

## **Before The Wedding**

An engagement is certainly good cause for celebration. Here are a few instances in which fine social stationery will serve you well before the wedding.

The news of your engagement may be heralded by engagement announcements sent to friends and family, and many parents want to share the excitement by hosting engagement parties. Relatives or friends of the bride may host a bridal shower or bridal tea, continuing the tradition of helping the bride and groom start their new lives together and of honoring the bride.

Once a date, time and location has been set, you may need to consider sending save-the-date cards which are especially helpful for your out-of-town guests.

And for the rehearsal dinner -- the final event before the wedding, invitations also may be issued to the members of your bridal party, their spouses or dates, and out-of-town guests.

## **Engagement Announcements**

Once you become engaged, you may want to share your excitement with others by officially announcing it. The announcement is traditionally made by your parents as soon after the engagement as possible. While there are no strict rules regarding the wording of engagement announcements, they are usually pretty straightforward.

## **Save-the-Date Cards**

Weekends during the holiday and summer seasons tend to be busy times for some people. If you are planning your wedding for one of these seasons, you may wish to send save-the-date cards. These cards, sent at least three months before the wedding, advise family and friends of your wedding plans and allow them to take your wedding date into consideration when making their own plans. Save-the-date cards are also sent when a number of overseas guests are invited and when a wedding is held in a resort area, since guests might like to plan a vacation around your wedding. They may be sent to all guests but it is especially important for out-of-town guests to receive them as they will have to make travel arrangements. However, if they are sent only to your out-of-town guests and your out-of-town guests speak to your in-town guests, your in-town guests might feel slighted, thinking that they are not going to be invited to your wedding.

## **The Rehearsal Dinner**

Custom suggests that the groom's parents host the rehearsal dinner and, therefore, issue its invitations. The rehearsal dinner takes place on the night before the wedding and is given as a courtesy to the bride's family. The rehearsal dinner invitations are usually worded formally, but many times just first names are used. This less formal style can be a way to let guests know how you, your fiancé, and your fiancé's parents wish to be addressed. Traditionally, the rehearsal dinner was held for just the wedding party in order to get them fed after the rehearsal -- and to give the bride's mother one less thing to be responsible for. While many rehearsal dinners are still reserved for the wedding party, others have expanded to include the wedding party, their spouses or dates, and out-of-town guests.

## **Wedding Invitations**

The traditional wedding invitation has changed little over the years. Its essential purpose is to invite your guests and to tell them where and when your wedding is being held. Most other information is superfluous.

There are a number of basic points of etiquette that should be followed when wording a traditional wedding invitation. The following section covers the correct wording line by line.

### **Bride's Name**

The bride's given names are used on invitations issued by her parents. Neither her title nor her last name is used since it is assumed that she has never married and has the same last name as her parents. If her last name is different from her parents' last name, she includes her last name on her invitations.

### **Groom's Name**

The groom always uses his full name, preceded by his title. There are no abbreviations, except for "Mr." All other titles, such as "Doctor" and "The Reverend" should be written out, although "Doctor" may be abbreviated when used with a long name. If "Doctor" is used more than once on an invitation, its use should be consistent. If it is necessary to abbreviate it with one of the names, it should be abbreviated with all names.

Initials are never properly used on formal wedding invitations. Men who dislike their middle names and use their middle initial instead should be discouraged from doing so. If your fiancé refuses to use his middle name, it is better to omit his middle name entirely than to use just his initial.

### **Date Line**

The day of the week and the date are written out in full. Abbreviations and numerals are not used. The day of the week is first, followed by the date of the month and the month itself. The day of the week may be preceded by "on." The use of "on," however, is unnecessary and may make the line too long.

### **Year Line**

Since wedding invitations are sent four to six weeks before the wedding, it is not necessary to include the year. Your guests will assume that the invitation is for the next August twenty-third and not for some other August twenty-third in the distant future.

Although it is not necessary to include the year, it is not improper to do so. Your invitations will, undoubtedly, be saved by family and friends as a remembrance and may even be passed down to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Including the year on your invitation will help your descendants remember your wedding day.

