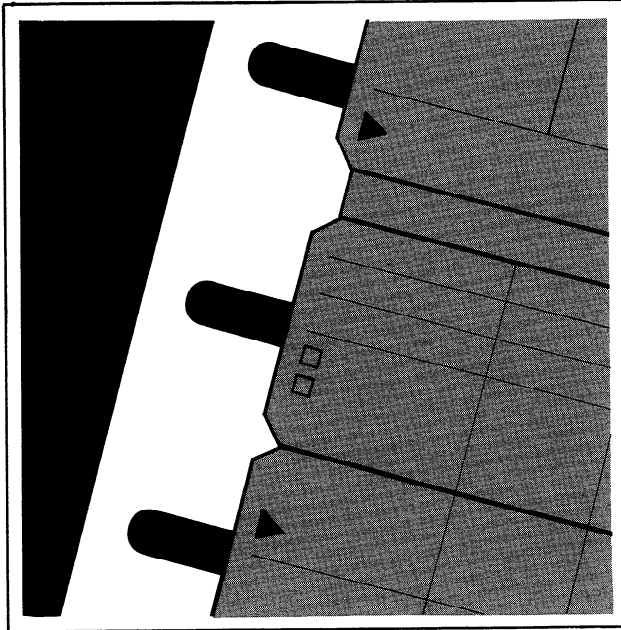


Handbook on Marriage Registration



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control
National Center for Health Statistics

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Preface

This handbook is prepared by the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, and contains instructions for persons with responsibilities for completing and filing certificates of marriage. It pertains to the 1989 revision of the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage and the 1977 revision of the Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations. This handbook is intended to serve as a model for adaptation by any vital statistics registration area.

Other handbooks available as references on preparing and registering vital records are:

- *Medical Examiners' and Coroners' Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*
- *Physicians' Handbook on Medical Certification of Death*
- *Hospitals' and Physicians' Handbook on Birth Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*
- *Funeral Directors' Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*
- *Guidelines for Reporting Occupation and Industry on Death Certificates*
- *Handbook on the Reporting of Induced Termination of Pregnancy*
- *Handbook on Divorce Registration*

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Introduction

Purpose

This handbook is designed as an aid to members of the clergy, county clerks, local registrars, and other local or State officials who have responsibilities related to completing and filing records of marriage. It includes background information on the importance of these documents for legal and statistical purposes as well as instructions for recording specific entries. The purpose is to achieve improved reporting by promoting better understanding of the forms and of the uses of information entered on them. With complete registration and a high degree of accuracy, many legal and research uses can be made of the information given on marriage certificates.

Importance of marriage registration

Registration of marriages in the United States provides documentary proof that a marriage has been performed. Individuals are frequently faced with the need to prove that a particular marriage has been performed. For example, rights to inheritance, pension, insurance, or other benefits may depend upon official documentation of a marriage.

The legal requirements for obtaining a marriage license and filing a certificate of marriage are set forth in each individual State's statutes. Procedures for registering a marriage vary, depending on the marriage laws in that State. Each State has a procedure whereby a marriage license is issued by a specified local official and a record of the marriage filed with that official. In addition, in most States a record is filed with the State office of vital statistics for statistical purposes and for the issuance of certified copies.

Central files of marriage records in State vital statistics offices facilitate the use of the records as proof that a marriage has been performed. Such proof of marital status is often required by a variety of governmental and private agencies. A search of county or other local records to obtain a transcript of a record of marriage is time consuming and costly, especially if the date and place of marriage are unknown. It is more efficient for the State vital statistics office to issue a certified copy of the record or

provide the name of the county or city where the marriage was originally recorded. Rapid and accurate verification of a particular marriage is of special value to members of the legal profession to settle estates or to conduct other legal matters. Obtaining the information from a single office in a State not only simplifies the work and cost to the applicant but also greatly reduces the burden placed upon local custodians of the records. In addition, a system of central files assures that a duplicate set of records is available in the event of fire or other disaster.

