

The reasonable and clear guide to charging for a wedding

It's our privilege and our duty to celebrate weddings. When couples come to us, we want their day to be personal, meaningful, legally binding and beautiful. This need not cost them a fortune.

1. When a couple marries in church it is a privilege for them to pay! They become part of a centuries old tradition by contributing financially to the ministry costs of their wedding. In so doing, they help sustain Christian service in that community.

2. To simply marry in church in 2016, everything that is legally required costs less than £500. The statutory fee 2016, [as set out in the fees table](#), is all that a couple is obliged to pay by law to marry in church in 2016. Other things, like flowers, organists, bells and choirs, along with the services of verger, are all optional extras in law.

For example...

If you pay a Verger to ensure all is clean and tidy on the day, it's the couple's choice to agree to this if they are paying for it. If so, the cost should be reasonable and clear to them.

3. Additional costs for these optional extras must be based on real expense incurred by the church.

4. It's not lawful to charge a "facility fee" for the church's beautiful setting or internal atmosphere, or to charge an "administration fee" to cover the costs of the wedding to the church. Legally all these costs are to be met from the PCC part of the statutory fee.

5. We strongly recommend that the church sets out itemised costs in quote form, so it's easy for a couple to see what they are paying for before they go ahead.

For example...

A couple may wish to book their flowers through the people who usually deliver this in your church. But they shouldn't feel obliged to. If the church provides the flowers, the cost should be reasonable and clear to the couple

6. When it comes to taking a deposit for a wedding, our legal advice hinges on the fact that the statutory fee is payment for a legal service and in law only becomes due for payment when the wedding has actually taken place.

So:

A couple cannot be required to pay any part of the statutory fee before the wedding, but if they wish to, you may take a part-payment towards the statutory fee before the wedding. That part payment must be returned in full if the wedding does not take place. Operating a pre-payment system like this also increases the incentive on the couple to let you know if their plans change.

7. You can take a non-returnable deposit against an optional additional service if the couple agrees to pay for that service – for example to secure the services of an organist who might otherwise be able to play elsewhere. It is good practice to make sure everything is written down when you take a deposit or a part pre-payment, so there is a clear record of what's been agreed at the time. We suggest that the reason for any deposit is set out in writing to save any possible conflict later if different people remember different things.

8. An annually-renewable Church Copyright Licence covers most songs reproduced for wedding ceremonies and also permits live music during the service (including worship) to be recorded. If the wedding is recorded a musician can charge extra, according to their association guidelines (but only if your local contract supports this practise). It is also open to organists to waive this as a gift to the couple. [See the Church of England's press release](#) for more on this, and [press coverage](#).

9. If the wedding is filmed any videography fee charged by the church should only reflect the real expense incurred by the church by having a video camera in the building – wear and tear, etc. Given the tiny size of video equipment today it is very likely that this will be nil. In any case it can be waived at your discretion.

10. Once the final church bill has been agreed, some couples are still keen to offer a donation to the church. Donations (but not fees or other charges) may be gift-aided. While these gifts are very gratefully received, no couple should be made to feel under any obligation. To read more about parochial fees, [visit the main Church of England web site](#).