

Helpful Hints for the Bride and Groom

In the many years that we have been in business, we've encountered countless happy brides and grooms. Not all of them were calm. This is the most important and special day of your life and with careful planning and organization, you can increase your enjoyment of not only your "big day" but all the days leading up to it.

Our hope is that this information will help all brides and grooms better plan their wedding and make it one of the most perfect memories of their life.

What You Need	When You Need It	Why It's Proper
Engagement Announcements	Because of school, military service or other plans, your wedding date may be far in the future. If you want people to know you are engaged, plan an Announcement using the Wedding Invitation format.	Either formal or informal copy is proper to let people know your exciting news.
Hold the Date Cards	Mail them three to four months in advance of the wedding.	It is a good idea to give family and friends as much notice as possible of the coming event. This is especially true if you have many out of town guests.
Wedding Invitations with Envelopes	Used for anyone you want to attend the ceremony (even if they are ill or too far away to actually come). Always lists who is getting married, on what day, of what year (spelled out in full), at what time, and the location.	An occasion this important rates more than a casual invitation. Elegance is enhanced by coordinating with lined inner envelopes.
Reception Cards	Traditionally a Reception Card is only used when a select number of the guests invited to the ceremony are invited to the reception. Nowadays, a Reception Card is included with the invitation, even when everyone invited to the ceremony is invited to the reception.	This invitation says, "You are special." Mailed along with the invitation, this card announces the time and location of the reception.
Response Cards with Self-Addressed Return Envelopes	A must in today's busy times, or you simply won't know who is planning on attending. Plus you will end up chasing down guests who do not send a handwritten reply.	The Response Card has become an accepted part of wedding etiquette. Including one with your invitation is a thoughtful way to ease the guest's responsibility to reply to formal invitations. As a courtesy to your guests, you should put a stamp on your self-addressed response envelopes
Wedding Announcements	If your circle of friends and relatives is larger than the list you intend to invite to the ceremony, or if you have a private wedding, you will want to send an announcement of your wedding.	Wedding Announcements include the wedding date, but never the time or location of the ceremony. Mail the day of the wedding.
At Home Cards	If you are moving to a new home and want to inform family and friends of your new information.	Informs family and friends of your new address and lets them know whether you are keeping your maiden name. Usually mailed with the announcement or mailed separately after the wedding.

Thank You Notes	A perfectly proper time-saver for those very busy days leading up to the wedding and immediately following the wedding.	It's a thoughtful way to let gift givers know their gift was received. Always write a personal thank you not later. Send within two months of the wedding.
Informals	With or without the name of the groom, this personalized stationary is needed to hand write thank you notes to those who gave a wedding gift.	People who took the time to pick out a wedding gift deserve a personalized thank you note. Also excellent for many other occasions where only brief correspondence is needed.
Wedding Programs	A great way for guests to follow the ceremony and learn who is in your wedding party. Enables you to share a special message or poem with your guests.	Provides guests with a nice memento of your special day.
Place Cards and Table Cards	Makes sit-down meals less chaotic if people have assigned seats, or at least assigned tables.	Place Cards list the guest's name and table and are often displayed on a table outside the tent or reception room. Table Cards list a table number inside the folder and the guests name appears on the outside of the folder.
Ceremony Cards	Used when everyone is invited to the wedding reception but only a limited number are invited to the ceremony.	This invitation says, "You are special." Mailed along with the invitation, this card announces the time and location of the reception.

The only timeline you will ever need...

Six to Twelve Months Before Your Wedding

- Announce engagement. Use formal printed announcements and/or the newspaper.
- Select a wedding date and time.
- Choose size and style of wedding formal, informal, special theme.
- Set a preliminary budget.
- Schedule a meeting with both sets of parents to openly discuss wedding expectations, costs, and responsibilities.
- Hire a wedding consultant if you plan to use one.
- Buy a wedding planner or a notebook to remain organized and record decisions.
- Invite attendants to be in your wedding.
- Reserve the ceremony location.
- Choose the officiant for the ceremony.
- Reserve the reception site. Find out what services are included or available.
- Interview caterers, florists, photographers, videographers, musicians, etc. Be sure to taste food options, see the work of florists, photographers and videographers. Listen to or watch tapes of musicians. Ask for references and discuss deposit requirements and the cancellation policy. Hire as soon as possible.

