

A
Bride's Complete
Guide to
Wedding Invitations



All the Issues, Problems,
Questions, & Crises Those
Other Guides Won't Touch

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2010

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Introduction: Your Wedding—Your Style

In your grandmother's day, the options for wedding stationery were limited. Basically they came down to a single choice: white or ecru. Times have changed. When they see all the stationery options available today, many prospective brides are overwhelmed. This is understandable when you consider that there are over 1,000 current styles of wedding invitations alone. Multiply this by the dozens of choices each of ink color, typestyle, wording and envelope lining. You can see that your selection is almost unlimited.

Given all these options, how can you make the perfect choice for your wedding stationery? You should begin by considering the style of your wedding. "All the elements of your wedding should be consistent for a smooth and harmonious atmosphere," writes Emily Post in her book *On Weddings*. "The invitations set the tone of the ceremony. If you have decided upon a traditional wedding you should use the formal, third-person-style invitation. If you are being married on a beach at dawn with a buffet breakfast to follow, your invitations might be a poem illustrated with shells."

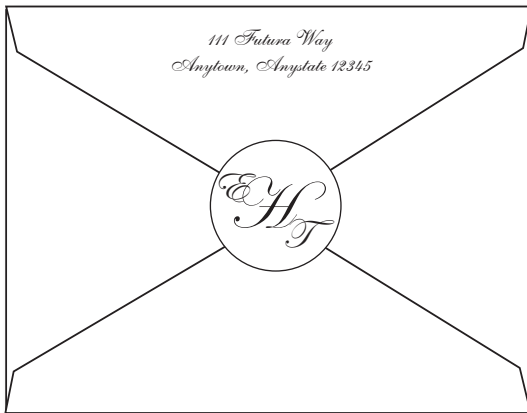
As you begin to browse some of the stationery designs available, keep in mind the image of the wedding you are planning. Will it be a grand formal affair in a large church with a hall or country club reception? An intimate home wedding with a few close friends and family? An informal outdoor ceremony? Or a unique theme event centered around a shared interest?

When your guests receive the invitation to your wedding, they should get a sense of the style of event they can expect. Do you want them to have the impression of uniqueness and originality—or of a strong sense of tradition? Or something in between—perhaps a new twist on a classic design? Do you want them to think opulent and grand—or simple and elegant? Formal or

casual? Sophisticated or cute? What is *your* style?

Many of the decisions about your wedding invitations—the design, the quantity, the ink color, the typestyle, the wording—will follow from the central decisions about the type of wedding ceremony and reception you are having. If you find yourself confused about printing choices, it may be that you have not fully thought about the style of your wedding. Take some time to think this through, and the little choices will sort themselves out.

Throughout this book you will find a number of handy worksheets designed to help you plan your wedding and make the best choices regarding your wedding stationery. Feel free to fill in these worksheets and to make notes elsewhere in the book. From the time we enter kindergarten, if not before, we are taught not to write in books. But you will get the most benefit from this book by writing all over it. It is a workbook as well as a guidebook.



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On Etiquette

Every year, we assist hundreds of customers with questions regarding what is socially acceptable in the area of invitation printing. This is only natural. In a world that is increasingly informal, weddings are among the few events in which formal standards of social ritual are expected.

We are always happy to help our customers. We try to answer questions of etiquette as honestly as we can. The difficulty lies in defining what is “proper.” What the etiquette books say is “done” is not always what is actually *done*. As social stationers we see people breaking the “rules” every day. We also deal with people from many different cultural backgrounds, with different expectations of what is socially acceptable.

The most difficult situations arise when we are asked to referee a dispute. Sometimes conflicts will arise during the exciting but stressful months of planning a wedding. Often, particularly when choosing stationery, these conflicts will center on the issue of what is “proper” or “acceptable”. Often, too, one party of the dispute will appeal to the stationer as an “expert” to “settle” the dispute.

Put yourself in our place. Whatever we say is sure to upset someone! Most often we will appeal to a “higher authority”, such as Peggy Post or Judith Martin. These etiquette authorities have written books on the “correct” way to handle each aspect of your wedding. These books can be very helpful in making choices. Unfortunately, in today’s fast-paced world, socially accepted standards of etiquette often change faster than books can be written on the subject.

Opinions on the rules of etiquette vary widely. Some regard them as carved in stone; others would disregard them entirely. Most people, however, will come down squarely in the middle. For this majority, some rules of etiquette are essential to avoid unnecessary friction in society. Saying “thank you”, including writing thank you notes when called for, falls into this category.

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Who's the host?

