

Candles in a Wedding Ceremony

courtesy of Weddings Are Fun (<http://www.weddingsarefun.com/unitycandles.html>)

It's hard to imagine a wedding without candles! Candles enhance an intimate, romantic mood no matter where the ceremony is being held. The soft glow of candles lends a feeling of solemnity and significance to a formal religious wedding ceremony. Candles can also create a lighthearted impression in a more casual wedding.

Unity Candles are often used to symbolically "join" the couple or families during the ceremony. Two tapered candles, each representing the bride and groom, are placed on either side of a larger pillar candle. These candles are placed on a small table on the altar area. Make sure it is located where the bride and groom can easily reach it, yet is out of the way when the bridal party enters or exits the altar. The side, taper candles may be pre-lit by attendants, family members (often the mothers of the bride and groom), or by the bride and groom themselves during the ceremony. It is customary for the ceremony officiate to include comments during the ceremony regarding the significance of the lighting of the Unity Candle. Then the bride and groom each use a taper to light the Unity Candle, the blended flame symbolizing their new life together as one unit. The side taper candles may either be left burning or extinguished. One important safety tip: It is a good idea to have an extra set of taper candles lying on the table, just out of sight. If the lit candles have burned down too much to safely handle, simply pick up the unlit tapers, ignite and proceed with lighting the center Unity Candle. The symbolism will be intact and the bride and groom will not suffer burns or damage clothing with hot wax.

Memorial candles are often used alongside the Unity Candle. These candles represent loved ones no longer living but significant in the lives of the bride and groom. They may be placed on the same table as the Unity Candle or on a separate table dedicated specifically to the memorial candles. The memorial candles need not match, just as each individual person had his own unique personality and impact on the couple. Often, the ceremony program will note who each candle signifies and their relationship to the bride and/or groom.

Candles may be used in conjunction with flowers as part of the wedding décor. Large candelabra on the altar area are quite beautiful and are available in many shapes, styles and finishes. Rows of votive candles along ledges, on tables or placed in lantern-style holders are inexpensive, yet dramatic decorations. Consider placing candles on or in front of mirrors to multiply the lovely reflection of the flames. White candles are popular choices, yet colored candles also may complement your chosen color scheme.

While candles are undeniably a beautiful tradition, do not overlook safety when deciding where to place lit candles. Votives and hurricane glass help protect the flame from an errant breeze or brush of cloth. Do not place flammable ribbons, cloth or silk flowers near the flames. Protect surfaces from hot, dripping wax. Keep the candles away from the traffic pattern of guests who are arriving or departing and certainly out of the way of the bridal party as they enter and exit the ceremony. Remember, the clothing worn by the bridal party (such as the train of the bride's dress) usually requires more space than everyday clothing so measure to ensure proper candle placement. Finally, make sure any candles are well away

from any small children, including the flower girl and ring bearer.

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