

HOW TO GET YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE IN

WASHINGTON



This guide won't help you find mythical cryptids of the Pacific Northwest, but it will help get you legally married.



A Quick Reality Check Before We Continue

Ah, marriage licenses. Those pesky papers that do all the heavy lifting and cause all the headaches. This one little packet can, in equal parts, annoy officiants, scare marrying couples, and delight bureaucrats. Every state has its own rules and seemingly so does every county.

Not to fear, soonlywed, this guide is designed to take the mystery out of marriage licenses. I've collected all the relevant information in one place, so that you can understand the process and get to work procuring your license.



IMPORTANT TIP

No one likes a scavenger hunt when they're intentionally looking for something. This guide was designed with that thought in mind. But counties can change requirements, so always confirm details with the county clerk's office before heading out.

Cryptids will have remain mysterious. The marriage license doesn't have to.

Hopefully the most exciting thing to happen to you during this process is that you find Bigfoot...as a bumpersticker on the way to the county clerk's office.

What This Piece of Paper Does... And Doesn't Do

1

It's permission, not proof.

A marriage license is what allows you to legally marry. It's issued before the ceremony and gives the officiant the authority to legally marry you.

2

It does not mean you're married yet.

The legal marriage happens only after the ceremony takes place and the completed license is properly filed.

3

It's not the same as a certificate

The certificate comes later, after the license has been signed and recorded. That's the document you'll use for things like name changes or legal records.

This certificate is not to be confused with the decorative or "commemorative" certificate you'll find in your packet. That certificate is not official and is not an acceptable proof of marriage.

A marriage license isn't a unicorn. It doesn't magically make you married, fix paperwork that comes later, or handle anything beyond its one job. It simply gives legal permission for the ceremony to take place.



When To Apply...

And When To Slow Your Roll

Getting your marriage license is time-sensitive and there's a real finesse to getting the timing right. This is not a case of let's get it done early and get it over with. So let's take a look at the logistics.



IMPORTANT TIP

Mermaid sightings depend on tides and timing,
You'll never find one at low tide.

The same holds true for marriage licenses -
well, at least the part about the timing.
Getting a license too early or too late can cause
problems. This section will help you hone your
timing.

You do not have to be a resident of Washington to get a marriage license. You can get a license in any county in Washington, for use in any where in Washington. Once issued, the marriage license is valid for 60 days. That means the clocks starts ticking as soon as the license has been issued. So if you apply too early you can run the risk of it expiring before you have a chance to use it.

Washington has a three-day waiting period between when the license is issued and when the ceremony can legally take place. However, unlike in Oregon, this waiting period will not be waived, not even with a court order. The webpage for the Auditor's Office of Clark County has a date calculator if necessary, to help in calculating valid dates for your license.

The takeaway here is simple: there's a sweet spot. You want to apply close enough to your wedding date that your license will still be valid, but with enough breathing room to account for waiting periods and county-specific procedures. Timing it right can make sure you don't got lost at sea.



What You'll Need ...

Getting your marriage license doesn't have to feel like an errand. If you want, make a date of it — grab coffee, take a walk, do something memorable - like search for Colossal Claude, the Columbia River Monster.

To get your marriage license, the first thing you'll need to do is apply online. After that, you can appear together at the county auditor's office in person, or, if that's not possible, download a marriage license notary packet and have your signatures notarized, either together or individually.

1

A valid photo ID

Each person will need government-issued photo ID. Names should match exactly, including middle names and suffixes, to avoid delays. Also, you must be 18 to get a marriage license in Washington. And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you also can't be 1st cousins.

2

Personal information

You'll be asked to provide basic personal details, including your full names, current addresses, dates and places of birth, social security numbers, parents' full names and their places of birth. You will also be asked to provide the date any previous marriage ended or the date a previous spouse died. You'll also be asked what last name(s) you'll use after the marriage. If a name change is part of your plan, come prepared with that decision.