Data from marriage records are used for many worthwhile statistical purposes. They are used to analyze and interpret current levels and changes in marriage and divorce, to project fertility and population changes, and to relate the results of those investigations to social and economic problems. Governmental agencies and legislative groups use marriage statistics to develop, implement, and evaluate public programs and policies. Scholars, researchers, writers, and journalists follow trends and differentials in family formation, dissolution, and reformation. Religious bodies and voluntary organizations study the quality and stability of family life. Many businesses, including economic consulting firms, use marriage data in forecasting markets for goods and services and in developing new products.

U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage

The National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health and Human Services, provides leadership and coordination in the development of the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage, which serves as a model for use by the States. This certificate is revised periodically in collaboration with county clerks, State health officials, registrars, and statisticians; Federal agencies; and other providers or users of vital statistics. The purpose of the revision is to ensure that the data collected relate to current and future needs. In the revision process, each item on the standard certificate is evaluated thoroughly for its registration, legal, statistical, and research value.

Each State is encouraged to adopt the recommended standard certificate as a means of developing a uniform national marriage registration and statistics system. Although many States use the recommended standard certificate, some States modify it to comply with State laws and regulations or to meet their own particular needs for information.

Uniformity of data allows for comparable national statistics, as well as the comparison of individual State data with national data and with data from other States. Certificate uniformity among the States also increases its acceptability as a legal record.

Confidentiality of vital records

State and local registrars protect the information on vital records from unwarranted or indiscriminate disclosure. Vital records are available only to persons who are

authorized access by State law and supporting regulations. Legal safeguards to the confidentiality of vital records have been strengthened in recent years. Extensive legal and administrative measures are used to protect individuals and establishments from unauthorized disclosure of personal information.

The format of the marriage license and certificate is designed to further assure confidentiality of information. The upper part of the certificate contains information that identifies the couple and items of information concerning the marriage. The lower part of the certificate contains confidential information for statistical use only. These items relate to the bride and groom and are not included on certified copies.

Specific responsibilities

The 1989 revision of the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage is shown in appendix A. The recommended format for this record includes both the license to marry and the certificate of marriage. In the preferred licensing procedure, the county clerk, registrar, or other licensing authority as designated by State law, is responsible for obtaining and entering the personal information about the prospective bride and groom on the record prior to issuing the license. In some States, the personal information is obtained from an application for a marriage license submitted by the bride and groom. After the marriage is performed, the person officiating (usually a member of the clergy or judiciary) completes the information concerning the ceremony, certifies to the marriage by signature, and returns the license and certificate to the original licensing authority. This authority will register and file the marriage record and transmit the original or a copy to the State office of vital statistics for central registration.

County clerk

The county clerk, or other local official legally authorized to issue marriage licenses, should:

- Review the marriage license application for completeness, accuracy, and compliance with the marriage laws of the State.
- Complete the personal information about the bride and groom as required on the marriage license (items 1-14b and 27a-30b on the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage).
- Inform the couple of any applicable State laws (for example, waiting period and expiration date of license).
- Issue the license with the necessary signatures (items 15-20).

- Upon return of the license and certificate from the marriage officiant, check completeness of entries about the marriage ceremony and register the marriage.
- Sign the marriage certificate (items 25-26).
- Forward the completed certificate to the State office of vital statistics within the time specified by law.
- Cooperate with the State registrar by replying promptly to any queries concerning any entry on the certificate.

Marriage officiant

The person who performs the marriage ceremony, the officiant, should:

- Know the State and local regulations regarding the performance of a marriage, including any registration requirements for officiants.
- Complete the officiant's portion of the marriage certificate (items 21- 23d on the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage), by entering the date and place of the marriage, and his or her signature, title, and mailing address.
- Obtain signatures of witnesses on marriage certificate (items 24a-b), as required by law.
- Provide a copy of the certificate to the bride and groom and return the completed original license and certificate of marriage to the legally designated local authority, usually the office of the county clerk who issued the license, within the time specified by law.
- Cooperate with State or local officials by replying promptly to their queries concerning any entry on the license and certificate of marriage.