- Create a preliminary guest list, including addresses. Ask all parents to do the same. Include the relationship (friend, uncle); this helps if the list needs to be shortened.
- Begin planning the wedding ceremony and reception.
- Write out directions and or a map to be included on a separate card with invitation.
- Shop for a wedding gown and accessories. Order your dress at least 6-8 months in advance.
- Choose and order attire and accessories for bridesmaids. Keep in mind the time of year and style of wedding.
- Start planning the honeymoon. If you are leaving the country, make sure your passport is up to date and verify any visa requirements.
- Register for wedding gifts. Develop a system for recording gifts as they arrive and for recording when you wrote the thank you.

Three to Six Months Before Your Wedding

- Finalize guest list. Write each guest's name and address on an index card and use these to track responses.
- Order wedding and reception invitations, response cards, place cards, announcements, thank you notes, informals, at home cards, hold the date cards and accessories. Always order extra invitations and envelopes to allow for addressing mistakes and surprise guests. It is less expensive to order extras from the start.

- Send out Hold the Date Cards so your guests can reserve your special day on their calendar.
- Address invitations and announcements as soon as possible.
- Arrange to have someone mail the wedding announcements the day of the wedding.
- Start making final decisions and arrangements for the ceremony and reception, including food, music, flowers and any rental equipment.
- Sign contracts and place deposits with caterer, photographer, videographer, florist, musicians and other service providers if you have not already done so.
- Plan rehearsal dinner: time, menu and guest list.
- Arrange for wedding day transportation for important guests and wedding party.
- Reserve a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town members of the wedding party and guests. It is nice to provide a list of local restaurant and attractions.
- Order wedding rings and make arrangements for engraving.
- Have both mothers select their wedding attire.
- Confirm the delivery date for the wedding gown and bridesmaids dresses. Schedule fittings.
- Choose and order formal wear for the groom and groomsmen. Remind men to submit their measurements to your formal wear provider.
- Finalize honeymoon plans.
- Shop for trousseau and special attire for parties, showers, and honeymoon.
- Write thank you notes as gifts are received. If you are using preprinted thank you notes to immediately acknowledge that a gift was received, be sure to send a hand written thank you on your informal notes within two months after the wedding.

Two to Three Months Before Your Wedding

- Finish addressing invitations and announcements.
- Finalized the ceremony details with officiant. Finalize details with caterer, florist, musicians, photographer, etc. Order wedding cake.
- Finalize plans for bridal luncheon or any other wedding events.
- Check requirements for medical tests and marriage license.
- Schedule appointment to have a picture taken for a newspaper announcement.
- Ask someone to be responsible for the guestbook.
- Choose small gifts of appreciation for the wedding party.
- Collect the forms necessary to change your name (if you are changing your name) on your Social Security card, driver's license, insurance, etc.
- Continue to write thank you notes.

Six Weeks to Two Months Before Your Wedding

- Mail the invitations (six weeks is customary, eight weeks is becoming increasingly common). It is not uncommon for guests to mail their response card without writing their name. To identify guests if this happens, assign each guest a number. Write this number very small on the back of their response card before you put it in the invitation. An incomplete response card can now be matched to a guest.
- Use the index cards with each guest's name and address to track responses
- Order wedding programs and reception accessories such as napkins, cake boxes, etc.
- Make final menu decisions.
- Set rehearsal time and verify with all participants.
- Have first wedding dress fitting.
- Schedule to have formal bridal portraits taken two to four weeks before wedding. Make sure wedding dress and shoes will be ready.
- Make sure members of the wedding party have their fitting.
- Make an appointment with your hairdresser to practice your wedding-day hair style. Bring headpiece. Have a makeup consultation at the same time. Schedule hair and makeup appointments for yourself and bridal party on the wedding day. Schedule a manicure for the day before the wedding.
- Give photographer a list of all pictures you would like taken, including pictures you may want of the tent, flowers, cake, etc.
- Give videographer list of all shots you would like included in the video.
- Purchase gift for fiancé, if gifts are being exchanged
- Choose thank you gifts for parents and any others who helped with the wedding.
- Submit wedding announcement and photograph to newspaper. Specify date for publishing.
- Continue to write thank you notes.

One Month Before Your Wedding

- Have your final wedding dress fitting.
- Verify that all members of the wedding party have had their final fitting.
- Get blood test and obtain your marriage license.
- Make sure you have all accessories, toasting goblets, cake knife, ring pillow, guest book, etc.
- Create a detailed wedding schedule for all attendants. List all events participants are expected to attend. Include date, time, location and any responsibilities. Give attendants the schedule two weeks before the wedding.
- Give musicians final music list for the ceremony and reception. Specify any music you do not want played. Have the music start 30 minutes before the ceremony.

