

The vow templates

Six structures — pick one, then break it where you need to. A worked example follows each.

Traditional

For a formal ceremony, or for anyone who finds that words polished by four centuries of use carry more weight than anything written last Tuesday.

STRUCTURE

I, [____], take you, [____], to be my [wife / husband / partner],
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

WORKED EXAMPLE

I, Thomas, take you, Eleanor, to be my wife,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

Modern

For a secular ceremony in your own voice — specific memories and concrete promises instead of inherited phrasing.

STRUCTURE

[Name], the first thing I noticed about you was [____].
What I know now is [____].
I promise to [____], and to [____] without keeping score.
I promise to [a small daily thing you will keep doing].
I promise that when [a hard thing] comes — and it will — I will [____].
I can't promise [____]. I can promise [____].
You are my favorite person, and I choose you — today, and every ordinary day after.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Carmen, the first thing I noticed about you was that you read the last page of a book first. You said you could face anything if you knew how it ended.
What I know now is that I can't give you the last page — nobody gets it — but I can give you the whole rest of the book, and I want my handwriting in every chapter of yours.
I promise to tell you the truth kindly, and to hear yours without keeping score.
I promise to keep asking how your day was, and to stay for the long answer.

I promise that when a hard year comes — and one will — I won't go quiet on you. I will stay at the table until we have solved it or laughed at it, whichever comes first.

I can't promise I will always get it right. I can promise you will never have to wonder whose side I'm on.

You are my favorite person, and I choose you — today, and every ordinary Tuesday after.

Funny

For a couple whose guests already know their banter — keep the ratio near 70/30, funny to sincere, and let the turn land hard.

STRUCTURE

[Name], I promise to [a small, absurd, very specific domestic promise].

I vow to accept that [their harmless flaw, stated fondly], and to defend it in public.

I promise to [one more joke promise — the most specific one you have].

But here is the part I'm not joking about:

You are [a sincere, specific truth about them].

I promise you [three real things].

I promise to [one real promise that costs you something].

[A closing line that is a joke and completely true at the same time.]

WORKED EXAMPLE

Katie, I promise to keep pretending your parallel parking doesn't frighten me.

I vow to accept that "five more minutes" is a philosophy, not a measurement, and to defend it at dinner parties.

I promise to watch the shows you have already seen, and to act surprised at every twist.

But here is the part I'm not joking about:

You are the first person I want to tell everything to — good news, bad news, and things that are only news to me.

I promise you the last slice, the aisle seat, and the honest answer — in ascending order of difficulty.

I promise to take your side, take out the trash, and take nothing about you for granted.

Marrying you is the easiest decision I have ever taken this long to say out loud.

Short

For anyone who would rather say five true things than perform for two minutes — and a reliable fallback if nerves are a real concern.

STRUCTURE

[Name], you are [one true, specific thing].

I promise you [____], [____], and [____].

I promise to [one thing you already do, and will keep doing].

I promise to [one thing that will be hard].

Whatever comes, we meet it together.

You have my word, and you have me.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Marcus, you are the calmest room I have ever walked into.

I promise you honesty, patience, and my full attention — even during the playoffs.

I promise to keep noticing you — across every crowded kitchen, at every dull party, for the rest of my life.

I promise to say the hard thing gently, and to say it soon.

Whatever comes, we meet it together.

You have my word, and you have me.

Religious

For a faith-centered ceremony that is not bound to one denomination's liturgy — reverent, with God present in the promises rather than in borrowed formality.

STRUCTURE

[Name], I believe [a statement of faith about how you came to each other].

Before God, and before everyone we hold dear, I make you these promises.

I promise to be faithful to you in every season.

I promise to pray with you and for you — in gratitude, and in grief.

I promise to forgive [____], as we have been forgiven.

I promise to [a promise about the home and life you will build].

What God joins today, let nothing divide.

I am yours, by grace, for the rest of my life.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Hannah, I believe grace has a sense of timing. I asked for patience, and was given you — which, as it turns out, taught me patience anyway.

Before God, and before everyone we hold dear, I make you these promises.

I promise to be faithful to you in every season — the ones we pray for, and the ones we pray through.

I promise to pray with you and for you, in gratitude and in grief.

I promise to forgive quickly and without a ledger, as we have been forgiven.

I promise to build a home with you where kindness is the house rule and the table always has room.

What God joins today, let nothing divide — not distance, not hardship, not time.

I am yours, by grace, for the rest of my life.

Second Marriage & Blended Family

For a second marriage or a blended family — promises made with eyes open, with room to address children directly if they are standing with you.

STRUCTURE

[Name], we both know what promises cost — we have each learned it the hard way.

So I make these with my eyes open.

I promise you [____] over [____].

I promise to keep showing up on the days it would be easier not to.

[Children's names] — I make promises to you, too.

I am not here to replace anyone. I am here to [____].

I promise to [something specific to their daily lives, at their pace].

[Name], [a closing line about what the years have taught you].

WORKED EXAMPLE

Rachel, we both know what promises cost — we have each learned it the hard way.

So I make these with my eyes open, which is the only way worth making them.

I promise you steadiness over grand gestures, and the truth over the comfortable version of it.

I promise to keep showing up on the days it would be easier not to — we both know those days come.

Owen and June — I make promises to you, too.

I am not here to replace anyone. I am here to be one more person in your corner — at every game, every recital, and every kitchen-table negotiation about broccoli.

I promise to knock before entering, to listen before advising, and to let you set the pace.

Rachel, the first half of my life taught me what matters. I intend to spend the rest of it proving I was paying attention — with you.

