

ceremony outline

It all starts with structure. Once you know your structure, or your flow, you can build your ceremony out from there so that it's tailored, personal, practical and effortless. We've created this sample ceremony outline just for you.

Now, every celebrant has their own ceremony structure, and no doubt, you will too. But whether you're a newbie to this industry or a seasoned pro, **this structure works for every ceremony we write** - whether it's a memorial, funeral or living wake. There are no rules and this definitely isn't the only way to approach a ceremony, but it does provide excellent scaffolding for a super strong service.

1. Opening & Words of Comfort

Let's start at the beginning. The opening.

The opening of your ceremony **sets the tone for the whole service**, so don't gloss over it. This is where you introduce yourself, express the sentiment of the ceremony, acknowledge the custodians of the land, bear witness to the fact that a death has taken place, offer words of comfort and share insights into the life you're honouring that day.

Don't be afraid to bring yourself into the ceremony - not in a showy way - but in a truly authentic, heartfelt, compassionate way. Let the guests know that this is a safe space to cry, mourn openly and express feelings respectfully, and that all tears are welcome. If you show heart and soul, you open the heart and soul of those around you.

2. Shifting

Use this space to transition from the welcome into something a little deeper. Remember, **the whole purpose of a funeral ceremony is to help the audience heal** - whatever that looks like for them - so you need to continuously take them deeper and deeper into this experience.

You can use music here, or even a meditation. A prayer also works. Something that acts as a punctuation mark - a moment of pause - to help guests stop for a minute and take stock of the situation. Silence works, too.

3. Reflections and Legacy

This is the portion of the ceremony that goes deeply into reflections and legacy. Regardless of the type of funeral service, **this section is about connecting the life you're honouring to its legacy**. Think: the why, what and how they lived. Really drill into the big life questions that connect us all as humans and make us uniquely, well, us.

You, or a friend, family member or loved one, can share stories and anecdotes about the past and who this person was. How they lived and loved, what they cared about. **Paint a solid picture of who they were at their core**; their essence.

In the case of an infant or stillbirth or small infant, you can talk about the journey mother/father and baby had. The experiences, the highs, lows and deepness, albeit heartbreaking, this experience has brought about.

4. Rituals

Weaving meaningful, personal and modern rituals into your ceremony allow guests to participate in a more tangible way.

Funeral services aren't just about listening, **a truly moving service should incorporate an element of sight, sound, smell, touch and/or taste to make this a multi-sensory journey - and rituals are a way to create that truly tangible, unique and personal experience**.

But first, what is a ritual? A ritual is any sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or objects and it can be as traditional or quirky as you like.

Every ceremony will be different in terms of the type of ritual that you bring into it, as well as the number of rituals it can sustain, but adding 2-3 rituals to every service is likely to be a significant inclusion, and here is a good spot to put one (or even two).

5. Conclusion

The conclusion is **the full stop on what has hopefully been a truly powerful ceremony filled with love, laughter and tears.**

And, it's a big deal.

The conclusion is the time when you **give thanks for the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the life you're honouring in a hopeful and uplifting way.**

Ending the service on a hopeful note can really help guests on their healing journey - so acknowledging the situation but also providing hope is really important.

Some things to consider:

- Recap their legacy and give thanks for all the positive things they brought to life.
- Does the family want a more traditional committal*? It's often included in religious services and burials, but it's not mandatory.
- Offer words of comfort as they move forward in their healing journey.

* A committal is the final rite of a funeral service and often associated with Christian/Catholic and Orthodox services, where the person is 'committed' back to the earth.