some states requiring one or more witnesses and others requiring blood tests and/or physical exams, and others requiring something else such as a waiting period. Regardless of the state, expect to pay for a marriage license. Costs will range from a low of \$25 to a high of \$100 or more. You'll both need to be present and you'll

likely need to bring a birth certificate and proper identification.

Then breathe a sigh of relief, because you're almost there!

'About the author' Yehiel Carter is an expert on wedding planning and etiquette. He can help you with anything related to planning your wedding, for more information and a free guide go to:

<http://www.bestweddinginstructor.com/bestweddingever/>