

Writing Your Own Vows

Decide whether you will take on writing the vows together or alone. If you go solo, you may want to take turns running them by each other before the big day. Make sure that you both have approximately the same length of text so that one person isn't rambling on for five minutes while the other says ten words. If you don't mind hiding a stash of tissue behind the altar, saving your tribute for the ceremony can often be extremely moving. If you choose to make it a joint task, pen a mutual vow that you both take. Either way, review your finished product by a trustworthy friend or family member with polished editing skills just to make sure.

Discuss what marriage means to you. With pen in hand, dish with your fiancée about important events and turning points in your relationship: how you met, when you fell in love, when and how you said, "I love you," any break-ups (and make-ups) you've endured. List the qualities you most admire in your loved one, and characteristics that he/she brings out in you. Recognize your goals and don't be afraid to confront the challenges you envision. Most importantly, take this alone time to laugh, cry, and divulge what marrying really means to you. You might not use everything you come up with, but it will be one of the most romantic dates you've had yet.

Before you get carried away and start spilling your heart out on the page, do your homework.

Check with your officiant to make sure that it's OK to pen your own promise -- some religions do not allow for variation on traditional vows. Even if you've gotten the go-ahead, it is imperative that you pass vows by him or her once you've finished. He or she may raise faith-based questions or objections to your wording, or contribute a thought or quote that might make your vows even more special.