3

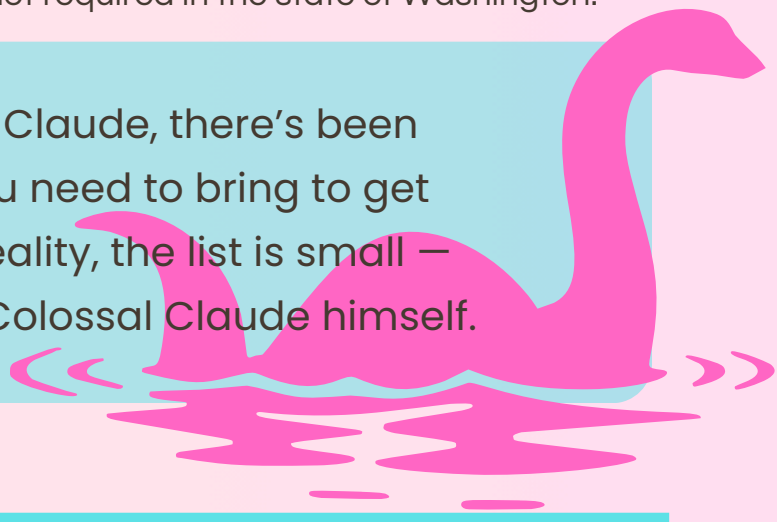
License fee

Marriage license fees in Washington vary, but are around \$150-172. Payment methods varying by county, with most taking cash or credit cards. Most counties will tack on a small processing fee if you are using a credit card, by the way, and most do not take checks.

And What You Don't

Medical exam or blood tests are not required in the state of Washington.

Like sightings of Colossal Claude, there's been much ado about what you need to bring to get your marriage license. In reality, the list is small — much smaller, in fact, than Colossal Claude himself.



What Happens Next

If you're having a rehearsal, I'll collect your marriage license then. If not, you'll bring it with you on the day of the ceremony.

Either way, please don't fill out any part of the license yourselves. That portion is completed by me at the ceremony to ensure everything is done correctly and legally, including names as they should appear after the marriage. Because you signed the license at the county clerk's office, you won't need to sign it again on your wedding day. You will, however, need two witnesses over the age of 18, who will be required to print their names on the license.

After the ceremony, it must be returned to the county auditor's office for recording. Depending on the county, the return window is typically between 5 and 10 days.

Whenever possible, I aim to return licenses within 3 days or less. If the ceremony takes place on a weekday and the auditor's office is nearby, I can often drop the license off in person. If the license is issued by an out-of-area county, I'll send it via certified mail to ensure secure delivery.

Once the license has been completed and returned, I'll send a quick email or text so you know it's been handled. If I had to mail it in, I will give you tracking number.

After the county records the license, they generate your official marriage certificate. Processing times vary by county, and it's completely normal for this step to take a few days. The certificate, not the license, is the document you'll use for name changes and other legal updates.

Once the county records your marriage, you'll need to contact the county auditor's office to order certified copies of your marriage certificate. Standard practice is to request three to four copies. You may not need all of them right away, but having extras on hand can save time later. (Skamania County will provide you with one certified copy.)



When you're ready for the next step, you'll find a separate name-change guide on my website to walk you through that process.

County Clerk Offices

Below are the auditor offices most commonly used by my couples. This information is current as of January 2026. Always confirm requirements directly with the auditor's office before heading out.

Clark County

Auditor Office

1300 Franklin St, 2nd Floor
Vancouver, WA 98660
(360) 397-2208

Apply online; license fee is \$172; certified copies of the marriage certificate are \$3

Cowlitz County

Auditor Office

207 N 4th Ave
Kelso, WA 98626
(360) 577-3002

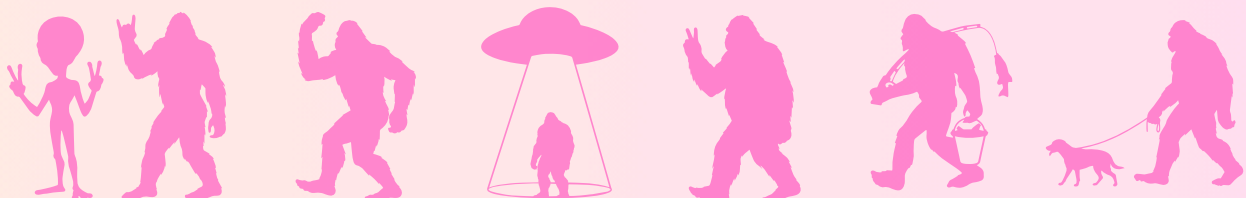
Apply in person or by mail; license fee is \$172; certified copies of the marriage certificate are \$3

Skamania County

Auditor's Office

240 NW Vancouver Ave, Room 27
Stevenson, WA 98648
(509) 427-3731

Apply online; license fee is \$162; you will receive one certified copy; extra copies are \$3



Thanks for Reading

Thanks for reading this guide. Truly. Marriage licenses aren't exactly light reading, so I hope this made the process feel a little less intimidating, and that you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed making it.

Have we met? If not, and you enjoyed this silly little romp through the bureaucracy of marriage licenses, then we should! I'm Kiki, and I love keeping engaged couples engaged!!

I help fun, sparkly, non-traditional humans celebrate their love through non-religious ceremonies, sharing their authentic stories with their chosen families - whether they have two legs, four legs, no legs, or wings.

THANK YOU!

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