### **Time Line**

The time of the wedding is presented on one line and all letters are lowercase. If your wedding is being held at six o'clock, the time line simply reads, "at six o'clock." The time line for weddings held at six thirty reads, "at half after six o'clock." The time line can be used to designate the time of day by using either "in the morning," "in the afternoon," or "in the evening."

Invitations for weddings held at eight, nine, or ten o'clock should designate morning or evening since weddings are held at those times during both mornings and evenings. Many Roman Catholic weddings, for example, are held at those times in the mornings since most Nuptial Masses are held before noon, while some Jewish weddings are held at those times on Saturday evenings so the guests and participants can wait until after sundown to travel on the Sabbath.

"Afternoon" begins at twelve o'clock. "Evening" starts at six o'clock.

### **Ceremony & Reception at Same Location**

When a wedding ceremony and reception are held in the same location, a line reading either "and afterwards at the reception" or "and afterward at the reception" is included on the invitations. This line appears at the end of the body of the invitation, beneath the city and state.

Many years ago, the reply request was engraved in the lower left-hand corner of invitations to weddings for which the ceremony and reception were held in the same place. This practice is gradually being replaced by reply cards and by reception cards, whose sole purpose is to give the reply information.

### **Street Address**

The accepted rule on the use of the street address is that its inclusion is optional unless there is more than one facility with that name in that town, in which case it is mandatory. The street address is also used when the facility is not well known or when there are a number of out-of-town guests. Since giving the street address is an additional courtesy to your guests, it is almost always proper. The only time its use is not proper is when direction and map cards are used. Then the street address is redundant. Including the street address, however, adds an extra line to the invitation. Most invitations, especially those engraved in script lettering styles, look better with fewer lines of copy, so before you decide to include the address consider the aesthetics.

### **City & State**

The last line in the main body of the invitation shows the names of the city and state in which your wedding is being held. Both city and state are included, and are separated by a comma.

### **Enclosure Cards**

Wedding invitations are typically mailed with other enclosure cards to help custom-tailor your wedding. Each enclosure card serves a distinct purpose as an aid for your guests. Some of the more common enclosure cards include reply cards and return envelopes, reception cards and ceremony cards. Other enclosures that may be helpful include direction and map cards, accommodation cards, transportation cards, pew cards, within-the-ribbon cards, admission cards and at-home cards.

## **Accommodation Cards**

Accommodation cards are enclosed with the invitations sent to out-of-town guests who are unfamiliar with the area and need to make hotel reservations. They list the names and phone numbers of nearby hotels. If you are paying for your guests' rooms, a notation to that effect is made on the cards.

## **At-Home Cards**

Family and friends can be made aware of your new address when at-home cards are included with your invitations and announcements. At-home cards are small enclosure cards whose card stock, lettering style, and ink color match the invitations with which they are sent. They alert people of the address at which you will be residing and the date after which you will be there. Although not done very often in the past, many couples now have their phone numbers engraved on their at-home cards.

The wording for at-home cards sent with announcements is different from the wording for at-home cards sent with the invitations. At-home cards sent with announcements show your names together as "Mr. and Mrs." since you are already married when they are sent. When sent with invitations your names are not used since you are not yet married and cannot use "Mr. and Mrs."

## **Directions & Map Cards**

Out of town guest will appreciate receiving direction cards or map cards. Direction cards give simple yet explicit directions to your wedding, while map cards are maps with the routes to your wedding highlighted. Map cards generally feature major roads and landmarks to help your guests find their way. When direction cards or map cards are used, the street address is not give on the invitations.

As with other enclosures, direction cards and map cards should complement the wedding invitations. They should be engraved in black ink on cards that match the invitations. To make them easier to read while driving, a sans serif (block) lettering style is usually used.

Direction cards and map cards are usually sent with the wedding invitations but may be sent afterwards in an envelope or as a postcard to those who accept your

invitation. When sent afterwards, a line reading, "We are looking forward to having you attend" may be added to the top of the cards.

