



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO Wedding Speeches

by Ray Salisbury

♥ Introduction:

For most people, public speaking is their number one fear. However, for the newly-wed bride and groom, it's really a pleasure. Sharing in front of family and friends, on the biggest day of your life, won't be as frightening as it first seems, particularly if you prepare well.

And, if you want to follow tradition, there's an order to the speeches. However, if a member of the bridal party is gifted at public speaking, it's a great idea for them to break the ice with an articulate delivery that is memorable, and gets your reception guests relaxed.

Conversely, if a member of the bridal party is unwilling to make a public address, do not force them – it could turn out awkward and you don't want your closest friends feeling embarrassed.

♥ Timing of Speeches:

Once all the wedding guests have received their food and are comfortably seated inside the venue, the toasts can begin about half an hour into the main meal. The best man or maid of honour can co-ordinate the exact timing with the MC. The guests must be served a glass of champagne, so they can do the toasts!

Too many speeches can become tiresome, especially if there are lots of young children at the celebrations. A great idea is to schedule the bride and groom's speeches at a later stage of the evening – not 'tacked on' after the others. A good time for this is just before you cut the cake, when you have the crowd's attention anyway.

♥ Order of Speeches:

Because the bride's father usually foots the bill for the wedding costs, he gets the right to speak first. This is the customary order:

1. Father of the bride
2. Father of the groom – *optional*
3. Groom
4. Best man
5. Groomsman – telegrams / emails

But it's your special day, so you can opt to mix things up a bit. Perhaps the bride or matron of honour wants to be heard, or are more confident speakers.

♥ Length of Speeches:

Some folks have something to say ... some just have to say something. Encourage your speakers to plan well in advance, as when they 'wing it', their talk will waffle and take numerous deviations. Or worse, they may say something crude or inappropriate. Most people delude themselves into believing they can invent a good speech within 24 hours of the event.

A reasonable timeframe is between 3–5 minutes per speech. If you lack confidence, make it short and sweet. Speak from the heart, not from index cards or notes. A bullet-pointed list of people to thank might be needed here. However, if you decide to name everyone, you run the risk of not mentioning a key person and causing offense. It might be better to express your gratitude in a general way.

♥ Content of Speeches:

There's nothing more painful than a half-drunk best man who focuses on the stag party's drinking exploits – or on the groom's past girlfriends.

moving moments
WEDDING VIDEO

make your marriage memorable

Keep your language simple, especially if the guests are from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Try not to use in-jokes or nicknames which only your mates will understand.

Finally, to avoid sounding egotistical, speak about the newly-weds in the third person, not just from your personal relationship with them.

♥ Writing Speeches:

- Make some rough notes of events & memories related to the couple.
- Do some digging. Chat with the couple's parents and or siblings for interesting anecdotes.
- Consult with the other speakers to avoid repeating one another's narrative.
- Draft an outline, in a logical order.
- Pick a theme, to tie all the random stories together.
- Write the content.
- Insert humorous tales to entertain.
- Practise reading your speech out loud, over and over.

♥ Delivering Speeches:

- Speak S.L.O.W.L.Y. Allow for pauses, especially before punch lines. Give your audience time to digest each section of your talk.
- Always use the microphone – you are paying a videographer good money, but his movie needs good quality sound – without the clattering of cutlery.
- Ask your videographer where is the best place to stand to be well-lit.
- Avoid excess alcohol, as staying sober will enable you to keep focussed and make a memorable dialogue.



THE SPEECHES

1 – Father of the Bride

- Welcomes the guests
- Thanks them for coming
- Talks about his daughter
- Welcomes their new son-in-law into the family
- Toasts the bride & groom

If the groom's father wishes to, he can be the second speaker

2 – Groom

Avoid making the groom's speech a mere list of thank yous. Insert a few jokes.

- Thanks father of bride for toast & for his daughter
- Thanks guests for attending & for gifts
- Thanks his bride
- Mentions how he met & dated his bride
- Talks about their future together
- Thanks the bridal party, & those who have helped

3 – Best Man

The best man is officially the spokesman for the bridal party. He does the following:

- Recounts how he first met the bride & groom, or how the couple met
- Shares insights about the groom's life & experiences
- Proposes a toast to the newly-weds
- Reads telegrams or emails from absent friends. (A groomsman can do this.)
- (Optional) Introduces the maid of honour

OPTIONAL SPEECHES:

If the maid of honour or the bride herself wishes to speak, then the groom's speech can be inserted between theirs.

4 – Maid of Honour/Chief Bridesmaid

- Follows the same format as the best man
- Should keep their own style and tone

5 – Bride

- She can say whatever she likes! She is the star.