

Robyn Ashley Weddings

NYC WEDDING OFFICIANT

THE OFFICIANT'S CUT

The Handfasting Ceremony.

The full ritual to read at the altar: the words for each cord, the loose-tie technique that decides whether a knot survives, the delivery cues, and the swap for a no-cinch family version.

AS SEEN IN

Tamron Hall · Brides · The Knot

FROM ROBYN'S DESK

The knot they *keep forever.*

The first handfasting I officiated ended with no knot. I cinched the cords tight against their hands, they slipped free, and the whole thing fell open in my palm in front of 80 people.

One thing had gone wrong, and it is the thing that goes wrong every time. I had tied around their skin instead of around the join. A knot tied that way cannot hold once the hands come out, so there is nothing left to keep.

So this is the handfasting ceremony with the technique on the same page as the words, the way I run it now. The lines for each cord are set in large type, so whoever is reading can do it at arm's length. In the margins are the cues I have learned over 300+ ceremonies.

Read it once out loud in your own voice. Cut anything that does not sound like you. The ritual is yours.

Robyn

ROBYN ASHLEY WEDDINGS · BROOKLYN ·
NYC



What you'll *actually need.*

One to three cords, about a yard each. A single cord reads clean and simple. Two or three let different family members each tie one with a blessing. Pick a soft, flexible cord or wide ribbon. Stiff rope fights the knot.

A way to present them. Drape the cords over your forearm, or lay them on a held tray, so the loose middles hang ready. Fishing for a cord in your pocket mid-ritual breaks the spell.

A reader, if you want one. The officiant can speak and tie both, or a parent reads each cord's blessing while you handle the binding. Decide in advance who says what.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Buy a spare cord of each color. They snag, fray, and go missing the morning of. The extra costs nothing and saves the one ritual that *cannot be improvised on the spot.*

Tie loose, around *the join*.

DO NOT SKIP THIS

Cinch the cords tight against the couple's hands and the knot collapses the second they pull free. There is nothing left to keep, and the whole ritual was for that keepsake.

The couple joins both hands, right to right and left to left, so their crossed arms make a figure eight. Drape the loose middle of the cords over the crossed hands. Tie a loose knot underneath, around the join, with a finger's room to spare. The couple slips their hands out and the loops settle into an infinity knot that holds.

Run it twice with a friend before the day, then once with the couple right before the ceremony.

ROBYN'S NOTE

I narrate slowly while my hands work. It buys time and keeps the room from noticing if a loop needs a second pass. The binding that fails is always the one nobody rehearsed.

Tying the *knot*.

— *[Address the guests. The couple steps forward. Cords ready over your arm or on the tray.]*

[PARTNER 1] and **[PARTNER 2]** have chosen a handfasting to mark their joining today.

This is one of the oldest wedding rituals there is, older than the rings, older than the white dress. It is where the phrase *tying the knot* comes from. For centuries, two people sealed a life together by binding their hands with cord.

— *[Slow down on "tying the knot." Let the room catch the phrase they have said a hundred times.]*

Please *join hands.*

[PARTNER 1] and [PARTNER 2], please join hands.

— *[Couple joins hands right to right and left to left, so the arms cross into a figure eight. Help them set the cross if it looks uneven.]*

These cords are the ties that bind you, never as chains, but as the threads of a shared life: love, trust, and the people who brought you here.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Set the figure-eight cross yourself if it looks off. The infinity knot only forms when the arms cross cleanly, and most couples set it slightly wrong the first time.

The first *cord*.

— *[Drape the first cord over the joined hands. Let the loose ends hang. Do not tie yet.]*

With this first cord, I bind the promise of your love. The thing that brought you here, and the thing that will keep you.

— *[If a family member is tying this cord, hand it to them now and let them say their blessing.]*

ROBYN'S NOTE

If different people tie each cord, line them up beforehand in the order they will go. A scramble for "who is next" is the only thing that makes this ritual feel disorganized.

The *binding*.

— *[Drape the second cord over the first. Then begin the loose tie underneath, around the join.]*

With this second cord, the strength to hold each other through every season. The good years and the hard ones both.

— *[Tie loosely around the join, never against the skin. Leave a finger's room. Narrate while your hands work.]*

[PARTNER 1] and **[PARTNER 2]**, your hands are bound, as your lives are now bound.

