

Diocese of Richmond Guidelines for Marriage Preparation – Structure and Schedule

	What?	When?	Where/How?	Why?
Proximate Preparation	Couple meets initially with parish priest or deacon	8-12 months prior to desired wedding date	Face-to-face meeting ... begin planning the wedding Liturgy.	To set wedding date; review marriage prep schedule. Special needs or considerations identified (e.g. remarriage, convalidation)
	Couple completes FOCCUS inventory. Schedules follow-up session(s) with priest or trained parish facilitator	As soon as possible after meeting parish priest or deacon	Usually within a parish program with a priest, deacon or mentor couple or individual. (Note: FOCCUS is available in multiple languages. A parish may choose to use a different pre-marital inventory (e.g. Prepare and Enrich)	To assess strengths and of couple's relationship and establish a strategy for growth
	Couple attends an approved pre-marriage educational program	Scheduled and completed early in the process.	Catholic Engaged Encounter; Catholic Charities; Christian Marriage Formation; UNITAS; Marriage Mentoring, God's Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage, etc.	To give couples an understanding of Catholic teaching on marriage and sexuality. To help couples fine-tune practical skills such as communication, conflict management, decision-making, finances...
	Couple completes Natural Family Planning instruction	Completed before wedding	Classes with certified NFP instructors held throughout diocese; correspondence course; or online training. <u>Where classes are not currently available, the couple attends a comprehensive introductory session.</u>	To ensure couples understand and have the skills to follow Church teaching on openness to life and responsible parenthood.
	Couple has final meeting with parish priest or deacon	As needed, after other components have been completed	Phone or face-to-face meeting	To discuss any issues raised so far and obtain referrals for additional counseling if needed
	Immediate Preparation	Catholic engaged encouraged to receive Reconciliation	Final 2 months before wedding	At parish during established Reconciliation times or during personal appointment with the pastor.
Couple meets finally with parish priest or deacon		Final 2 months before wedding	Meeting with priest or deacon	To plan wedding liturgy