

How to Get Married in the District of Columbia

The Basics

The process for getting married in the District requires an eligible couple to submit an application for a license and pay a fee to the Marriage Bureau. After a three-day waiting period, the couple will receive the license from the Bureau. Then the couple may have the marriage solemnized (i.e., have a ceremony in District). Once the ceremony has been performed, the person who performed it will state the time and place of the wedding on the license, sign it, and send it back to the Bureau. The clerk will then register the marriage and the couple can receive an official certificate of their marriage. The Marriage Bureau is located at 500 Indiana Avenue NW, Room 4485, Washington, DC 20001. The phone number is (202) 879-4840. Their hours are 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Who Can Marry?

To be eligible to marry in the District, both parties must:

- Be 18 years of age or older (or 16 years of age with the consent of a parent or guardian);
- Not be married to anyone else (i.e. any divorce must be final at the time of application); and
- Not be closely related by blood or marriage to one another. A person may not marry his or her grandparent, grandparent's spouse, spouse's grandparent, parent's sibling, parent, step-parent, spouse's parent, child, spouse's child, child's spouse, sibling, child's child, child's child's spouse, spouse's child's child, or sibling's child.

Do We Have to be District Residents to Marry in the District?

No. The District does not have a residency requirement.

Wedding Location

If you get a District marriage license, the wedding must be performed in the District.

Waiting Period

You must wait *three full business days* between applying for a marriage license and receiving a marriage license. For example, if you apply for a license on Monday, three full business days (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) must pass before you can pick up your license on Friday. That means that a couple that applies for a license on Tuesday, March 2 will not be able to pick up the license until Monday, March 8.

How Do We Get a Marriage License?

Both people who are marrying must appear in person at the Marriage Bureau of the District of Columbia Superior Court and fill out a marriage license application. After a three-day waiting period, the couple must return to the Marriage Bureau to pick up the license.

What Do We Need to Bring with Us When We Apply?

Each party to the marriage must bring:

- Proof of age, such as a driver's license, birth certificate, passport, or a similar official document.

- The \$35 license application (waived if you are already domestic partners in the District), and an optional additional \$10 if you would like a certified copy of the marriage certificate. The fee must be paid in cash or by a money order made out to “Clerk, D.C. Superior Court.”

The following information is required on the license application:

- Social security numbers, addresses, and dates of birth of both parties;
- Previous marriage information (city, state, and country of each marriage and the ending status of each such as by divorce or death);
- The name of the person who is solemnizing the marriage (unless the applicants are requesting a civil service to be performed by a Superior Court official).
- Home and work telephone numbers for both parties are also requested.

The fee payment receipt is required when you pick up the license. The license must be picked up in person; licenses are not issued by mail.

Who Can Perform the Ceremony?

First, any judge or justice from a court of record. Second, anyone who is authorized by a religious organization to officiate marriages – such as a minister, priest, rabbi, imam – so long as he or she is registered with the Marriage Bureau to officiate marriages.

How Do We Schedule a Civil Wedding Ceremony?

When applying for a marriage license, you may request a civil wedding (to be performed by a Superior Court official) by submitting a Civil Wedding Request Information form. The Clerk will try to schedule the ceremony on or near the date requested, though the requested ceremony must be at least 10 business days after license becomes valid. After submitting the form, the Clerk will confirm the appointment by telephone. The marriage ceremony room can accommodate 10-15 guests. There is no fee for a civil marriage ceremony, though tax deductible donations may be made to the D.C. Superior Court Art Trust Fund.

Do We Need Witnesses?

No witnesses are required for civil ceremonies. No signature other than that of the officiant is required on the certificate.

Can We Get Married If We are Already Domestic Partners?

If you are part of a District domestic partnership, upon marrying, your domestic partnership automatically dissolves and you are simply married. If you are part of a domestic partnership or civil union from another state, the other state’s law may require you to dissolve it prior to marrying in the District. Check the other state’s law about your responsibilities and obligations relating to dissolving a legal relationship prior to marrying.