Etiquette says that whoever is hosting the wedding should issue the invitation, and this is what we usually say to our customers. Well, what does *hosting* mean? Does it mean whoever is paying for the wedding reception? Suppose your parents are divorced and your mom raised you after the divorce, but your father is paying the bulk of the cost for your wedding. Should your father issue the invitations and not your mother?

In all honesty, we can't imagine a young woman who has any kind of relationship to her mother excluding her from the wedding invitation because she isn't paying her share.

So your folks are divorced. Should your father's name be on the invitation? If he is paying for the wedding, or a substantial portion of it, then he will usually be listed along with your mother as issuing the invitation. What if he is not? Then you have a more difficult decision.

Here are some of the things you need to consider. Was your dad involved in raising you? Is he involved in your life now? Do you want him to be in the future? How would he feel if you left him off the invitation? Can you even answer this question?

Then there are your mom's feelings to consider. What kind of relationship does she have with your father? Is it amicable? Or is there still bad blood? Will she be upset if your dad's name is on the invitation? If you want to include him, does she understand why?

Now can you see why we said this is not an etiquette issue? Etiquette can tell you which fork to use to eat your salad. It can't solve issues like these. So how do you solve it? Here is our first suggestion:

Don't assume you know how anyone feels. Ask.

The worst situations we've seen occur when the bride assumes that she knows what everyone wants. She has the invitations printed, and then there is an explosion. Very often she comes back to us in tears. She has to have them reprinted, and no one is happy.

Suppose you do ask and your folks don't agree? We used to recommend a family conference, but this is risky. It might turn into a free-for-all. In some

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Choices, Choices, Choices

The classic wedding invitation was a white or ecru vellum sheet, with or without a raised border called a *panel*. This sheet folds in half for added weight, but is printed only on the face. The printing is done by means of either engraving or thermography. Engraving is the time honored method of achieving raised printing and is still preferred by some. Thermography, as the name implies, is a heat process. Modern thermography closely simulates the look of engraving, at a substantially lower cost. Most wedding invitations today are thermographed, and it is considered appropriate even for the most formal weddings. However, engraving is available for those who want this beautiful and traditional form of printing.

Many contemporary invitation designs are single card style. They may have a traditional panel, an updated border of simple elegance, or an elaborate embossed design. Some designs are even available in both the traditional folder and the single card style. Increasingly, however, newer designs are coming out only in the single card variety.

Besides the traditional wedding folder and single card styles, invitations are now available in a variety of other folded formats. Some are read book fashion, with a verse or design on the front, and the invitation copy inside. Trifold invitations, which may be either z-fold or letterfold type, often open out to reveal an extra-large print area for a long verse or strikingly large type. These may open either horizontally or vertically. French fold invitations fold in half in one direction, and then in half again in the other. They may be made of either vellum (a smooth finished stock that is most common for wedding invitations) or parchment (a paper with an uneven coloring that simulates antique parchment). French fold invitations often have a rough edge known as a *deckle*.

Increasingly popular are single card invitations which do not fold at all. Pocket invitations which have a variety of inserts are one of the hottest trends of the past decade. They are an elegant solution to the problem of

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The Making of An Invitation

Can I design my own invitations?

There is a lot of demand today for wedding invitations that are one of a kind. Because of this there are more and more ways that you can make your invitations unique. But there are still limitations. These aren't imposed on you arbitrarily by the wedding industry. They result from the complex way in which invitations are made. Let's take a little look at this process so you can better understand what can be done and what can't.

If you want to design your own invitations from scratch, you will want to work with a printer who can offer you the types of paper and printing techniques your project requires. This chapter will help you talk to them.

Perhaps you don't want to design your own invitations. Maybe you would just like to change the size or color of a design you've seen in a catalog. Is this possible? This is not as easy as it sounds. To explain why, it is necessary to describe the process of manufacturing.

Or maybe you are interested in traditional invitations. Your concern is whether or not you should order engraved invitations, or save money by having them printed with thermography (also called *raised printing*). What is the difference between these techniques and why is this there a cost difference?

If there are parts of this chapter that seem more technical than you are interested in reading, you can skip them. You can always use it as a reference if there are questions about the process you don't understand.

Paper

All invitations start with paper. There are many different kinds and grades

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Enclosures

As the name implies, enclosures are printed items enclosed in with your wedding invitations. There are six enclosures we will need to consider: Reception Cards, Respond Cards, Map or Direction Cards, At Home or New Address Cards, Pew Cards and Dance or Admittance Cards. We will take these one at a time, beginning with Reception Cards.

