

Marrying a Foreigner in South Africa – Practical Checklist

This checklist is designed to help couples prepare for marrying a foreign national in South Africa. Requirements can vary by case and by Department of Home Affairs office, so always confirm details in advance.

1. Confirm eligibility

- Both parties are 18 years or older (or have required consent if a minor).
- Neither party is currently married to someone else.
- Marriage type confirmed (civil marriage, civil union, or customary marriage).
- Authorised marriage officer identified for the chosen marriage type.

2. Identity and immigration documents

- South African partner: valid South African ID (green ID book or smart ID card).
- Foreign partner: valid passport.
- Foreign partner: proof of legal stay in South Africa (entry stamp and visa).

3. Proof the foreign partner is free to marry

- Letter of No Impediment or Certificate of No Legal Impediment from the foreign partner's country of citizenship.
- Official sworn translation if the document is not in English.

4. If either partner was previously married

- Final court-issued divorce decree, or
- Death certificate of former spouse (if widowed).

5. Home Affairs marriage interview

- Book appointment with the Department of Home Affairs.
- Attend the marriage interview (may involve separate interviews).
- Bring all original documents to the interview.

6. DHA permission letter

- Receive written permission letter from the Department of Home Affairs.
- Provide the DHA letter to the marriage officer before the wedding.

7. Marriage day requirements

- Original identity and status documents available.
- Two witnesses present with valid identification.
- Marriage register and forms completed and signed.

8. After the marriage

- Apply for abridged marriage certificate (often issued shortly after the ceremony).
- Apply for unabridged marriage certificate if the marriage will be used abroad.
- Arrange legalisation or authentication if required for foreign use.

Tip: Start early. Delays most commonly occur due to foreign documents, Home Affairs appointment availability, and missing prior-marriage records.