- Prepare your wedding toasts.
- Pick up and try on your wedding bands.
- Confirm honeymoon reservations.

Two Weeks Before Your Wedding

- Confirm final details with all wedding professionals you have hired. Confirm wedding night hotel reservation.
- Give caterer your guest count.
- Finalize seating chart for reception.
- Submit names for place cards to calligrapher or write out yourself.
- Give a wedding day schedule to all attendants.
- Finish addressing announcements.
- Pick up wedding dress.
- Have your bridal portrait taken.
- Break in your wedding shoes.
- Fill out a change-of-address for at the post office.
- Arrange for someone to collect gifts brought to the ceremony and bring them to your home.

One Week Before Your Wedding

- Verify final details with all service providers. Inform them of any changes.

- Finalize the guest count, making necessary changes to seating chart.
- Confirm transportation for the wedding party.
- Confirm that the photographer understands the list of pictures you have requested.
- Confirm that the videographer understands your specific requests.
- Verify that all wedding attire has been picked up and fits.
- Confirm that all attendants know when to arrive at the rehearsal, rehearsal dinner, and the wedding ceremony. Confirm that all attendants have a copy of the wedding schedule you created.
- Pack for your honeymoon.
- Stop mail and newspapers during honeymoon.
- Pay bills that will be due while you are away.
- Continue to write thank you notes, if possible.
- Pick up your marriage license.

The Wedding Day

- Be sure that both of you eat something.
- Try to relax and enjoy the day. If anything goes differently than planned, chances are you are the only ones who will notice.

Wedding Expenses

The expenses listed below are divided according to tradition. There may be variations due to local customs or special circumstances.

Bride (or her family)

- Wedding invitations (including Response Cards, Reception Cards, etc.), all stationary and announcements
- Wedding consultant
- Wedding cake
- Wedding gown, accessories and trousseau
- Engagement and wedding photographs
- Ceremony expenses (excluding officiant's fees)
- Reception expenses
- Flowers for ceremony, reception and bride's attendants
- Transportation of wedding party to ceremony and reception site
- Lodging for out-of-town bridal attendants
- Groom's ring
- Gifts for bride's attendants and groom
- Bridal luncheon (optional)

Attendants

- Wedding attire
- Traveling expenses

- Wedding gift

Groom (or his family)

- Bride's engagement and wedding rings
- Personal wedding attire and traveling expenses
- Marriage license
- Officiant's fee
- Transportation of groomsmen and groom to ceremony; bride and groom to ceremony
- Rehearsal dinner expenses
- Bride's bouquet and going away corsage; corsages for both mothers
- Boutonnieres for groomsmen
- Gifts for groomsmen and bride
- All honeymoon expenses
- Lodging arrangements for out-of-town groomsmen
- Bachelor's dinner (optional)

Bride and Groom

- Thank you gifts for parents and others who helped with the wedding

Etiquette Questions

Other than friends, the groom’s family, and my family, who should receive invitations?

Send invitations to the members of the wedding party and their parents. It is also appropriate to include the officiant and his/her spouse. All children over the age of sixteen should receive their own invitation. Plan to order an additional twenty-five invitations to allow for the unexpected. It is less expensive to buy extras now.

Should I have a return address printed on the back flap of the invitations outer envelope?

Yes! The U.S. Postal Service suggests that all first-class mail have a return address. It gives the wedding guest an address to which to send a reply (if you don’t use reply cards) or a gift. Also, it ensures that you will know if the invitation does not reach its destination as it will be returned to the sender.

Is it acceptable to send gift registry cards with the invitation?

It is not proper to include with your wedding invitation any card that mentions gifts you expect to receive. Let friends and family spread the word on where you are registered.

My fiancé and I have had several showers and other parties given in our honor. Therefore, some friends have given us more than one gift. Can we write one thank you note to cover both gifts, or does each gift require a separate note?

Gifts given at separate parties require separate thank you notes. If you use preprinted thank you notes to immediately acknowledge that a gift was received, always follow up with a hand written note to the gift giver. These notes should be written no later than two months after the wedding.

How do you address the outer envelope of an invitation to a married couple if the woman has kept her maiden name?

If the woman kept her name, address the envelope with both names on the same line if space permits:

Mr. William Greenberg and Ms. Laura Vargas
28 Brookview Avenue

For an invitation to an unmarried couple living together, list their names alphabetically on separate lines without “and”:

Mr. William Greenberg
Ms. Laura Vargas
28 Brookview Avenue