Reception Cards or Folders

The reception card or folder is a smaller invitation to the reception which is enclosed in the inner envelope with your wedding invitation. If the reception card is not used, the date, time and place of the reception should be included on the wedding invitation. This is often done in a corner copy (footnote), as such:

Reception following
The Highlands Golf and Country Club
Yourtown, Yourstate

More formally it is included in the body of the invitation following the location of the ceremony:

and at the reception following
The Highlands Golf and Country Club
Yourtown, Yourstate

NOTE: The city and state may be omitted if the reception is in the same city as the ceremony.

For wording of reception cards, see p. 80.

There is some confusion about when it is necessary to use a separate reception card. Strictly speaking, it is only necessary when you have a more restrictive

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Informals & Thank You Notes

The informal is a small note card used for writing thank you's to acknowledge the wedding gifts you will receive. Your married names should appear on the front panel of informals mailed after the wedding date. Traditionally these would read something like:

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Handy

Today, you may elect to use your first names, in which case the bride's name always goes first:

Elizabeth and Tom Handy

Another choice would be a monogram. The form for a three letter monogram is as follows:

A three-letter monogram in a cursive script, reading 'EHT'. The 'E' is on the left, the 'H' is in the middle, and the 'T' is on the right. The letters are interconnected and have a decorative, flowing appearance.

Where the "E" is the bride's first initial, the "T" is the groom's first initial and the "H" is the married surname initial.

Informals should be ordered in the same quantity as your wedding invitations. Remember, you may receive gifts from people who were unable to attend your wedding. Any leftover informals may be used for small notes of all kinds, as to acknowledge a housewarming gift or to RSVP a social invitation.

It is also a good idea to have some informals printed with your maiden name to be used for acknowledging gifts received before the wedding, either shower gifts or early wedding presents. Many brides-to-be choose

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Doing the Numbers

Chances are, you have some questions by now about “how many”. How many invitations do I need to order? Do I need the same number of all my enclosures? How about informals? Napkins? Favors? And the granddaddy of them all: How much is all this going to cost?

Let’s consider the last question for a moment. At the end of this chapter are some worksheets designed to help you prepare a printing budget for your wedding. We hope they are helpful to you. Before you can put them to use, however, you will first have to work on the other “how many” questions. Below you will find some important tips on doing these numbers, some of which can save you a bundle of money. But first, let’s look at an approach to shopping for wedding invitations that we don’t recommend.

Don’t Try This At Home...

About three or four times a week we get a phone call at our shop that begins with the question: “How much are wedding invitations?” We hope we’re not offending anyone, but this is about as scientific an approach to finding a printer as calling automotive dealerships and asking “How much is a car?”

The question is, do you want an old clunker or a brand-new Lexus? (Sure, you’d like the Lexus for the price of the clunker. But we’re dealing with the reality here.)

Perhaps you’ve called around asking the “how much” question yourself. Or you’ve thought about it. To be fair, this is not really a bad question. You want to find a printer who will give you a fair price. The problem is, like most wedding invitation customers, you probably do not buy printing every day.

You probably have bought copies at a copy shop. Calling to ask how much copies cost makes sense. But printing and copying, even when they are

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Wording Your Invitations and Enclosures

One question we often hear is: Can any wording be used on any invitation? The answer is a qualified Yes. Any wording may be used, provided it will fit the invitation chosen. The standard form invitation is about twelve lines of type. Copy in excess of fourteen lines is usually considered “extra copy”. Some invitations can fit a great deal of extra copy, plus corner copy if needed. Others cannot. Another factor is the typestyle chosen. Some styles can be made smaller to fit and remain legible. Others cannot.

How you word your wedding invitation is your decision. There are certain traditions, which you may choose to follow or not as you wish. There are no Etiquette Police. There is only Tradition and Opinion. Tradition is what your grandmother thinks. Opinion is what your neighbor thinks.

Later in this chapter is an extensive sampling of both traditional and contemporary wordings. But first, let's look at the standard form, line by line.

LINE 1: Traditionally, formal invitations are issued in the third person, usually by the parents of the bride:

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Wade Smothers, III

Notice the comma before “III”. Style guides insist it is used before all suffixes, although some leave it off in this case. The use of the full middle name is also traditional.

LINE 2: Another tradition is the use of the “u” in the word “honour”. This is the older spelling, still in common use in England. In America, spelling reformers like Ben Franklin simplified many spellings. For formal invitations, however, the older spelling persisted:

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Proper & Efficient Addressing

You have several choices for addressing your invitations. The first choice is to do it yourself, perhaps with the help of a friend or family member. The second is to hire a professional calligrapher. If you are considering using a calligrapher, there are several factors to consider besides price.

