

Your Wedding Planner

Traditionally, there are three speeches at a wedding, given by the father of the bride, the groom and the bestman, in that order. It's now not uncommon for others in the bridal party and the couple's family – such as the bride, chief bridesmaid or parents of the groom – to say a few words, too. The speeches are usually given after the meal before the cutting of the cake or between different courses.

father of the bride's speech

The primary aim of this speech is to talk about the bride with affection and praise. The bride's father may share a couple of anecdotes about the bride's childhood and adolescence. He should welcome the groom to the family and talk about the newlywed's secure and happy future. To conclude the speaker proposes a toast to the bride and groom.

father of the groom's speech

Similar to the speech of the father of the bride, this is your turn to talk about your son, welcome your new daughter, and wish them well for the future. In your speech you might like to thank the previous speaker, compliment the newly married couple, welcome the bride and her parents to the family, offer an anecdote about the groom, and finish with a toast to the bride and groom.

groom's speech

The groom should speak on behalf of himself and his wife, although more and more brides are choosing to add their own voice to the occasion. The groom should thank the first speaker for the toast and pay tribute to the people who have raised his bride. This is often followed by him thanking his own parents for their love and support. He may choose to talk about how he met his beloved and then briefly outline the couple's intentions over the coming years. It is important that he ends by thanking the hosts of the wedding and the guests for their support and attendance. In closing he thanks all those who have helped with the wedding and proposes a toast to the bridesmaids and pageboys.

bestman's speech

Here the tone can change from serious to fun and witty, but the bestman must be careful not to descend into bad taste. He should begin by thanking the groom for his toast to the bridesmaids and pageboys and then offering his sincere congratulations to the newlyweds. He then has the opportunity to recount a few anecdotes from the groom's past and, if the groom did not mention how he first met his bride, the bestman is at liberty to do so. He should propose a toast to absent friends and read out any greeting cards, emails and telegrams. Once these have been read he announces the cutting of the cake.

chief bridesmaid's speech

The bride's leading lady may like to offer a few words, which can be more relaxed and conversational in tone. After thanking the previous speaker and complimenting the bride and groom, you may like to recount a story about the bride, or an experience you shared together.

The bride or bride's mother may also like to make a speech or toast.

writing a speech

Find out approximately how much time the couple would like you to speak for – five minutes is usually enough. Jot down all the things you would like to say and then group them according to type and subject matter. You should start to see which points are most important and from there you can derive a logical progression to create a framework. Break your speech up into titled sections such as 'praise daughter', 'incident with the swing and the cat', 'welcome groom', and 'propose toast'. Prepare numbered cue cards, one per section title. If it helps, list a few key words as a prompt but don't write out the entire speech or learn it off by heart – sincerity is best achieved through spontaneity and a smile.

top tips

- ♥ Prepare your speech well in advance and remember that practice makes perfect.
- ♥ Structure your speech well by ensuring it has a beginning, middle and end. Begin with thank-yous, follow with anecdotes, and finish with a toast.
- ♥ Don't drink too much alcohol before your speech – you don't want to be slurring your words!
- ♥ Take a deep breath before beginning, stand tall and don't rush – take your time and speak clearly.
- ♥ Avoid saying 'um' and 'er.' If you need to gather your thoughts, don't be afraid to pause for a few moments.
- ♥ For those who are not accomplished after-dinner speakers the trick is to be sincere and concise.
- ♥ Finish on a positive note with a heart-felt comment.

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