

— A GUIDE TO —  
**CHANGING YOUR  
LAST NAME**



wandering wilde

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## a guide to changing your last name



# INTRODUCTION



Okay ladies (or gentlemen!) – changing your last name is not easy. If you're choosing the traditional route of stealing his last name because he stole your heart or if you're both changing names to keep up with modern times, this guide will be a life saver!

As a recent bride myself, let me tell you, it feels like it never ends. Just yesterday, (almost five months after I said, 'I do') I finally changed my car's title. That thought never even crossed my mind when I was planning the wedding and working on the legal documents afterwards.

1ST thing is first: **get the marriage license**. There's a huge difference between marriage licenses and certificates, and each state has a different set of guidelines for how to apply for each document.

What is a marriage license?

**DEFINITION** A marriage license is a legal document obtained by a couple prior to marriage. Once the license is signed (before or after the ceremony) and returned by an officiant to the county, a marriage certificate is issued.

It is important to note that you will need to obtain a license in the state you are getting married in, but most states do not require you to be residents of said state. This means if you're planning your destination wedding in the Rocky Mountains or from the beaches of Florida you will need to check that state's guidelines and laws.





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### Other things to note:

- Some states have a waiting period once you apply for the license.
- Each license will expire at some point if it has not been turned in, pay attention to the deadlines! Some are 30 days, others are 90 days for example.
- The officiant, two witnesses, and you as the happy couple need to sign the license post-ceremony.

Getting married out of the country? Destination weddings are definitely beautiful and **#goals** as the young kids say these days, but like U.S. laws, foreign marriage laws also vary among locations. **Travel.State.Gov** is a great resource if you're getting married outside of the country. Another great resource for couples in this situation includes **findlaw.com**.



Here's a generalized breakdown of what you'll need to bring or know in any of the states:

- » **Proof of Identity (i.e. valid driver's license, state-issued ID card, birth certificate, passport, military ID, alien registration card, or social security card)**
- » **Divorced? You'll need to bring a certificate of divorce to provide record that you are legally able to remarry.**
- » **If you're under 18, you need parental or legal guardian consent.**
- » **Cash**

There is usually a fee to apply for a marriage license; it can be anywhere from \$35 to more than \$100. Most offices charge an extra fee if you're using credit card, so be prepared with cash in hand.

After all is said and done, and you've gotten all the required signatures on the license, the document needs to be sent or taken into the county or state agency that records marriage certificates like a register of deeds office. In many cases, the couple doesn't send it in themselves, the officiant does. You'll be mailed a certified copy or you can pick up your copy in person as well.





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Something to consider: **You may want more than one certified copy.**

Considering it is the one document you will need to provide for EVERY STEP hereafter in the name change process, it never hurts to have two on hand.

...but now that the fun part is over, it's time to dig into the order of things. Here are some of the essential tasks to cross off the list first:

- ☐ **Update your social security card**
- ☐ **Get a new driver's license/ Voter's registration**
- ☐ **Obtain a new passport**
- ☐ **Tell your employer**
- ☐ **Update your bank accounts and credit cards**
- ☐ **Alert your insurance**
- ☐ **Change the title/registration on your vehicle**
- ☐ **Update city bills and auto-pay accounts like mortgage/ rent, utilities, student loans, car loans, etc.**
- ☐ **Let your doctor's office(s) know/change emergency contact if desired**





And then of course there's the easy minute stuff like social media accounts and emails. Even though they're at the "bottom" of the list, they end up getting taken care of right away because of how easy they are to change. It can seem like the list is never ending, and you may discover a new change six months after if you're like me.

Just whatever you do, don't change your name and phone number at the same time (\*insert nervous chuckle here !) About a month after I got married, I switched phone plans and decided to get a local number, but I didn't realize how much I hadn't changed from my maiden name so everything was twice as complex.

If all this seems overwhelming, there are also some online resources you can pay to update all the information for you! Crazy what people on the internet have come up with these days, but super convenient.

**Changing your name can take some time, but just take it day by day and try not to get too frustrated or fed-up with the process as it's symbolic to your next journey as a freshly married couple!**

wandering all day