State health department

The State health department administers the statewide marriage registration system under the laws and regulations of the State. Marriage certificates are placed on permanent file by the State office of vital statistics after they have been accepted for filing.

Part I—General instructions for completing licenses and certificates

The information necessary for preparing the marriage license and certificate is obtained by the county clerk or local official from the prospective bride and groom. In some States or local jurisdictions, the county clerk receives a marriage application that has been filled in by the applicants. The county clerk should review the entries on the application to be sure they are complete and consistent and to verify that the couple is legally free to marry. The license to marry can then be completed and signed by the county clerk and the applicants. After the marriage ceremony has been performed, the license and the completed certificate of marriage are returned to the county clerk who reviews, signs, and dates the record.

It is essential that the license and certificate be prepared as a permanent legal record:

- File the original certificate (or a copy if your State law requires the original to be filed with the clerk who issued the license) with the State registrar.
- Avoid abbreviations except those recommended in the specific item instructions.
- Verify the spelling of names with the applicants, especially those that have different spellings for the same sound (for example, Smith or Smyth, Gail or Gayle, and Wolfe or Wolf).
- Refer problems not covered in these instructions to the State office of vital statistics.
- Use the current form designated by the State.
- Type all entries whenever possible. If a typewriter cannot be used, print legibly in permanent black ink.
- Complete each item, following the specific instructions for that item.
- Do not make alterations or erasures.
- Obtain all signatures. Rubber stamp or other facsimile signatures are not acceptable.

Part II—Completing the marriage license and certificate

These instructions pertain to the 1989 revision of the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage, as shown in appendix A.

Upper portion of the marriage license and certificate

The upper portion of the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage contains the items required for identification of the individuals to whom the marriage license is being issued, when and by whom the license to marry was issued, and when, where, and by whom the marriage was performed. These are the items of information usually furnished to establish the fact of marriage.

1. GROOM'S NAME (*First, Middle, Last*)

Type or print the full first, middle, and last names of the groom. Do not abbreviate.

Entries of Jr., Sr., II, and so forth, following the last name are acceptable.

The full name of the groom along with the full name of the bride is needed to identify the individuals to be married. It is also used for indexing and querying records of marriage.

2. AGE LAST BIRTHDAY [Groom]

Enter the groom's exact age in years at his last birthday.

Age is used by the local licensing authority to determine whether or not the individuals are of legal age for marriage according to State law. Age is also used to describe and analyze differences in marriage patterns of brides and grooms by race, geographic area, and other characteristics. Having both age and date of birth on the record increases the accuracy of the information.

3a-c GROOM'S RESIDENCE

Groom's residence is the place where his household is located. This is not necessarily the same as his "home State," "voting residence," "mailing address," or "legal residence." The city, county, and State entered should be that of the place where the groom actually lives. Never enter a temporary residence, such as one used during a

visit, business trip, or vacation. However, place of residence during a tour of military duty or during attendance at college is *not* considered temporary and should be entered on the certificate as the groom's place of residence.

3a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION [Groom]

Enter the name of the city, town, or location where the groom lives. This may differ from the city, town, or location in his mailing address.

3b. RESIDENCE—COUNTY [Groom]

Enter the name of the county where the groom lives.

3c. RESIDENCE—STATE [Groom]

Enter the name of the State where the groom lives. This may differ from the State used in his mailing address. If the groom is not a resident of the United States, enter the name of the country and the name of the unit of government that is the nearest equivalent to a State.

The groom's residence is used for identification and refers to the place regarded as home up to the time of marriage. It provides the basis for determining the marriage rate for residents of particular areas and for comparing place of marriage with place of residence.

4. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) [Groom]

If the groom was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the groom was born in a foreign country or a U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the groom was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the groom was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter "Unknown." Do not leave this item blank.

Birthplace is an aid in identification. It is used in such legal processes as verifying facts of citizenship and obtaining passports. It has been used in studies that describe differences in marriage patterns between native and foreign-born persons and among persons born in different States. It may be used to analyze migration and the effect of migration on marriage. This information is also used in genealogical research.

5. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) [Groom]

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the groom was born.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

Date of birth is used for identification and to calculate the exact age of the groom. Information on age at marriage, in combination with other items on the record, is used

to analyze factors affecting family formation. Having both age and date of birth on the record increases the accuracy of the information.

6a. FATHER'S NAME (*First, Middle, Last*) [Groom]

Type or print the first, middle, and last names of the father of the groom. Do not abbreviate.

Entries of Jr., Sr., II, and so forth, following the last name are acceptable.

The father's name is used for identification and for legal matters such as consent to marriage where required by State law. The item can be used to establish the groom's parentage and to provide information for genealogical studies.

6b. BIRTHPLACE (*State or Foreign Country*) [Groom's Father]

If the father of the groom was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the father was born in a foreign country or U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the father was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the father was born in a foreign country, but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter "Unknown." Do not leave this item blank.

The birthplace of parents is used for identification and genealogical research.

7a. MOTHER'S NAME (*First, Middle, Maiden Surname*) [Groom]

Type or print the first, middle, and maiden surname of the mother of the groom.

If the mother is married, widowed, or divorced, be sure to enter her maiden surname, not a last name acquired by marriage.

The mother's name is used for identification. The item can be used to establish the groom's parentage and to provide data for genealogical studies.

7b. BIRTHPLACE (*State or Foreign Country*) [Groom's Mother]

If the groom's mother was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the mother was born in a foreign country or U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the mother was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the mother was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter “Unknown.” Do not leave this item blank.

The birthplace of parents is used for identification and genealogical research.

8a. BRIDE’S NAME (*First, Middle, Last*)

Type or print the full legal first, middle, and last names of the bride. Do not abbreviate.

8b. MAIDEN SURNAME (*If different*) [Bride]

Enter the last name of the bride as given at birth or adoption, not a name acquired by marriage.

The full name of the bride along with the full name of the groom is needed to identify the individuals to be married. It is also used for indexing and querying records of marriage. The maiden surname is important for identification of women because it remains constant throughout a lifetime, in contrast to other names, which may change because of marriage or divorce.

9. AGE LAST BIRTHDAY [Bride]

Enter the bride’s exact age in years at her last birthday.

Age is used by the local licensing authority to determine whether the individuals are of legal age for marriage according to State law. Age is also used to describe and analyze differences in marriage patterns of brides and grooms by race, geographic area, and other characteristics. Having both age and date of birth on the record increases the accuracy of the information.

10a-c BRIDE’S RESIDENCE

Bride’s residence is the place where her household is located. This is not necessarily the same as her “home State,” “voting residence,” “mailing address,” or “legal residence.” The city, county, and State entered should be that of the place where the bride actually lives. Never enter a temporary residence, such as one used during a visit, business trip, or vacation. However, place of residence during a tour of military duty or during attendance at college is *not* considered temporary and should be entered on the certificate as the bride’s place of residence.

10a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION [Bride]

Enter the name of the city, town, or location where the bride lives. This may differ from the city, town, or location used in her mailing address.

10b. RESIDENCE—COUNTY [Bride]

Enter the name of the county where the bride lives.

10c. RESIDENCE—STATE [Bride]

Enter the name of the State where the bride lives. This may differ from the State used in her mailing address. If the bride is not a resident of the United States, enter the name of the country and the name of the unit of government that is the nearest equivalent to a State.

The bride's residence is used for identification and refers to the place regarded as home up to the time of marriage. It provides the basis for determining the marriage rate for residents of particular areas and for comparing place of marriage with place of residence.

11. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) [Bride]

If the bride was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the bride was born in a foreign country or a U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the bride was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the bride was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter "Unknown." Do not leave this item blank.

Birthplace is an aid in identification. It is used in such legal processes as verifying facts of citizenship and obtaining passports. It has been used in studies that describe differences in marriage patterns between native and foreign-born persons and among persons born in different States. It may be used to analyze migration and the effect of migration on marriage. This item is also used in genealogical research.

12. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) [Bride]

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the bride was born.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

Date of birth is used for identification and to calculate the exact age of the bride. Information on age at marriage, in combination with other items on the record, is used to analyze factors affecting family formation. Having both age and date of birth on the record increases the accuracy of the information.

13a. FATHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) [Bride]

Type or print the first, middle, and last names of the father of the bride. Do not abbreviate.

Entries of Jr., Sr., II, and so forth, following the last name are acceptable.

The father's name is used for identification and for legal matters such as consent to the marriage where required by State law. The item can be used to establish the bride's parentage and to provide information for genealogical studies.

13b. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) [Bride's Father]

If the father of the bride was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the father was born in a foreign country or a U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the father was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the father was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter "Unknown." Do not leave this item blank.

The birthplace of parents is used for identification and genealogical research.

14a. MOTHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Maiden Surname) [Bride]

Type or print the first, middle, and maiden surname of the mother of the bride.

If the mother is married, widowed, or divorced, be sure to enter her maiden surname, not a last name acquired by marriage.

The mother's name is used for identification. The item can be used to establish the bride's parentage and to provide data for genealogical studies.

14b. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) [Bride's Mother]

If the bride's mother was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the mother was born in a foreign country or a U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the mother was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the mother was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter "Unknown." Do not leave this item blank.

The birthplace of parents is used for identification and genealogical research.

WE HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IS CORRECT TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF AND THAT WE ARE FREE TO MARRY UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS STATE.

15. GROOM'S SIGNATURE

The groom should sign his full name in permanent black ink.

The signature is a legal item attesting that the information provided is correct and that the groom is entitled to marry under the laws of the State.

16. BRIDE'S SIGNATURE

The bride should sign her full name in permanent black ink.

The bride's signature is a legal item attesting that the information provided is correct and that the bride is entitled to marry under the laws of the State.

THIS LICENSE AUTHORIZES THE MARRIAGE IN THIS STATE OF THE PARTIES NAMED ABOVE BY ANY PERSON DULY AUTHORIZED TO PERFORM A MARRIAGE CEREMONY UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF _____ .

17. EXPIRATION DATE (Month, Day, Year)

The county clerk or other local official legally authorized to issue marriage licenses, should enter the exact month, day, and year that the license to marry expires.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

This item identifies the period for which the license is valid. It helps ensure that ministers and magistrates do not perform an illegal marriage by mistake and alerts the couple to legal deadlines.

18. SUBSCRIBED TO AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME ON: (Month, Day, Year)

The county clerk or other local official legally authorized to issue marriage licenses, should enter the exact month, day, and year that the marriage license is issued.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

19. SIGNATURE OF ISSUING OFFICIAL

The county clerk or other local official legally authorized to issue marriage licenses, should sign his or her first, middle, and last names in permanent black ink.

20. TITLE OF ISSUING OFFICIAL

Enter the title of the local official who issues the license to marry.

Items 18-20 demonstrate that the license is authentic and issued by the proper authority.

21. I CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE NAMED PERSONS WERE MARRIED ON:

(Month, Day, Year)

The person performing the marriage ceremony should enter the exact month, day, and year that the marriage occurred.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

This is a legal item showing when the marriage actually occurred. It is needed to assure that the license was valid at the time of the ceremony. It is used statistically to count the number of marriages that occur during a specified period of time. It may be used in combination with other items on the certificate for analysis of marriage trends and characteristics.

22a-b WHERE MARRIED

22a. WHERE MARRIED—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION

The marriage officiant should enter the name of the city, town, or location where the marriage ceremony took place.

22b. COUNTY

The marriage officiant should enter the name of the county where the marriage ceremony took place.

These are legal items that establish whether the marriage was performed within an authorized geographical area. They may also be used for statistical analysis of marriages by place of occurrence.

23a-d OFFICIANT

23a. SIGNATURE OF PERSON PERFORMING CEREMONY

The person performing the marriage ceremony should sign his or her full name in permanent black ink.

23b. NAME (Type/Print)

The person performing the ceremony should type or print his or her full name.

23c. TITLE

The person performing the marriage ceremony should enter his or her title.

