

HANDBASTING

You will need:

Two pieces of material, between 1.5- 2m long (width is less important but 5cm is decent). If you'd like to include other people (kids, parents, dogs etc) just add another ribbon/piece of material. As for your material, if you've bought handfasting ribbons for your wedding, you can use them but you really can use anything you can tie a knot in (scarves, ties, dressing gown cords, ribbon, climbing rope, the shirt you wore when you first met/first gig/got engaged, something sentimental that reminds you of better times or beautiful people) or create a patchwork ribbon from little bits and pieces.

Why you're doing this:

Handfasting is a traditional ceremony that signified an intent to marry. Imagine it's five hundred years ago, there were all manner of plagues ravaging the land and people who could conduct legal weddings were few and far between. This was very inconvenient if you were young and in love and impatient so you could be bound together by family, using tartan or cloth, a symbol to everyone that you had made a commitment to be together, to live as family and be legally married within the year. Life was much simpler in Ye Olde Times.

To mark your un-wedding date, you're going to make that same commitment to continue to be together, to be each other's family. You're celebrating a date that was important for such a long time, one that you'd looked forward to for ages. It's been emotional, time to let it go.

So mark today, like you would any big life moment. Celebrate what your original wedding date meant to you both, why you chose it, remember the excitement you felt when you booked your venue, ordered your dress, talk about why you are getting married, how brilliant you both are and toast your future. And tomorrow, when you wake up, you have a wedding to look forward to, not one to miss.

What to do:

[Here's a short video to keep you right](#) or you can read through instructions below. A wee practise run wouldn't go amiss if you're planning on inviting a virtual audience.

If you're doing this with help from another person, you could ask them just to tie ribbons round your joined hands. This has the advantage of being able to hold your wedding rings in your joined hands as you're being handfasted.

If, however, it's just the two of you, this is the easiest way to do it:

Standing opposite each other, with your right hand, hold on to the other person's right forearm, like you're making an Unbreakable Vow, Potterheads. Or like this, Muggles:



Person 1 (P1) holds on to one set of ends of the ribbons in the hand by Person 2 (P2)'s elbow.. Hold on tight. P1, take the loose ends in your free hand and pass them under your arms to P2:



P2, take the loose ends in your free hand and pass them over your joined arms to P1. Loop the material loosely. This is important. If your loops are too tight, you'll end up in a right fankle.



Repeat if you can. When you've run out of material to loop, P2 takes the loose ends and holds on tight (in the hand next to P1's elbow)



Don't let go of your ends! If you're going to read vows, have a reading or say anything to each other, now is the best time to do it.

Pull your hands back, parallel to each other and through the loops and tie your knot. Take it slowly and try not to drop a tie like Flora!



Looks complicated but it's really simple. Give it a try and remember not to lose your knot!

Things you can do to accompany your handfast:

Write down an agreed number of nice things about each other. They can be funny, kind, silly, loving, a private joke, whatever you like- write them on bits of paper and fold them up and swap bundles. Take turns opening what you've written.

Invite other people to join you via Zoom/Skype and get them to pop party poppers or champagne when you 'tie the knot'. Give them something to say and assign them part of a reading.

Choose a verse to read. Maybe adapt it first to suit your relationship. I've included examples at the end but you could easily adapt 'These are the hands....' to be more about you and what you want to say.

If you wrote vows, why not read them to each other as you're handfasted. You've got ages to think of new ones!

Make some promises. Promise that when this is all over, you'll go on long non-government sanctioned walks, book a holiday, get excited about your new wedding date, get a puppy, eat in restaurants (remember them?) and see shows, celebrate all the exciting things and the mundane moments because you do them together. Write your own promises together.

Go for a walk together and have one of those great big chats about life. They always help.

Rings- you could thread your rings onto your ribbons. They might end up stuck in the knot but as long as you remember where they are! Or, you could exchange rings before you handfast.

Poems/readings

If you're reading these yourselves, change them to suit eg 'as together we build our future'
If you've asked people to join you via Zoom or Skype, you could ask them to read out a line in turn.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you,
that are holding yours on your wedding day, as you promise to love each other today,
tomorrow, and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the
years, and with the slightest touch, will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief fills your mind.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes; tears of sorrow, and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children.

These are the hands that will help you to hold your family as one.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

When the one whose hand you're holding
Is the one one who holds your heart
When the one whose eyes you gaze into
Gives your hopes and dreams their start,
When the one you think of first and last
Is the one who holds you tight,
And the things you plan together
Make the whole world seem just right,
When the one whom you believe in
puts their faith and trust in you,
You've found the one and only love
You'll share your whole life through.

As our hands are bound together now, so our lives and spirits are joined in a union of love and trust. For always, we hold in our own hands the fate of our union. Above us are stars and below us is earth. Like stars our love should be a constant source of light, and like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow.

May our hands be blessed this day. May we always hold each other. May we have the strength to hang on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. May we continue to build a relationship founded in love, and rich in caring. May our hands be healer, protector, shelter, and guide for each other.

I promise to hold you tight through both good times and bad, without fear and without hesitation. I will hold your hand and you will hold mine and we will live, not happily ever after, but happily, and lovingly, together.

From this day forward, I choose you to be my best friend, my only love and my future husband/wife. I choose to live, play and laugh with, to work by your side and dream in your arms and to always fill your heart and feed your soul.

In a time when nothing is more certain than change,
the commitment of two people to one another has become difficult and rare.
Yet, by its scarcity, the beauty and value of this exchange have only been enhanced