Carry the *knot*.

Slip your hands free, gently, and carry the knot with you.

— *[Couple withdraws their hands slowly. The loose loops settle into an infinity knot. Hold it up for the room to see.]*

What is tied here today, you carry forward together. This knot is yours to keep.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Tell the couple beforehand to ease their hands out, never yank. A slow withdrawal lets the loops find their shape. A fast one drags the knot loose right when the room is watching for it.

What the *colors* say.

Most couples use one to three cords. Each color can carry its own meaning, which is what makes the family version work: one cord, one person, one blessing.

Red Passion, strength

Blue Loyalty, patience

Green Growth, new roots

Gold Prosperity, wisdom

Silver Protection, peace

White Purity, devotion

Purple Dignity, dreams

If the cords *aren't right*.

If a guest worries about tying too tight. Use the no-cinch version.

Drape the cords and let them rest, then lift them off together as a loop the couple keeps. The bind is symbolic, so a gentle drape reads the same and never pinches.

If you want the kids in it. Give a child a wide ribbon to drape and a pin to fasten it, no knot to manage. A pinned ribbon is the keepsake, and small hands can do it without help.

If you want more voices. Let several family members each drape a cord with a one-line blessing, then you tie the final knot under all of them. Cap it at three speakers so the ritual stays under five minutes.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Whatever the form, the read is the same: two lives bound into one knot they keep. Pick the version that is genuinely yours and the room can tell.

If it goes *sideways*.

If the knot falls open on the slip-out. Lift the cords, say, "Let's tie this one for keeps," and re-tie it loosely in your hands. Warm and unbothered. The room reads a second pass as care.

If a cord tangles or drops. Say, "Patience, this part rewards it," set it right, and go on. A calm line buys all the time a fumble needs.

If you lose your place in the words. Stop, find the line, and continue. Nobody in the seats has the script. A short pause looks like care, never a stumble.

ROBYN'S NOTE

The difference between a first-timer and a pro is not that the pro never fumbles. It is that the pro has a warm line ready, says it, and keeps the ritual moving.

Three things *before you tie it for real.*

This is one ritual, marked the way I would mark my own. Treat it as a working draft and it starts sounding like you.

i Practice the loose tie until the knot holds every time.

Run it twice with a friend's hands. Tie around the join, never the skin, with a finger's room. The slip-out should leave an infinity knot you can lift and keep.

ii Set the cords and the order the morning of.

Drape the cords ready over your arm or a tray. If family members are tying, line them up in order so there is no scramble for who goes next.

iii Read it aloud once, and fill every bracket a week out.

Whoever is reading runs it start to finish in their own voice. Fill each [BRACKET] in advance and print a clean copy on cardstock for the day.

"We were writing the ceremony ourselves and kept getting stuck on where the handfasting fit. The kit had the whole arc already. We dropped our words in and it sounded like us."

DANA & MARCUS · MARRIED IN THE HUDSON VALLEY, 2025

IF THIS RITUAL IS DOING ITS JOB

The whole ceremony, *not just one knot.*

The handfasting is one ritual. A ceremony is the architecture around it: the processional, the welcome, the vows, the unity moment, the pronouncement, all timed so the binding falls at the right beat instead of feeling bolted on. The Couple's Ceremony Kit is the full word-for-word framework I use, with this handfasting script and a diagrammed binding sequence, plus every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in.

\$79

Open the Couple's Ceremony Kit →

ONE-TIME PAYMENT · LIFETIME ACCESS · 48-HOUR MONEY-BACK

Where this *came from*.

PULLED FROM

The handfastings I have tied into NYC and Hudson Valley ceremonies, with the binding technique I now teach every couple up front. The structure is field-tested over *more than 300 ceremonies*.

WHAT IS IN THE KIT

The full word-for-word ceremony framework, with this handfasting script and its diagrammed binding sequence, plus every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in. All of it in *the Couple's Ceremony Kit*.

USE THIS FREELY

Print it, mark it up, hand a copy to whoever is reading at the altar, run it at the rehearsal.

IF YOU DO ONE

Email me. I read every one.
hello@robynashleyweddings.com.

Marked from a working ritual, with the technique and cues I use at the front of the aisle.

About this ritual, and where it has been tied.