

Your Top 10 Wedding Invitation Etiquette Questions Answered

Your invites are one of the most important elements in your day because they provide guests with crucial information. And while some details of your wedding don't follow a strict set of rules, your invitations do have a set of hard-and-fast rules to follow. Scan these etiquette Q&As for answers to your most pressing wedding-invite-related questions.

1. When should we send out our wedding invitations?

Traditionally, invitations go out six to eight weeks before the wedding -- that gives guests plenty of time to clear their schedules and make travel arrangements if they don't live in town. If it's a destination wedding, give guests more time and send them out three months ahead of time. Most couples also send out save-the-date cards. They go out at six to eight months.

2. When should we make the deadline for RSVPs?

Make your RSVP date two to three weeks before your wedding date -- this will allow enough time for you to get a final head count to the caterer (one week before) and to finalize your seating chart. If some guests still haven't responded by your deadline, give them a quick call and ask for their RSVPs (still via mail) so you have all their information.

3. Where do we include information about our wedding website?

Your wedding website should be included on your save-the-date. A simple "AmandaandJon.com," is all you really need. If you'd like (or if you don't have save-the-dates), you can include the web address in the formal invitations with an insert -- a small card that informs guests they can find more details online.

4. Can we include our registry info on our invitations or save-the-dates?

In a word, no. Including registry info on the wedding invitations or save-the-dates is still considered impolite because it can come off as though you're asking for gifts. Tell your wedding party, parents and close friends where you are registered, and let them fill guests in. Plus, most guests will know that all that extra information (that they didn't find on the invitation) is on your wedding website.

5. We're having an adults-only wedding (no kids). How can we make sure this is clear to our guests?

Address your invitations correctly -- to each guest by name, not "and guest" -- and guests should understand that the invite is meant for only those mentioned. If you find that some reply with their children's names added, give them a call and explain that you're having an adults-only wedding and that you hope they can still attend. If there are a lot of kids in your family, you may want to consider hiring or arranging for a babysitter. It's definitely not required, but it's a nice gesture. Just be sure to include this information on the wedding website.

6. How do we let guests know our dress code?

The easiest way to get your point across is to include a dress code in the lower right-hand corner of the invite or on a reception card; "black-tie," "cocktail attire" or "casual attire" are all acceptable. Your invitation design will also clue guests in. An ultra-formal, traditional invite with letterpress and calligraphy will give guests a hint to the formal nature of the event, whereas a square invite with a playful font and bright colors would fit a much more casual style. Another way is to direct guests to your wedding website, where you can go into more detail about the weekend events and dress code in a more informal forum.

7. Do we have to invite every guest with a date or a "plus-one"?

No, you don't have to. If a guest isn't married or in a serious relationship, it's perfectly acceptable to invite them solo. Most guests will understand that without "and Guest" or another name on the invitation means they aren't invited with a plus-one. While it's always nice to invite everyone with a guest, if you're having a small wedding, your family and friends should understand your reasoning. What to do if a guest RSVPs for two? Call them up and explain that you're having an intimate wedding and, unfortunately, you were not able to invite everyone with a guest. But if you realize that nearly everyone will be coupled up, extend a plus-one invitation to your few single friends and family.

8. Where do you put the return address on wedding invitations?

The return address usually goes on the back flap of the envelope. Also, the return address used should be that of the person(s) whom you've designated to receive response cards -- be it your parents or you (traditionally, whoever is hosting the wedding handles response cards). Don't forget that the RSVP envelope should also be printed with this address (and should include postage).

9. If our wedding reception is for immediate family only, is it okay to invite people to the ceremony only?

Not really. Everyone who attends the ceremony (or bridal shower, engagement party or wedding reception) should be invited to the wedding -- that means the ceremony and the reception. In your case, by inviting guests to one and not the other, you're basically saying you want them there for the actual ceremony but you either don't want to pay for their plate at your party or don't care enough to have them there to actually celebrate your newly-married status.

10. I invited my friend and her boyfriend (by name on the invite) to the wedding, but they recently broke up. Now she wants to bring a friend I don't like -- can I tell her no?

Because you worded the invitation correctly by having her boyfriend's name on the envelope (rather than "and guest"), you have every right to say no. As a rule, invitations are nontransferable when people are invited by name. Try explaining that you're not friendly with her proposed guest and you'd prefer that the wedding be limited to very good friends and family. If you invited all of your single friends sans dates, let her know she won't be the only one coming solo (in case that's her worry).