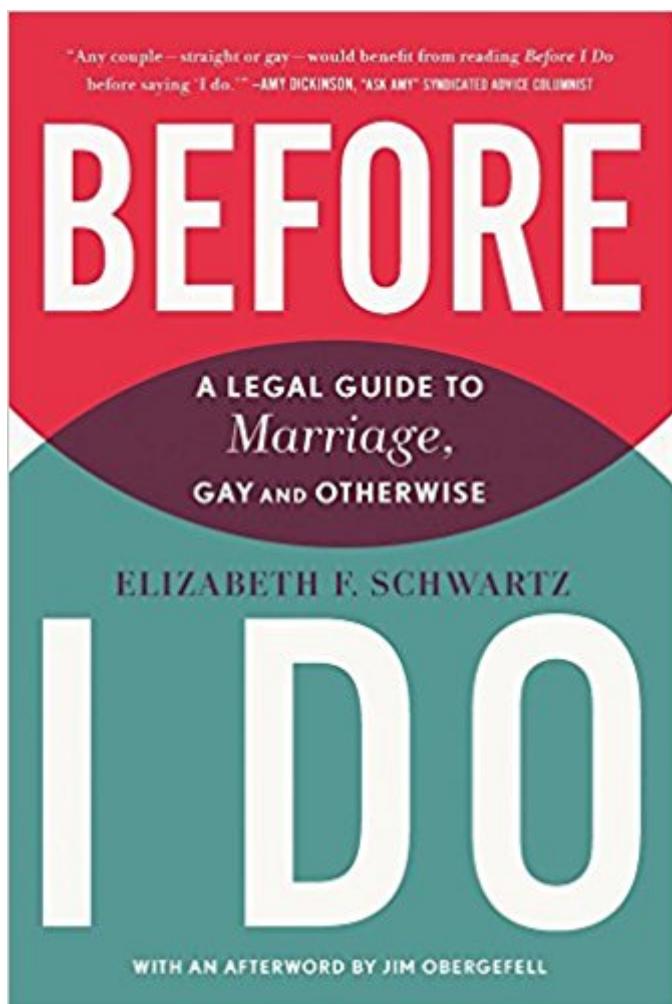


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# Before I Do: A Legal Guide To Marriage, Gay And Otherwise



## Synopsis

Not long ago, same-sex couples had to jump through endless hoops to make their relationships even close to legal. For the most part, those days are over. Same-sex couples no longer have to operate as outlaws--they too can have in-laws! But here's the rub: many gay and lesbian couples, accustomed to living off-grid, are so thrilled to have the benefits of marriage that they gleefully jump into marriage without fully understanding the consequences. In her first book, *Before I Do*, leading gay rights attorney Elizabeth F. Schwartz spells out the range of practical considerations couples should address before tying the knot. She explores the rights marriage provides and those it does not. With cameos from some of the most prominent LGBT professionals, Schwartz explains all of the implications of marriage from name changes and getting a license to taxes, insurance, Social Security, and much more. Substantial chapters on estate planning, pre- and post-nuptial agreements, and organizing finances make *Before I Do* relevant for all couples, young and older, and a crucial handbook for anyone considering marriage--because, as Schwartz explains, just because you can get married does not mean you should.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for *Before I Do*: "This book is essential for LGBT couples as they explore the practicalities and legalities of a civil union and it's well rounded enough that straight couples may find it useful as well." Library Journal (starred) "During my thirty years of covering the gay beat for the Miami Herald, never did I imagine the need for a marriage guide for LGBT couples. Yet today nothing is more urgent. *Before I Do* guides all couples, gay and otherwise, about the responsibilities of marriage. Ignore it at your peril." Steve Rothaus, The Miami Herald