The word “calligraphy” means “beautiful writing”. Make sure the writing you pay for is beautiful. Always ask to see samples of a calligrapher’s work before agreeing to use their service. With calligraphy, as with all arts and crafts, there is a great variance in the skill of the craftsperson. Look at samples of their work and judge for yourself. There are many styles of type used by calligraphers. Some calligraphers can only do one or two styles of writing. Others are accomplished in quite a few. Ask to see samples of their various styles and choose one which is appropriate to the style of your invitations.

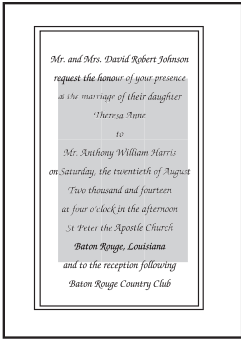
Another matter to discuss with your calligrapher is turnaround time. Many people do calligraphy as a part time occupation. While this should not dissuade you from using their services, make sure that they can deliver your work in a timely manner. Ask them to give you a timetable that you will both be able to live with.

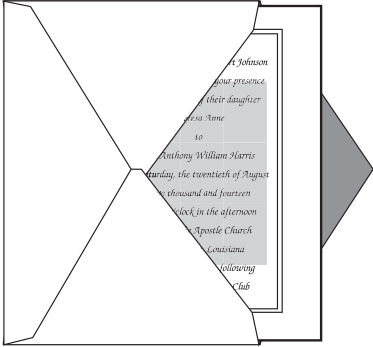
You might ask for references from a prospective calligrapher. If they are truly professional about their work, they should be happy to have you talk to one or two of their previous customers. If they hesitate to give references, you should be very wary of using their services.

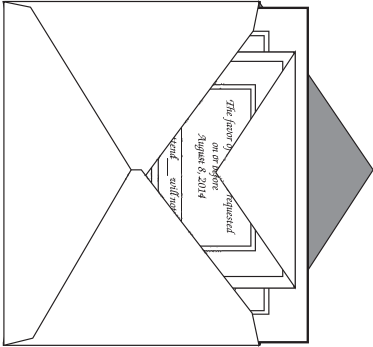
The third addressing option available today, which seems to be gaining in popularity, is computer addressing. This may be done either with your own computer with a laser or ink jet printer or by hiring a company that offers this service. Usually the computer type is a simulated calligraphy. If you are considering using a professional computer addressing service, the same considerations apply as those for choosing a calligrapher.

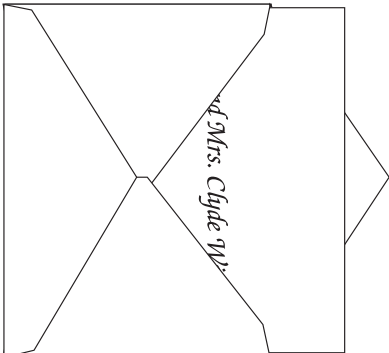
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Assembling Invitations

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1. The tissue—if you are using one—is placed over the main copy area of your invitation.
- 

2. The invitation is placed in the inner envelope with the copy facing the back (flap side), so that when it is removed it faces the reader.
- 

3. Enclosure cards, if any, are placed inside the inner envelope with the invitation. They may be placed inside the folded invitation. This may have been one reason for the invitation being folded in the first place. Today, enclosure cards more commonly are placed on top of the invitation before inserting in the inner envelope.
- 

4. The front of the inner envelope, with your guests names written on it, should face the back of the outer envelope. When it is removed, the first thing your guests should read is their names.

Enclosures should be folded in half if they are not solid cards. Reply cards should *not* be inserted inside reply envelopes. They should be tucked under the open flap with the printed copy face up. Reply envelopes should be pre-stamped.

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Conclusion

You've come to the end our tour of the world of wedding invitations. We hope you've found this book helpful for planning your wedding. With a little bit of effort your plans for a perfect wedding can come true.

Share Some Inviting Help

If you have friends or relatives who are getting married, why not recommend this book to them? We can be found on-line at:

www.invitationguidebook.com

Comments or Suggestions?

Send them to us at comments@invitationguidebook.com or click the *contact us* link on our website.

Thanks and Best Wishes

We thank you for purchasing *The Bride's Compete Guide to Wedding Invitations*. We know there are many books out there on wedding planning and etiquette. We appreciate that you've chosen ours.

All the best in your new married life – Melissa & Rob.