GENERAL
MARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Department of Health
Division of Vital Records
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Providence, RI 02908-5097
401.222.2812
www.health.ri.gov

RESPONSIBILITIES of the bride and groom

Both the bride and groom must supply:

1. Proof of birth facts and identification

- A certified copy of a birth certificate.
- For persons born outside the United States who cannot obtain a birth certificate, a valid passport or alien card may be accepted. Additional requirements may exist in some locations, as some offices may not accept a passport without a certified copy of a birth certificate.
- Contact the city or town office where you will apply for the license to verify the requirements and the hours of operation. A list of city and town offices with phone numbers can be found on the Department of Health website at www.health.ri.gov under the Vital Records section.

2. If applicable, a "Minor's Permit to Marry"
   A "Minor's Permit to Marry" form must be completed if a female applicant is under 18 years of age, or if the bride or groom (regardless of age) is under control of a legal guardian. The permit should be signed and notarized in the presence of the city or town clerk, or any clerk employed in that office. A female under age 16 and a male under age 18 cannot secure a marriage license in Rhode Island without the approval of Family Court.

3. Proof that previous marriages have ended

- If either applicant has been previously married and that marriage ended in divorce, the applicant must present a **certified copy** of the **final** decree of divorce (with the raised or original stamped court seal) to the city or town clerk.
- If either applicant has been previously married and that marriage ended in death, a **certified copy** of the death record must be presented to the city or town clerk.

4. Accurate information
   Any person who willfully and knowingly supplies false information on a marriage license shall be punished by a fine of not more than $1,000 or imprisoned not more than one year, or both, pursuant to Section 23-3-28 of the RI General Laws.

WHEN and WHERE can the ceremony occur?

- The license is valid for **three (3) months** (beginning with the issuance date and ending with the expiration date, as specified on the "License and Certificate of Marriage" form).
- The ceremony must occur during that three-month period.
- The location of the ceremony must take place where the marriage license is valid.

WHO can be witnesses at the ceremony?

- In addition to the officiant, the marriage must take place in the presence of two (2) witnesses who have reached legal age (18 years of age).
- If the honor attendants are witnesses and are less than 18 years of age, other persons of legal age who are present at the ceremony may sign as witnesses.

Marriage Requirements In the State of Rhode Island

HOW to apply for a Marriage License

Both the bride and groom must:

- Apply for the marriage license in person at a city or town office (see section below on where to apply) and sign the license in the presence of the city or town clerk or his or her assistant.
- Present proof of birth facts and identification.
- If previously married, present a **certified copy** of the final decree of divorce (with the raised or original stamped court seal) or a **certified copy** of the death certificate of the previous spouse.
- If under age 18 or under control of a legal guardian, a parent or legal guardian must complete a "Minor's Permit to Marry". Grooms under age 18 and brides under age 16 will need court permission to marry.
- For a list of city and town offices, visit the Department of Health website at www.health.ri.gov under the Vital Records section.

Please note: If the bride and groom do not marry, the marriage license should be returned to the city or town office where the license was issued.

WHERE to apply for a Marriage License

Residents of R I

- **If the bride lives in Rhode Island,** apply for the license from the city or town clerk at the city or town of the bride's residence.
- **If the bride does not live in Rhode Island but the groom does live in Rhode Island**, apply for the license from the city or town clerk at the city or town of the groom's residence.
- **If either the bride or the groom is a resident of Rhode Island**, the marriage license is valid in any city or town in Rhode Island and the couple may be married anywhere in Rhode Island.

NON-Residents of RI

- **If both the bride and groom do not live in Rhode Island,** the marriage license must be obtained at the city or town clerk's office where the ceremony will take place. The couple must marry in the city or town where the license was issued.
- If the marriage ceremony is performed in a city or town other than the city or town of issuance, the validity of the marriage may be in question.

Cost of the Marriage License	$24.00

*Cash/Check only

WHO is allowed to correct information on the Marriage License?