"Anyone in a relationship should read this book! Schwartz lays out the laws that affect relationships with stunning clarity and brevity, and her humor, humanity, and graphics make it a compelling read."Mary Bonauto, Civil Rights Project Director, GLAD "Elizabeth Schwartz's new book is a must-read for couples who are thinking about marrying and want to get it right."Serene Jones, president of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York "Few decisions are more consequential than marriage. Before marrying, there are a few legal questions you should ask to give your 'I do' the surest chance of longevity and satisfaction. Schwartz's book is the best insurance for your own 'happily ever after.'Kate Kendell, Esq., executive director, National Center for Lesbian Rights "LGBT lawyer Elizabeth Schwartz has written a colorful and comprehensive guide to marriage, using real-world examples from her legal case files, and including helpful contributions by experts in the field. Her book covers every conceivable aspect of matrimony, including the choice not to marry. Any couple straight or gay would benefit from reading *Before I Do before saying 'I do.'*"Amy Dickinson, "Ask Amy" syndicated advice columnist "At last, a sensible guide to practical issues facing all couples considering marriage. Schwartz tackles tough issues that too many couples avoid discussing and offers sensible advice that can be helpful to anyone in a relationshiphowever that may be defined."Rabbi Stuart Weinblatt

Elizabeth F. Schwartz has been practicing law since 1997 and is one of Florida's best known advocates for the legal rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Her practice focuses on family formation (adoption, insemination, and surrogacy), divorce, estate planning, and probate. Schwartz lives in Miami.

Having worked in the legal field 6 years and currently in my 14th year as a mediator, I find *BEFORE I DO* an essential book for ANY same-sex couples contemplating marriage. It brings up many potential "issues" that not many, including myself, would have anticipated. In particular, I was surprised to find out about the "marriage penalty", and appreciate how the author gives real life scenarios. Being a retired military member and a current federal employee retiring in 5 years, this is my "go to" source for information regarding how to protect my military retirement pay and my future federal pension. This book is well written in easy to understand language with a bit of humor. I read *BEFORE I DO* cover-to-cover in one sitting, and have recommended it to all my friends, many of whom work in the legal field. It's an enlightening experience not to be missed. Elizabeth covers it all - the good and the bad", with very descriptive examples.

This book is a MUST read for anyone (gay or straight) that is contemplating marriage. "Before I Do" succinctly captures the myriad of financial and legal implications that one needs to consider before tying the knot. It's a fun read that also contains relevant real world accounts of what happens when marrying couples fail to plan. Financial professionals working with gay couples would also greatly benefit from this excellent book! Elizabeth's sharp wit and humor humanize and simplify what can often be very complicated and intimidating topics. Great book!!

What an amazing resource and guide. Just as the description of the book says, this book is helpful for anyone who is married or thinking about getting married - LGBT or otherwise. And if you plan to not get married, it is chock full of helpful advice to plan for your future. As a young professional male in his 30s who has discussed marriage with my partner, I have found that through reading this book, there is so much more that I have learned and will be planning for before taking the marriage leap. Thank you for writing this and sharing your expertise with all of us, Liz.

my mom heard about this book on some local radio show or something and then got me this book when my BF and i got engaged. at first i thought it was for gay couples only but then started reading. dude this is universal sh\*t!! for one thing, i had no idea that we don't merge credit. i heard getting married would make my student loan interest rates go down. and the tax stuff was all news to me and glad i know it now.i love the questions to ask each other - my BF have learned so crazy stuff about each other i can't believe we didn't know already.anyway, lots of really good stuff in this book. it's not uptight lawyer-ese either. it's an easy read and funny and even has pictures/graphics to explain stuff! who doesn't love pictures?? thanks mom!

I knew that Liz Schwartz was an amazing attorney and advocate. She's helped so many LGBT clients build and safeguard their families. Unfortunately, she's also had to help many LGBT clients deal with problems that could have been pre-empted with better legal planning. "Before I Do" is a very practical, readable manual that helps people think about issues that they should consider before they marry. Talking about finances, having children, and what happens in case of certain contingencies can be difficult. This book makes those discussions much less difficult and more constructive.

Not only an excellent guide on addressing the legal implications for those, gay and straight, about to

commit matrimony, but a thoughtful approach to preventing conflicts and costly litigation should things not end happily ever after. I just gave this as a gift to a colleague at the moving-in stage who hopefully will avoid the ugly ordeal I just experienced in Florida's whoever-has-the-most-money-wins civil court system. Well written with great examples of how the hard-won right to marry should be cherished and protected.

This book is a great resource for my clients who are thinking about getting married. I've referred this book to a number of couples to read before deciding if they want to get married and if they want a prenuptial agreement and if so, what they want to put in it. The stories told by experienced divorce attorneys add to the depth of the book.

This book is a must-read for anyone concerned with their future. I quickly read it and passed it along to my sister. Highly recommend.

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