

BBC Learning English  
6 Minute English  
*Sham weddings*

NB: This is not a word for word transcript



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**Yvonne:** I'm Yvonne Archer, this is 6 Minute English and Rob has joined me for today's programme. Hello, Rob!

**Rob:** Hello, Yvonne, good to be here!

**Yvonne:** So, with the royal wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton just a few days away, I thought we'd talk about weddings – but weddings of a different kind. Any ideas, Rob?

**Rob:** Hmm. Is it your wedding?

**Yvonne:** Well, before I reveal all – you'd better answer today's question!

**Rob:** OK then – fire away.

**Yvonne:** OK. How long was the world's longest-lasting marriage?

- a) 79 years
- b) 82 years or
- c) 86 years

**Rob:** Hmm. I'll have a guess at 79 years – I think 86 and 82 years is just a little bit too long.

**Yvonne:** Mm. As usual, I'll tell you the correct answer at the end of today's '6 Minute English! Now, back to weddings, and today, we're talking about '**sham weddings**'. Rob, would you explain what 'a sham wedding' is for us, please?

**Rob:** Yes, of course. Well, something that's 'a sham' isn't genuine – it's not real. So, for example, in a sham wedding, one of the people getting married may be doing it for money.

**Yvonne:** And you've got two more examples there for us haven't you, Rob - adjectives that describe something that isn't real or genuine.

**Rob:** Yes, we can say 'fake' or '**phoney**' - which is an American English word. So, 'a fake wedding', 'a phoney wedding'.

**Yvonne:** Thanks. Now, it's not just the people who are actually marrying each other who are guilty in the event of a sham wedding. Alex Brown, a Church of England minister was found guilty of conducting sham marriages at his church. Here's June Kelly, the BBC's Home Affairs Correspondent, on what happened to him:

### **Insert 1: June Kelly**

**He was jailed for joining together 360 bogus brides and grooms over a four year period. Now, if a couple want a C of E service and one of them is a non-European, they'd have to apply for a common licence first; greater scrutiny for them and more controls on the clergy.**

**Yvonne:** Alex Brown was actually jailed. The BBC's June Kelly describes what he did over a four year period as: 'joining together 360 **bogus** brides and grooms'. Of course, 'brides and grooms' are women and men who are about to be joined

together in marriage. But can you explain what 'bogus' brides and grooms are for us please, Rob?

**Rob:** Well, 'bogus' is another adjective we can use to describe something that's not genuine. For example, false information might be described as 'bogus'; 'I was given a bogus address and phone number' for example.

**Yvonne:** Yes, that's a good example. As we heard, if a couple wants to have a C of E wedding - that's short for 'a Church of England wedding' - and one of them is non-European, they now have to apply for a common licence. Why, Rob?

**Rob:** Well, applying for a common licence means greater controls on the clergy - that's the vicars and ministers - so they can avoid conducting sham marriages. And there will be greater **scrutiny** for couples - more thorough background checks on them - to make sure they're not bogus brides and grooms.

**Yvonne:** The Church of England, together with the UK Border Agency, has developed guidance to help stop vicars being exploited - or unfairly used - by people who want them to carry out sham marriages. The British Immigration Minister, Damian Green MP, explains more about what he thinks the guidance will achieve.

### **Insert 2: Damian Green MP, British Immigration Minister**

**There's been more freedom for vicars to act in the past. So what this does is make it necessary for them to take action, which will mean that anyone trying to marry in church - which the criminal gangs that lie behind sham marriages have often exploited as a fairly easy loophole - that loophole will now be gone.**

**Yvonne:** Damian Green believes that **a loophole** will now be gone, making it much more difficult for bogus couples, vicars and criminal gangs to carry out sham weddings. So, how would you describe 'a loophole', Rob?

**Rob:** A loophole. Well, that's something that allows people to escape punishment even if they're doing something wrong, because the law doesn't specifically say that it's illegal. For example, people sometimes escape paying taxes because of a loophole in the law.

**Yvonne:** And it's a loophole that has lead to an increase - a rise - in the number of sham weddings taking place here in the UK. So, we've mentioned a Royal Wedding, a sham wedding and now for the world's longest marriage! Rob, how many years did you say the longest lasting marriage went on for?

**Rob** And I said 79 years. Was I right?

**Yvonne:** No, it was actually 86 years!

**Rob:** Wow, that's a long time!

**Yvonne:** It's an American couple that's been married for 86 years and eleven months.

**Rob:** Congratulations!

**Yvonne:** Now, as your reward, Rob, you get to remind us of some of the language we've heard today!

**Rob:** Certainly, OK! We heard:  
a sham wedding

phoney

bogus

scrutiny

a loophole

**Yvonne:** Beautifully read, Rob! Now, that's all we've got time for on today's "6 Minute English" - but we hope you'll join us again soon.

**Both:** Goodbye!

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>a sham wedding</b>	a wedding which is false or not real, perhaps arranged to gain money dishonestly
<b>phoney</b>	fake or false
<b>bogus</b>	not genuine
<b>scrutiny</b>	careful observation or examination of something
<b>a loophole</b>	a way of avoiding a rule or law

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