

**Office of the Chief Rabbi**  
**Marriage Guidance for Covid-19**  
**Updated 2 August 2020**

This document is intended for all officiating Rabbis so they understand the new processes and so they can explain these to marrying couples. Although intended primarily for officiating Rabbis, there may be instances where you wish to share this document with couples and it has been drafted with this in mind.

Mazaltov! We wish you both every happiness not just for your forthcoming wedding, but for every day afterwards. We are here to help you as best we can at this important time.

We are sorry that your plans for such an important day have been impacted by the current pandemic but we will do our very best to facilitate your chuppah in a safe manner.

Government guidance for exiting lockdown underpins and drives this protocol. As the guidance changes so will this protocol. Please ensure you are reading the most recent version of this protocol. This should be read together with the latest [guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships](#) and the latest [guidance for the safe use of places of worship](#).

The protocol below sets out the conditions under which weddings can now take place, with our shared priority of ensuring the well-being of all involved.

Wedding protocol

From the 4<sup>th</sup> July, weddings can take place with no more than 30 people in attendance. If a couple wishes to have a larger wedding ceremony, they should wait until such time as it is permitted to gather in larger numbers. In cases where couples wish to hold their wedding sooner, the following notes describe the protocol that must be adopted.

1. The Office of the Chief Rabbi normally only permits Jewish weddings to take place where the civil registration is effected immediately following the religious ceremony. Where couples have already posted the banns but have had to change venue, they will be required to give their notices again for the new venue. In addition, couples may not have had the opportunity to register their civil marriage at present as register offices are only just reopening and some may not yet be accepting new registrations. Since the statutory notice period is 28 days, this may cause a delay that could preclude the synagogue from registering the marriage on the day of the chuppah. Accordingly, in the current exceptional circumstances, the requirement to hold the two ceremonies together will be waived for a limited period. This waiver is conditional on the couple providing a written undertaking to arrange for a civil marriage ceremony at a register office as soon as is reasonably possible after the date of their chuppah.
2. The Wedding may only be attended by a maximum of 30 people, to include the Chatan, Kallah, officiating Rabbi, witnesses appointed by the Rabbi, photographer etc., bearing in mind the requirement that there needs to be a *minyan* (including the Chatan) of 10 adult male Jews present.
3. The wedding must be held at a COVID-19 secure venue that is large enough to hold 30 people, where this can be safely accommodated with two metre social distancing. Such venues will include some but not all synagogues and other locations where Jewish marriages

can take place securely. Likewise, an outdoor wedding at a COVID-19 secure venue is permissible.

4. Weddings can take place in gardens of private homes subject to prior agreement with us. Unlike other venues, private homes do not have a person or persons responsible for the management of the venue and who would carry out a proper risk assessment and ensure full compliance with Government guidelines. This must be carried out by the host/home owner who takes full responsibility for ensuring that the garden and the wedding taking place there are COVID-19 secure.
5. Only the Rabbi, Chatan and Kallah should stand under the chuppah. Other than between the Chatan and Kallah, social distancing of 2 metres must be adhered to by everyone present. Parents may stand under or near the chuppah subject to 2 metres social distancing. Any addresses will be brief, and the service will proceed efficiently.
6. The officiating Rabbi must wear gloves and ideally should recite all the seven blessings forming part of the ceremony. This would ensure minimal passing of the cup of wine between different people. The cup of wine should be covered with cling film before the ceremony commences to avoid contamination droplets from the officiants.
7. Where others are called to recite the blessings they must each use hand sanitiser, or put on a pair of disposable gloves, immediately prior to picking up the cup. The officiating Rabbi and others (if any) reciting the blessings must not hand the cup directly to each other. They must each place it on the table at the side of the chuppah so the next person can pick it up (after using hand sanitiser) and maintaining 2 metres social distancing at all times.
8. After reciting all the blessings, the cup should be placed back on the table. The cup should not be passed directly between those present (except between Chatan and Kallah) and everyone should use hand sanitiser before and after picking up the cup.
9. All those attending must be asymptomatic. We would strongly advise that those considered 'clinically extremely vulnerable' do not attend but they must make their own risk assessment and take appropriate precautions should they choose to attend.
10. All those attending must wash their hands in accordance with best practice before the start of the service. Those handling the wine cup must be especially careful with hygiene and act in accordance with best practice, using hand sanitiser as described above.
11. If the wedding is indoors, everyone present (except for the Chatan and Kallah) must wear a face covering for the duration of the event.
12. Guests are prohibited from singing. Only the Rabbi/Chazan (or those reciting the blessings if any) are permitted to sing/chant and they should do so quietly, with the assistance of a microphone if necessary. They should not directly face the Chatan and Kallah, or others present, and should be more than 2 metres away from the Chatan and Kallah and anyone else. No musical instruments that are blown into are permitted.

13. All those attending should take care to limit the time they spend interacting with people outside their household/support bubble.
14. Couples must be mindful of the law and government guidance, and its ever-changing nature, with respect to celebrations and catering and should ensure they are compliant at all times.
15. By taking part in a wedding as set out in these protocols, all participants agree to comply with these guidelines and further agree that the Office of the Chief Rabbi, the officiating Rabbi and the Synagogue (should that be the chosen venue) cannot accept any liability or risk for any unfortunate virus spread. Couples should note that their Rabbi of choice will have the option to decline to participate, should he feel uncomfortable with any of the arrangements.