

Intriguing Invitations

A wedding invitation pecking out of the mailbox is always a pleasant sight. Make sure your message expresses the warmth and happiness you wish to share with your guests.

As with every aspect of planning a wedding, traditional guidelines exist for wording, paper and engraving of wedding invitations and announcements. Many couples, however, come up with informal and creative variations.

A very formal wedding still commands the use of very proper wording engraved on thick, creamy paper. A less formal celebration might call for pastel ink on parchment.

THE GUEST LIST

After you've decided on a budget and the number of guests to invite, ask your fiancé and his family to make up their list. Let them know how many you hope they'll invite. Normally, each family invites half the guests. Another option: divide the guest list into three sections. The groom's family, the bride's family and the bridal couple each invite a third. As a rule

of thumb, expect about three-fourths of those invited to attend.

Invitations should be sent to your wedding officiant and spouse, your fiancé's immediate family, and members of your wedding party and their parents. You are not obligated to invite companions for single friends on your list.

If you do wish to invite the friend or fiancé of a single guest, ask for that person's name and address and send a separate invitation. If the couple lives together, mail a joint invitation, as you would for a married couple.

While drawing up your invitation list, put together your announcement list, if you are planning to send announcements. This list should include acquaintances not invited to the wedding with whom you wish to share the good news. Neither an invitation nor announcement requires a gift — feel free to send them

to everyone. Order about 50 extra envelopes to allow for addressing mistakes.

PAPER AND PRINTING

While handwritten invitations are appropriate for a small ceremony — 50 guests or less — for a larger wedding, you'll want printed invitations. A classic formal invitation is printed or engraved on the top page of a folded sheet of white or off-white paper. A small inner envelope, unglued and unsealed, encloses the invitation or announcement. This is placed inside a larger envelope which is addressed and stamped.

Add a personal touch to your invitations using translucent or shiny paper, colored ink or a special border. If you select colored ink, use the same shade to address the envelopes. Select someone with beautiful handwriting, perhaps a professional calligrapher, to address envelopes or write invitations.

Order invitations and announcements at least three months before the wedding to allow time for printing, addressing and mailing. Engraving may take longer. Have the envelopes delivered early for addressing ahead of time.

ADDRESSING

Compose a master list on index cards; make sure all names and titles are spelled correctly. Address all invitations by hand, in blue or black ink; never use a computer.

The only abbreviations used are Mr., Mrs., Ms. and Jr. Most elected officials are addressed as The Honorable; the clergy as The Reverend Father, Pastor or Rabbi; and high-ranking military personnel as Commander, Colonel, etc. A single woman, even a child, is addressed as Miss or Ms. Young boys are addressed as Master. Try to avoid nicknames or initials. Spell out streets, cities and states in full, and don't forget zip codes.

If several members of a family are invited, avoid using the phrase "and family." You want each person to feel the invitation is meant especially for them. On the inner envelope, include the name of each child invited:

Mr. and Mrs. Jones
Kate, Matthew, and Ava



Invitation
by Pear Tree Greetings



Invitation
by Pear Tree Greetings

Thank-You Notes

So many people will make your wedding-day dreams come true: your family, friends, co-workers and wedding professionals. What better way to single them out for their hard work than to send a heart-felt "thank you."

Choose formal thank-you notes for both of you, since your groom will be writing thank-you cards as well. Your note paper may be engraved with your new address, in which case you could use it after the wedding. City and state names are printed out in full with no abbreviation. A street number may be spelled out or shown in numerals. Stationery imprinted with your married name or initials is never used until after the wedding.

One final, important reminder to help your wedding run smoothly: make sure each piece mailed has sufficient postage. It would be terribly embarrassing if your invitations and thank-you notes were returned by the post office! •

Adult members of a family should receive separate invitations, whether or not they live with their parents. Send one joint invitation to two brothers or two sisters living at the same address.

Invitations should be mailed four to six weeks before the ceremony. Two months is courteous if you plan to marry during the holidays.

Allow people time to consider your invitation and word their replies. Depending upon the formality of your invitation, they'll respond with formal written acceptances or regrets, informal notes, phone calls or response cards.

If you haven't had a response from a guest two weeks before the wedding, call and check. When each invitation is accounted for, tell your caterer how many guests to expect.

Formal announcements, created in the style of your invitation, should be mailed the day of the wedding or immediately afterward if you plan to send them. Ask a bridesmaid or family member to do this if you don't have time.

KEEPING TRACK

As soon as your invitations are sent, you'll begin receiving calls and notes from guests, saying they can hardly wait. Promptly record who's coming, and who won't be able to attend. Allow space in your filing system to describe gifts received, and make a notation when a thank-you note is sent.

SPECIAL ENCLOSURES

Enclosures are printed in the same style as the invitation itself. At-home cards may be enclosed with formal invitations, but are usually sent with an-

nouncements. These are small cards informing everyone of your new address and the date you'll be ready to receive mail and visitors there.

Ceremony cards are sent if there's a chance that uninvited persons may try to attend, or if the wedding is held in a public or historic place. Engraved cards may be enclosed with the invitations, to be presented at the door for admittance. For other types of enclosures you may wish to ask your printer, stationer or wedding consultant.

WEDDING PROGRAMS

A program is extremely helpful in guiding your guests through the ceremony and is a wonderful memento of your wedding. It provides vital information and might be an elaborate booklet, a calligraphy-inscribed scroll, or a preprinted wedding bulletin with your wedding service photocopied inside.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Normally, announcements are not mailed to anyone who has been invited to the wedding. But they may go out after an intimate ceremony for family only, after an elopement, or a wedding so far away that many people could not attend. Business associates with whom the couple work day-to-day might also receive announcements. (Remember, no one receiving an announcement need feel obligated to send a gift.)

Printing and paper for the announcements are the same as for invitations. Announcements should be addressed like invitations and, whenever possible, mailed out immediately after the ceremony. •