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Marriage Ceremony

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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No formula need be observed in solemnizing a marriage, except that the parties must respectively declare, in the presence of the minister or officer, that they accept each other in marriage. T.C.A. § 36-3-302.

This statute has been interpreted by the Attorney General as requiring that the parties personally appear together before a person authorized by law to solemnize marriages, so that a marriage ceremony cannot be performed by telephone. Op. Tenn. Att’y Gen. 90-71 (7/16/90). The statute was amended in 2017 to authorize participation by video conference, but only for members of the armed forces who are stationed in another country in support of combat or another military operation.

Since many officials asked to perform marriage ceremonies may do so infrequently, here is an example of a typical ceremony. This sample ceremony certainly is not legally required, and it may be altered as the persons being married desire, so long as the parties do each declare in the presence of the marrying official that they accept each other as spouses, respectively. The traditional marriage rite of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), whereby the parties simply pledge their vows one to another in the presence of the congregation, constitutes an equally effective solemnization. T.C.A. § 36-3-301(b).

Source URL: <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/marriage-ceremony>