## **Reception Cards**

Reception cards are used whenever the wedding ceremony and reception are held in different places. Because they are at different locations, they are considered separate events. Therefore, they each require their own invitations. Reception cards are not necessary when the ceremony and the reception are held at the same place.

The first line on the reception card indicates the occasion. It reads "Breakfast" when occurring before one o'clock (regardless of the menu) and "Reception" when held at one o'clock or later.

The next line indicates the time and usually reads, "immediately following the ceremony." This phrase should not be taken literally as it simply means that the reception will start in, more or less, the amount of time it takes to get from the ceremony to the reception. If the reception is scheduled to start two or more hours after the ceremony ends, the phrase "immediately following the ceremony" should be replaced with the appropriated time. The line may then read, "at eight o'clock."

The name of the facility at which the reception will take place is given on the third line. The address is usually shown on the fourth line, although it is omitted whenever the facility is very well known or when directions and map cards are used.

The city and state follow on the next line if they are not the same as those shown on the invitation. If the city and state do not appear on the reception card, it is assumed that the reception is in the same town as the wedding. Likewise, if the city is different but the state is the same, you need only mention the city. These are options. You may, however, under any circumstances use both city and state.

## **Reply Cards & Envelopes**

Reply cards can be engraved in a number of different formats. All formats, however, share similar features. Spaces are always provided for the guests' names and for their responses. A request for a response is always included as well, usually before a specific date. The name and address of whoever will receive the replies is engraved on the face of the reply envelopes.

## **Divorced Parents**

Some of the most difficult situations in wording wedding invitations occur when the parents of the bride are divorced. There are simple and straightforward rules to handle these situations but sometimes emotions take control of circumstances and render these rules inadequate. You may find yourself unable to follow the prescribed rules of etiquette to a tee for fear of offending a family member or creating additional, unnecessary tensions. If you find yourself in this situation, you may choose to go a different route and find wording that is both appropriate and innocuous. Etiquette is intended as a guide to good taste and to facilitate good relationships and the comfort of everyone. Therefore, in such an instance it is entirely appropriate for you to stray from the accepted rules.

The proper way to word an invitation when the bride's parents are divorced is to list the names of the bride's parents at the top of the invitation. Her mother's name is on the first line and her father's name is on the line beneath it. The lines are not separated by "and."

### **Traditional wording**

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Philip Smith  
request the honor of your presence  
at the marriage of their daughter  
Susan Anne

*(this phrase is reserved for church weddings)*

to

Mr. John Edward Jones  
Saturday the nineteenth of July  
two thousand and seven  
at three o'clock in the afternoon  
Saint Edwards Christian Church  
123 Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia

### **Issued by bride and groom**

Kristin Marie Barnett  
and  
Thomas Lyon Rider  
request the honour of your presence  
at their wedding  
Saturday the twenty ninth of April  
two thousand and six  
at six o'clock in the evening  
Saint Matthias' Episcopal Church  
123 Huguenot Road  
Midlothian, Virginia

### **Including both sets of parents**

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Smith  
request the pleasure of your company  
at the marriage of their daughter  
Susan Anne

*(this phrase is used for weddings not in a church)*

to

Mr. John Edward Jones  
son of  
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Alan Jones  
Saturday the first of April  
two thousand and ten  
One o'clock in the afternoon  
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden  
Richmond, Virginia



**Other items available here we will gladly help you with:**

Napkins

Wedding Programs

Menu Cards

Personalized wedding favors / favor boxes

Bulk candy for favors

- Jordan almonds
- Dutch mints
- Petite butter mints

Bridesmaid gifts

- Lots of silver jewelry to be engraved!
- Purses that can be monogrammed

Groomsmen gifts

- Engraved army knives
- Engraved Glassware

Aisle runners

Toasting Glasses

- Glass or silver that can be engraved

Cake / Knife sets

- Sterling silver that can be engraved

Garter belts

Guest Books and pens

Photo albums / Scrapbook wedding albums / Personalized albums

Thank you notes

- For the shower
- After the wedding
- Blank or imprinted with your name or monogram

Change of address cards

Money cards for minister, organists, coordinators etc.