

# Interesting Traditional Marriage Customs around the World

Marriage is a recognized union between two people, called *spouses*, which establishes rights and obligations between them.

Also known as *matrimony* or *wedlock*, this union can be recognized through social norms and laws or a ritual, and it also accepts the indisputable rights that any children born or adopted within that union have.

People around the world have been performing marriage ceremonies for a long time, with each culture adding something special and unique.



## A Brief History of Marriage

- Ancient societies started practicing marriages because they needed to secure a safe environment in which they could have offspring and pass their property onto someone.
- One of the earliest Hebrew laws required a man to marry his deceased brother's widow.
- Dating back to the Ancient Rome, the engagement ring is a custom that was believed to represent eternity and everlasting union.
- In the 5th century, the Christian Church took an interest in marriage as a religious ceremony, but it was only in the 12th century that the Church defined marriage as sanctioned (officially accepted or allowed) by God.
- Even though divorce (ending the marriage) was practiced by ancient Greeks, it was not recognized by the Catholic Church. British King Henry VIII even broke his ties with the Church and started his own Church of England so that he could divorce his wife and marry a new one.



## **Indian Wedding Celebrations**

Celebrated with numerous rituals and ceremonies, Indian weddings last for days.

- The wedding starts with pre-wedding ceremonies, such as the engagement ceremony, where the bride and the groom exchange rings.
- Then there is the Mehendi Ceremony held at the bride's house, where her palms, wrists and feet are decorated for the wedding.
- On the wedding day, the husband and wife put flower garlands around each other's necks, which symbolizes the bride's acceptance of her husband.
- The traditional wedding is followed by many other traditions, such as for example, stealing the groom's shoes. The bride's sisters play a trick by stealing the shoes once the groom has entered the wedding tent, so the groom must bribe them in order to get his shoes back.



## Japanese Wedding Celebrations

In Japan, wedding ceremonies are traditionally held in Shinto shrines. Painted white from head to toe, the bride also wears a white *kimono* (Japanese clothing).

During the ceremony, the bride puts on a white hood to hide her "horns of jealousy" that she feels towards her mother-in-law. She declares herself a maiden, and promises to become a gentle and obedient wife.

Throughout the celebration, Japanese brides change their costumes several times, so they also wear a red kimono, and a more modern dress.

As a symbol of the newly established union, the happy couple drinks *sake*, a Japanese alcoholic drink made from rice. In this tradition, known as *san-san-kudo*, the bride and groom each take three sips from three different sake cups. Their parents do the same, which bonds their families together.



## Jamaican Wedding Ceremonies

In Jamaica, the entire community participates in nearly all stages of the wedding. More precisely, everyone in the village comes together to help plan the wedding.

On the wedding day, everyone goes out in the street to see the bride and judge her looks – if she is not perfectly dressed, they will criticize her.

The wedding celebration also involves a lot of traditional dancing, including *Quadrille*, a dance which originates from the colonial times, when slaves secretly copied the dance moves from their masters.

Several cakes are served, and they are all brought in by married women wearing white. One such cake is the traditional black cake, made from dark fruits and rum.



## Welsh Wedding Ceremonies

According to Welsh wedding tradition, a man should carve a wooden spoon and give it to the woman he loves. If she wears it, that means they are engaged.

Another wedding custom in Wales suggests that brides should be kidnapped by their families shortly before their wedding day, so if the groom comes and rescues her, that means they will be married.

Welsh brides also put *myrtles* (a flower) in their bouquet, because it symbolizes love. The bridesmaids receive a cutting of the myrtle and, if they plant it and see it bloom, they will also marry soon.



## Comprehension Exercises

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### Vocabulary Questions

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1. What does "bribe" mean?
  - A. giving someone money to try to make them do something
  - B. performing a traditional ritual
  - C. being made to do something
2. What does "eternity" mean?
  - A. staying young forever
  - B. a married couple's love
  - C. time that never ends
3. What does "ritual" mean?
  - A. an action performed only once in a lifetime
  - B. a set of actions performed regularly
  - C. all marriage-related actions
4. What does "obedient" mean?
  - A. being obliged to clean the house
  - B. never listening to your relatives
  - C. complying and being willing to comply with orders
5. What does "offspring" mean?

- A. something made in the name of love
  - B. a person's child or children
  - C. a disappointing family member
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### **Collocation Questions**

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6. In India, bride's sisters \_\_\_\_\_ a trick with the groom.
- A. act
  - B. make
  - C. play
7. Drinking sake is a symbol of the \_\_\_\_\_ established union.
- A. freshly
  - B. recently
  - C. newly
8. Welsh men \_\_\_\_\_ a wooden spoon for their engagement.
- A. carve
  - B. cut
  - C. sculpt
9. Henry VII broke his ties \_\_\_\_\_ the Church to get a divorce.
- A. to
  - B. with
  - C. from
10. The engagement ring represents \_\_\_\_\_ union.
- A. an immortal
  - B. an everlasting
  - C. a timeless
11. Drinking sake \_\_\_\_\_ the two families together.
- A. bonds
  - B. joins
  - C. connects
12. According to an ancient law, a man was required to marry his \_\_\_\_\_ brother's widow.
- A. departed

- B. gone
  - C. deceased
13. Children born within marriage have \_\_\_\_\_ rights.
- A. indisputable
  - B. inconvertible
  - C. unanswerable
14. In colonial times, slaves secretly \_\_\_\_\_ their masters' dance moves.
- A. duplicated
  - B. copied
  - C. reproduced
15. Marriage was created when people wanted to pass their property \_\_\_\_\_ someone.
- A. by
  - B. onto
  - C. over
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### **Wh Questions**

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16. **How** is the bride's jealousy hidden in Japan?
- A. by putting white make up on
  - B. by wearing a white hood
  - C. by wearing a red kimono
17. **Where** is the Mehendi ceremony in India held?
- A. at the bride's house
  - B. at the groom's house
  - C. in the wedding tent
18. **Why** did King Henry VIII found his own church?
- A. to have more children
  - B. not to be obliged to marry
  - C. to be able to divorce
19. **Who** judges the bride's looks in Jamaica?
- A. the groom
  - B. the mother-in-law

C. the whole village

20. **What** will happen to the Welsh bridesmaid if her myrtle cutting blooms?

- A. she will never get married
  - B. she will get married soon
  - C. she will have many children
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### **Evaluating Statements**

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21. Based on the information in this lesson, which statement is **true**?

- A. In India, the groom has to give money to the bride's sisters if he wants his shoes back.
- B. In India, the groom has to dance a traditional dance if he wants his shoes back.

22. Based on the information in this lesson, which statement is **false**?

- A. In Wales, the bride is kidnapped by her own family before the wedding.
  - B. In Wales, the bride is kidnapped by the groom's family before the wedding.
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### **True or False?**

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23. Based on the information in this lesson, is the following statement true or false?

*"During a traditional Japanese wedding, the bride wears both a white and a red kimono."*

- A. True
- B. False

24. Based on the information in this lesson, is the following statement true or false?

*"Everyone is welcome to bring in a wedding cake to a Jamaican wedding."*

- A. True
- B. False