- The State Office of Vital Records at the Department of Health can correct information on a marriage license.
- If any information is in error, the bride or groom should contact the State Office of Vital Records at 401.222.2812 after the marriage license has been registered.

WHO can perform the ceremony?
General Laws of Rhode Island § 15-3-5: Officials empowered to join persons in marriage. – 15-3-5.

(RELIGIOUS)

- Every ordained clergy or elder in good standing.

(CIVIL)

- Every justice of the supreme court, superior court, family court, workers' compensation court, district court or traffic tribunal.
- The clerk of the supreme court, every clerk or general chief clerk of a superior court, family court, district court, or traffic tribunal.
- Magistrates, special or general magistrates of the superior court, family court, traffic tribunal or district court.
- Administrators of the workers' compensation court and every former justice or judge and former administrator of these courts.
- Every former chief clerk of the district court.
- Every former clerk or general chief clerk of a superior court.
- The secretary of the senate.
- Elected clerks of the general assembly.
- Any former secretary of the senate or any former elected clerk of the general assembly who retires after July 1, 2007.
- Judges of the United States appointed pursuant to Article III of the United States Constitution.
- Bankruptcy judges appointed pursuant to Article I of the United States Constitution.
- United States magistrate judges appointed pursuant to federal law.
- Every justice and every former justice of the municipal courts of the cities and towns in this state.
- The police court of the town of Johnston.
- Every probate judge and every former probate judge.
- Wardens of the town of New Shoreham may join persons in marriage in New Shoreham.

RESPONSIBILITIES of the officiant

- Perform the ceremony.
- Sign the appropriate officiant section of the marriage license in black ink only (no commercial correction products may be used).
- Obtain witnesses' signatures on the marriage license in black ink only (no commercial correction products may be used).
- Register the marriage record within 72 hours with the city or town clerk **where the license was issued.**
- City/Town of marriage must be the 39 cities/towns in RI (no villages)

Cost for one certified copy	$20.00
Additional copies	$15.00

*Cash/Check only!

Officiant Instructions for Completing the Marriage Certificate

All entries must be made in black ink to ensure a clear image on microfilm or photocopy.

<u>DO NOT USE</u> water-soluble ink or felt-tipped pen.

Please read all instructions before completing the certificate.

Dates of Issuance and Expiration: The marriage license is valid for three months **only**.

Where the Ceremony Must Occur: If either party lives in Rhode Island, the ceremony may take place in any city or town in Rhode Island. If neither party lives in Rhode Island, the ceremony may **only take place in the city or town where the license was issued.**

If the Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation permitting you to perform this marriage, then the ceremony must take place in the city or town stated in the Bill.

Witnesses: There must be two witnesses age 18 or older in addition to you and the couple to be joined in marriage.

Signatures and Printed Names: You and the witnesses must sign and clearly print your names in the provided areas. Please use **black, non water-soluble ink**. Do not use felt-tipped pen.

Corrections: If any error occurs, do not use liquid correction fluid or correction tape. Rather, please consult with the city or town office where the license was issued **before** making corrections. Once the city or town office receives and files the certificate, all other corrections must be done by the State Office of Vital Records.

Type of Ceremony: Only RI civil servants as defined in RIGL 15-3-5, or those authorized by the RI General Assembly may perform civil ceremonies. All other ceremonies are religious. This includes those from non-denominational religious groups.

Denomination or Name of Court: If a religious organization empowered you to perform the ceremony, specify its name or list "non-denominational." If you are a judge, specify the name of the court over which you preside. If the RI General Assembly passed legislation permitting you to perform the ceremony, **list the House or Senate Bill number and enclose a copy of the Bill with the certificate.**

Where to File the Certificate: Rhode Island law requires you to file the marriage certificate with the city or town office **where the license was issued**. A **marriage certificate** must be filed within 72 hours of the ceremony (Section 15-3-12).

If the Marriage Does Not Take Place: Either party named on the license must return the license to the city or town office where the license was issued.