The name and title of the officiant are used to determine whether a legally authorized person performed the marriage ceremony.

23d. ADDRESS OF PERSON PERFORMING CEREMONY (Street and Number or Rural Route Number, City or Town, State, Zip Code)

The person performing the ceremony should enter his or her mailing address.

This information is used to facilitate querying.

24a-b WITNESSES

24a. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS TO CEREMONY

The person acting as the legal witness of the ceremony should sign his or her full name in permanent black ink.

24b. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS TO CEREMONY

If there is a second legal witness of the ceremony, this person should sign his or her full name in permanent black ink.

These signatures are required by law in most States.

25. SIGNATURE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL MAKING RETURN TO STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The local official responsible for filing the certificate of marriage with the State office of vital statistics should sign his or her full name in permanent black ink.

26. DATE FILED BY LOCAL OFFICIAL (*Month, Day, Year*)

The local official should enter the exact month, day, and year that the marriage certificate was received from the officiant.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

The signature of the local official and the date filed are legally required items that authenticate the certificate and prove that the certificate was properly filed within the time period specified by law.

Lower portion of the marriage license and certificate

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION. THE INFORMATION BELOW WILL NOT APPEAR ON CERTIFIED COPIES OF THE RECORD.

The lower portion of the U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage contains confidential information. This information (items 27-30) is separated from the identifying information and is excluded from certified copies of the certificate. The information is used for a wide range of research purposes.

27. NUMBER OF THIS MARRIAGE—First, Second, etc. (*Specify below*)

27a. GROOM

27b. BRIDE

Enter the number of this marriage for the groom and for the bride.

If he or she has never been married prior to this marriage, enter “First.”

If he or she has been married prior to this marriage, enter the number of this marriage—"Second," "Third," etc.

This information is used to study how population growth and childbearing patterns are affected by disruption and resumption of marriage and to examine the trend of marriages by previous marital history. Number of this marriage has been shown to be related to age at marriage, stability of the marriage, and fertility of the couple.

28. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, LAST MARRIAGE ENDED

28a. By Death, Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify below) [Groom]

If the groom was previously married, enter death, divorce, dissolution, or annulment to describe the manner in which his last marriage ended. If the groom was never previously married, enter "N.A." or "Never Married." Do not leave this item blank.

28b. Date (Month, Day, Year) [Groom]

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the last marriage of the groom ended.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

Specify the date of the death of his previous wife or the date when the last divorce, dissolution, or annulment became final. If the groom was never previously married, leave this item blank.

28. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, LAST MARRIAGE ENDED

28c. By Death, Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify below) [Bride]

If the bride was previously married, enter death, divorce, dissolution, or annulment to describe the manner in which her last marriage ended. If the bride was never previously married, enter "N.A." or "Never Married." Do not leave this item blank.

28d. Date (Month, Day, Year) [Bride]

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the last marriage of the bride ended.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

Specify the date of the death of her previous husband or the date when the last divorce, dissolution, or annulment became final. If the bride was never previously married, leave this item blank.

Information from items 28a-d permits the study of the interval between the date of remarriage and the date of dissolution of the last marriage, by type of dissolution. It is used for constructing marriage "life tables," which show the likelihood of widowhood, divorce, and remarriage after a given age. It is also used for planning by the Social Security Administration, by pension funds, and by the county clerk for determining whether the parties are free to marry.

29. RACE—American Indian, Black, White, etc. (Specify below)

29a. GROOM

29b. BRIDE

Enter the race of the groom and of the bride.

For Asians and Pacific Islanders, enter the national origin, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, or Hawaiian.

If the groom or bride is of mixed race, enter both races or origins.

Race is essential in producing marriage data for minority groups. It is used to study marriage patterns and childbearing experience for racial groups. Race is an important variable in studies of population growth and family formation. Marriage data by race are needed to ensure that all racial groups are adequately represented in detailed studies of family formation.

30. EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed)

Elementary/Secondary (0-12)—College (1-4 or 5 +)

30a. GROOM

30b. BRIDE

Enter the highest number of years of regular schooling completed by the groom and by the bride in either the space for elementary/secondary school or the space for college. An entry should be made only in one of the spaces for the groom and in one for the bride. The other space should be left blank. Report only those years of school that were completed. A person who enrolls in college but does not complete one full year should not be identified with any college education in this item.

Count formal schooling only. Do not include beauty, barber, trade, business, technical, or other special schools when determining the highest grade completed.

Education is an indicator of socioeconomic status and is used in combination with other items on the certificate to measure its effect on marriage patterns and differences.

Appendixes

A. The U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage

B. The Marriage Registration System in the United States

Appendix A

The U.S. Standard License and Certificate of Marriage

	U.S. STANDARD LICENSE AND CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE				
TYPE/PRINT IN PERMANENT BLACK INK FOR INSTRUCTIONS SEE HANDBOOK	LICENSE NUMBER				STATE FILE NUMBER
	1. GROOM'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) Edmund Matthew Kowales		2. AGE LAST BIRTHDAY 36		
	3a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION Bladensburg		3b. COUNTY Prince Georges		
GROOM	3c. STATE Maryland	4. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) Pennsylvania	5. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) February 8, 1953		
	6a. FATHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) Douglas Allen Kowales	6b. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) Pennsylvania	7a. MOTHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Maiden Surname) Betty Ann Shaw	7b. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) New York	
BRIDE	8a. BRIDE'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) Julia Lynn Thorpe		8b. MAIDEN SURNAME (if different)		9. AGE LAST BIRTHDAY 31
	10a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION Takoma Park		10b. COUNTY Prince Georges		
	10c. STATE Maryland	11. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) Washington, D.C.	12. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) September 17, 1957		
	13a. FATHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) William Thomas Thorpe	13b. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) Maryland	14a. MOTHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Maiden Surname) Joan Barbara Crismond	14b. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) Washington, D.C.	
SIGNATURES	WE HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IS CORRECT TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF AND THAT WE ARE FREE TO MARRY UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS STATE.				
	15. GROOM'S SIGNATURE <i>Edmund Matthew Kowales</i>		16. BRIDE'S SIGNATURE <i>Julia Lynn Thorpe</i>		
LICENSE TO MARRY	This License Authorizes the Marriage in This State of the Parties Named Above by Any Person Duly Authorized to Perform a Marriage Ceremony Under the Laws of the State of Maryland				
	18. SUBSCRIBED TO AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME ON: (Month, Day, Year) April 19, 1989	19. SIGNATURE OF ISSUING OFFICIAL <i>Steve A. DeFord</i>	20. TITLE OF ISSUING OFFICIAL County Clerk		
	21. I CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE NAMED PERSONS WERE MARRIED ON: (Month, Day, Year) May 7, 1989	22a. WHERE MARRIED—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION Takoma Park	22b. COUNTY Prince Georges		
CEREMONY	23a. SIGNATURE OF PERSON PERFORMING CEREMONY <i>Richard Klue</i>		23b. NAME (Type/Print) Richard Klue	23c. TITLE Minister	
	23d. ADDRESS OF PERSON PERFORMING CEREMONY (Street and Number or Rural Route Number, City or Town, State, Zip Code) 292 Spirit Lane, Annapolis, Maryland 21401				
	24a. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS TO CEREMONY <i>Robert D. Steute</i>		24b. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS TO CEREMONY <i>Barbara Foley Wilson</i>		
LOCAL OFFICIAL	25. SIGNATURE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL MAKING RETURN TO STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT <i>Judith M. Barn</i>		26. DATE FILED BY LOCAL OFFICIAL (Month, Day, Year) May 10, 1989		
CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION. THE INFORMATION BELOW WILL NOT APPEAR ON CERTIFIED COPIES OF THE RECORD.					
	27. NUMBER OF THIS MARRIAGE (First, Second, etc. (Specify below))	28. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, LAST MARRIAGE ENDED (By Death, Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify below)) Date (Month, Day, Year)		29. RACE—American Indian, Black, White, etc. (Specify below)	30. EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed) (Elementary/Secondary (0-12) College (1-4 or 5+))
GROOM	27a. Second	28a. Divorce	28b. June 1, 1982	29a. White	30a. 12
BRIDE	27b. Second	28c. Divorce	28d. December 8, 1984	29b. White	30b. 4

Appendix B

The Marriage Registration System in the United States

The registration of marriages in the United States is a State and local function. The civil laws of all States provide for a continuous and permanent marriage registration system. A central file in the State office of vital statistics for the registration of marriages is established in almost all States. Each system depends upon the conscientious efforts of the local officials, clergy, and other officiants in preparing the information needed to complete the original records and in certifying to the information on these records. For a graphic presentation of the registration system, see the accompanying chart, "Marriage Registration System in the United States."

Most States have local registration districts or units to facilitate the collection of vital records. A district may be a township, village, town, city, county, or other geographic area.

A local official collects the records of all marriages occurring in his or her area and transmits them to the State office of vital statistics. The local official is required to see that a complete certificate is filed promptly for each marriage occurring in that area. Marriage records are completed in the offices of the county clerk (or in the offices of clerks of other political subdivisions) where the application for the marriage license is filed. After the marriage is performed, the officiant returns the marriage license and certificate to the county clerk, and the record of marriage or a copy is transmitted to the State office.

The State office of vital statistics inspects each record for promptness of filing, completeness, and accuracy of information; queries missing or inconsistent information; numbers the records; prepares indexes; processes the records; and stores the documents for permanent reference and safekeeping. Statistical information from the records is tabulated for use by State and local health departments, other governmental agencies, and various private and voluntary organizations. The data are used to plan programs and services for the public.

An important function of the State office is to produce an index of all marriages occurring within that State. The State office can then provide the name of the county, city, or other area where the marriage was performed and originally recorded, so that a person wanting a certified copy of the marriage certificate can contact the appropriate county official. In some States, the State office may also provide a certified copy of the marriage certificate on file in the State office.

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in the Public Health Service is vested with the authority for administering vital statistics functions at the national level. Data tapes of information derived from individual records registered in the State offices, or copies of the individual records themselves, are transmitted to NCHS by States participating in the marriage-registration area (MRA). The MRA includes those States that maintain central marriage registration files and meet certain minimum standards of completeness and accuracy of reporting. Monthly, annual, and special statistical reports are prepared from these data for the United States as a whole, for the MRA, and for the component parts—counties, States, and regions—by various characteristics such as age, race, and sex. The statistics are essential to the fields of social welfare, public health, and demography. They are also used for program planning and evaluation in both business and government. NCHS serves as a focal point, exercising leadership in establishing uniform practices through model laws, standard certificate forms, handbooks, and other instructional materials for the continued improvement of the marriage registration system in the United States.

The Marriage Registration System in the United States

Responsible Person or Agency

Marriage Certificate

County clerk or other local official

1. Receives application for marriage license and reviews application for completeness, accuracy, and compliance with State marriage laws.
2. Issues marriage license. Records dates of issue and expiration.
3. Checks completeness of entries about the marriage ceremony when license and certificate are returned by the officiant.
4. Sends specified information or records regarding marriage to State registrar.
5. Maintains file of marriage records and issues certified copies.

Marriage officiant

1. Checks validity of marriage license.
2. Performs marriage ceremony.
3. Certifies to the facts of the marriage ceremony.
4. Returns record of marriage to county clerk within the legally prescribed time.

State registrar, office of vital statistics

1. Queries incomplete or inconsistent information.
2. Maintains files for permanent reference and issues certified copies.
3. Compiles health-related statistics for the State and civil divisions of the State for use of the health department and other agencies and groups interested in the fields of demography, social welfare, mental health, and public health.
4. Sends data tapes of information derived from individual records registered in the State office, or copies of the individual records themselves, to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Public Health Service,
Centers for Disease Control,
National Center for
Health Statistics

1. Prepares and publishes national statistics of marriages.
2. Conducts research studies based on marriage records.
3. Maintains a continuing technical assistance program to improve the quality and usefulness of marriage statistics.