

Some Notes on Wedding Day Speeches

Writing wedding day speeches can be daunting and stressful. Whether you're the father of the bride, the best man, a bridesmaid or the groom and have never had a problem cracking a few jokes or giving a decent presentation in work, the idea of the 'wedding speech' can terrify you.

But don't worry.

Writing a good wedding speech isn't as difficult as it seems. It is about editing. Get as many of your thoughts down on paper (or, on screen) as early as you can. It is never too early to start writing.

Don't worry about where to start. Remember the writer's mantra: *Before you focus on getting it right – first get it written.*

No professional writer one ever writes a speech from start to finish. Start anywhere – start at the middle, at the end... just start writing.

Write down the stories in full. Don't be afraid about writing too much, it is better to have a first draft that is too long than too short. Having a lot of material allows you to pick the best bits and highlight those.

The real skill to good writing is editing. With each revision and rewrite your speech will get shorter, tighter and better. Don't worry about putting in a lot of jokes. Sincerity works best. Tell stories and anecdotes. Real stories about real people are often funnier than using set piece jokes.

As you write and edit, you will get to know your speech better. You will see how you remember the sequence and the stories intuitively. On the day you will just need the script as a safety net.

Remember, **wedding guests are positive listeners**; they will be supportive. They are there to share in the joy. They don't expect a stand-up gig, but they *want* to laugh, and will laugh at what you say. So don't put so much pressure on yourself.

Groomsmen, the main thing you've to remember is that it's a toast not a roast. Keep that in mind and everyone will be happy it went smoothly.

The New Wedding Speech

Traditionally the father of the bride, best man and groom were the only people who made speeches at a wedding, but today the bride, the maid of honour and bridesmaid say a few words. Sometimes the new couple will want to open the "toasting" up to the floor.

The main thing to remember is that this is the bride and groom's day (or the bride and bride or groom and groom). Whatever the new couple want is fine. Nothing is set in stone when it comes to weddings.

If the couple feel that having dad, mum or the best man worrying too much about public speaking, then they can let them off the hook and ask a friend or relative to say a few words instead.

Your bridesmaid might sing a song, or a wedding guest might have written a poem to celebrate your marriage - tailor *your* speeches to *your* day, and don't let tradition dictate who gets their say on your big day.

Parent or guardian's Speech

- Keep it short - let guests know you'll be brief to take the pressure off you - and them!
- Tell the bride how beautiful she looks; how talented and wonderful she is and how proud you are of her.
- Keep jokes to a minimum - You don't have to be a comedian. People love stories and Irish people are almost hardwired to think and talk in stories. Tell stories – but keep them respectful and charming
- Talk briefly about marriage and about how special this day is to you and the rest of the family. Heartfelt is best. Say what is truly in your heart – remember the wise words of Cato: *Talk about what matters to you and the words will follow.*
- Thank the guests for coming - If there's one or two who have travelled from afar to be there, or some special guests you'd like to mention, thank them here.
- Finish by welcoming your son or daughter-in-law into the family and tell everyone to enjoy their night.
- It is really that simple!

General wedding etiquette: Decide whether you want the speeches before or after the meal – though after the meal is usually, best. The venue management/wedding coordinator can also advise you about this.

Some things to do/say before the meal: As the Bride and Groom arrive, the Best Man or the Hotel Maître'd announces:

“Ladies and gentlemen, please stand and welcome the Bride and Groom”.

If appropriate they can then call on the member of the clergy to say grace before meals

After the meal: Announcement by Best Man or the Hotel Maitre'd:

“Ladies and Gentlemen, our Bride and groom are about to cut the cake. If anyone would like to take photographs, please come forward.”

Allow the cake cutting ceremony to conclude then get the Maitre'd to introduce the Best man

Suggested structure (for guidance only)

- Best man's speech 5 – 7 mins
- On conclusion Best man makes a toast to the bride and groom.
- Best man and/or groomsmen read out cards and messages.

- Best man then calls on bride's mother or father or brother etc. to speak on behalf of the bride and her family.
- Best man then calls on groom's mother or father or brother etc. to speak on behalf of the groom and his family.
- Call on the Groom to speak (Finishes with a toast to the Bridesmaids)
- Call on the bride to speak (optional)

The general structure of the Best Man speech

- *Introduction/Opening*
- *Being the best man/your relationship to the groom*
- *Funny stories involving the groom*
- *Compliment the bride etc and thank Bridesmaids and others*
- *The "happy couple" i.e. sincere section of the speech, happy lives together*
- *Toast the happy couple*
- *Cards and messages*

Some standard openers and one-liners:

Yes, these are corny, but they often work to break the ice. You can adapt these to suit the situation:

Well, what can I tell you about XXXX? I've known them for about 10 years, they're handsome, intelligent, witty, charismatic... oops, sorry, wrong wedding.

When XXXX asked me to be a "Best Man/Best Woman", I wasn't really sure what my responsibilities were supposed to be. I asked around, and was told that my main duties for today were:

1. To ensure that the groom arrives on time,
2. To make sure he is sober,
3. And to make sure he is looking good.

Well 2 out of 3 isn't bad... (look at groom for a few seconds)... I'm best man/woman, not a plastic surgeon!

To be fair XXXX is looking quite handsome tonight... but - though it may be hard to believe - he didn't always look so well. His parents had to borrow another baby for the baptism pictures. Yes, it is true that XXXX was the teacher's pet – but that was just because the teacher couldn't afford a dog!

I am deeply honoured to have been asked to be the best man/woman. Some of you have been kind enough to say I was the right person for the job as I have been like (another) big brother/sister figure to XXXX.

Actually... I see myself as more of another parent figure. After all, I've seen them stagger about naked, learning to walk. I've watched them learn to drink from a bottle. I've dressed and undressed them and cleaned up after their mess.

And all that was just this morning.

As many of you will know organizing the seating at a wedding reception can be a tricky business... where do you put Aunt Mary or cousin Tom. I am happy that the happy couple accepted my suggestion that they use the wedding present list and put those who bought the biggest items nearest the front and... (look slowly around the room) work outwards from there depending on the size of the gift.

Whoever bought the toast rack won't be able to hear this, as they're seated in the car park.

Wedding Day Speech request form:

Name:

Email address

Mob Number

Date of event

Nos attending

Format: format/buffet etc

Information for best man speech

Q #	Question	Answer
1	Groom's name	
2	Relationship of best man to groom	
3	Groom's profession/job	
4	Groom's interests (list in order) E.g.: sports, music, reading, movies, TV, politics	
5	Has the groom any notable achievements or successes – or some humorous – but not embarrassing failures	
6	Any particular phobias, fears or dislikes	
7	How long has best man known the groom	

8	Are Grooms parents still alive? If not which is still alive and attending	
9	Bride's name	
10	Relationship of best man to bride	
11	Bride's profession/job	
12	Bride's interests (list in order) E.g.: sports, music, reading, movies, TV, politics Notable achievements by the bride	
13	How long has best man known the bride	
14	Has the bride any notable dislikes or phobias (ones known to those attending)?	
15	Are bride's parents still alive? If not which is still alive and attending	
16	Any particularly notable guests – distinguished friends or relatives attending?	

Any other information:
