



10 Things You Must Know Before Ordering Your Wedding Invitations

You only get one chance to make a first impression...

Imagine each of your guests opening the mailbox and finding a beautifully addressed envelope. Can you envision their reaction as they open the envelope and unveil your wedding invitation? It's the first glimpse that most of them will have into your Big Day. What is their next move? Are they racing to their calendar to reserve the date for your wedding, or are they yawning, adding the invitation to the stack of other mail on the counter, and wondering what else they may have going on that weekend?

A wedding invitation sets the tone for the entire event ~ it signals the formality and style of the ceremony and reception, reflects the personality of the couple, and has the potential to make the invited guests very excited to be included in the celebration.

Before you order your wedding invitations, here are 10 things that you need to know and do.

Before the appointment with your wedding invitation consultant:

1. Get a clear picture of your dream wedding and your personal style and taste.

Close your eyes and envision your wedding day. What do you see? Is it a black-tie affair, an intimate backyard wedding, a ceremony on the beach, or something in between? Is the ceremony during the day or in the evening? Is it in your hometown or a destination wedding? Think of several adjectives that best describe how you want your wedding day to look and feel. For example: traditional, romantic, vintage, rustic, sophisticated, elegant, fun, funky, minimalist, casual, grand, spiritual, family-oriented, luxurious, dramatic, tropical, etc.

What is your personal taste and style? That will play a factor, as you will want to convey your personality as a couple. Think about where you like to shop {Banana Republic or Anthropologie? Pier1 or World Market?}. In your fashion, décor and lifestyle, do your tastes tend to be more traditional or contemporary? More subtle and understated or bold, trendy, and colorful? Classic elegance with an updated twist? Bohemian chic or preppy classic? It's okay to be a mix of styles, just try to hone in on the types of things you are usually drawn to and your own personal style.

2. Decide if there is a color palette for your wedding.

Do you want to incorporate a particular color or set of colors into your wedding invitations and accessories? Do you want to match the paper color of your invitations to your dress {white, ivory or something else}? What color{s} are the bridesmaids' dresses? Is the wedding in a particular season that you'd like to celebrate: the Fall {think browns, oranges, golds and mossy greens}, in the Spring {think bright pinks, purples or lime greens}, in the Summer {think blues and yellows, like the beach!} or in the Winter {think silver, light blue, reds and greens}? If you have specific colors that you'd like to include on the invitations or accessories, it would be helpful to bring in any samples, swatches or photos with you to the appointment.

3. Determine if your wedding will have a theme or a symbol that is significant.

Is your wedding at the beach or in a rustic barn? Do you share a love of botanical prints? Did you meet on an airplane? Are there any significant icons that you want to incorporate into your wedding and possibly your invitations or accessories? Do you want to create a custom icon or duogram {first letters of your first names} for your invitations and/or a custom monogram to use at the ceremony and following? A custom duogram or monogram can serve as a “logo” for your wedding that can be carried through as few or as many pieces as you’d like – on the invitations, menu cards, place cards, beverage napkins, custom cups, drink stirrers, and even gobos (for custom lighting on the dance floor). In the appointment, your wedding consultant can show you examples of duograms and monograms or motifs that may inspire you.

4. Determine the number of invitations you will need to send.

Your guest list can largely be determined by the following three factors:

- a) the number of guests your ceremony and reception sites will hold
- b) the level of intimacy desired for the wedding
- c) the number of guests that can be accommodated within your wedding budget comfortably

Keep in mind that the number of invitations you will is not necessarily the number of guests that you’d like to invite ~ this is the number of households to which invitations will be sent. For example, if you are inviting 200 people and three-quarters of them are married, the number of invitations you will actually need is more like 125 or 150. When the quantity you think you need is on the borderline, we recommend ordering the next quantity higher. It’s always better to have more invitations than not enough, as guest lists have a way of creeping up, often suddenly and at the last minute. The cost of ordering more than you think you’ll need as part of your initial order is far, far less than the cost of re-ordering a small number at a later date. {This is because the cost of invitations is primarily based on the design, layout and running of the printing press, not necessarily the quantity of invitations. Re-ordering a smaller, additional amount later can often be as expensive as the initial order.}

During the appointment with your wedding invitation consultant:

5. Understand the various invitation printing methods and choices in invitation stock.

An experienced wedding stationer can explain each of the methods of printing and the differences between them. These methods include letterpress, engraving, embossing, thermography and flat printing {offset or lithography, digital and desktop printing like laser and inkjet}. Before your appointment, take notice of any mentions in bridal magazines about the various ways invitations are printed. If you have a preference, let your wedding invitation consultant know. It’s also great if you can bring in magazine clippings or samples of invitation printing styles that appeal to you. A good wedding stationer will be able to explain and show examples of different paper stocks {including papers made from tree pulp, cotton, and bamboo}, as well as the different weights and thicknesses of invitation stocks. Are you concerned about using eco-friendly papers? Your stationer should be able to guide you select papers and other components that are easier on the environment if this is important to you.

6. Decide what additional cards and features to include with your invitation.

How do you want your guests to let you know that they will be joining you to celebrate? Would you prefer a reply card and envelope or a reply postcard? Will you need a reception card, directions/map card, accommodations card or wedding website card? Do you like pocket folds, ribbons, vellum overlays, belly bands, envelope liners or all of the above? Do you want single or double envelopes? If you have an idea of what features you would like to include, it would be helpful to share that with your wedding stationer. If you are unsure, you will be able to touch and feel a variety of samples to help you decide during your appointment.

7. Have a rough idea of your budget.

Almost everyone has a budget, and it's helpful for everyone involved to know what yours is going in the appointment. Also, it is good to know if your wedding invitation budget includes postage, as that can often be a cost that is overlooked. Although you may have an idea of what you want to spend, be open to being educated about what different invitation styles and printing methods cost. Too often, bridal magazines do a disservice to brides by showcasing luxurious suites of high-end invitations with all the bells and whistles, but then advise that you assign a woefully low percentage of the budget for wedding invitations and accessories. This just creates unreasonable expectations from the beginning. A great stationer will inform you about the varying costs of different printing methods, stocks and extra add-ons, and will work with you to create a wedding invitation suite that is within your financial comfort zone.

8. Determine who will be issuing the wedding invitation.

Does your family situation fit the traditional model in which the bride's parents issue the invitation? Or does your family situation look like many these days in which there are complications due to varying circumstances? For example, are your parents divorced? Remarried? One or both parents deceased? Are the grooms' parents equally involved and contributing to the wedding financially? Are you paying for the majority of the wedding yourselves? Your stationer can help you navigate the wording of your invitations to fit your particular situation, whether it's traditional or not, while keeping in line with etiquette guidelines. Believe it or not, there are guidelines for just about any situation, and it's best that you are fully aware of how to properly word your wedding invitation as to avoid offending anyone or causing embarrassment or hard feelings. That being said, the role of the stationer is to inform you of the guidelines and make a recommendation. Ultimately, it will be your job to make an informed decision and do what feels comfortable for you and your family.

You will also need to decide whose address will be on the reply envelope or postcard {the bride's parents, the bride, the bride and groom?}. Similarly, you will need to decide whose address to put on the outer envelope flap. Typically, this is the address of the person{s} issuing the invitations.

9. Consider how you would like the wedding envelopes to be addressed.

Will you, a family member, or friend, be hand-addressing the envelopes? Will you hire a calligrapher? Will you have the addresses printed on the envelopes? We offer several options for us to address your invitations, which we can discuss in the appointment with you. We also recommend that you are prepared to order extra envelopes {around 15% extra} to allow for any errors in addressing.

10. Make your decision.

Making your final decision doesn't have to be stressful or overwhelming. Be sure to give yourself a chance to be informed of the options and to look at several styles before you buy. Don't overthink it, and trust your own instincts. There will likely be one invitation style that you continue to come back to over and over ~ that is generally "the one." Once you have narrowed down the options to a few finalists, ask yourself three simple questions about each invitation you are seriously considering:

1. Which invitation reflects the tone and spirit of our wedding day?
2. Which invitation most fits our personality and style?
3. Which invitation do I see my guests getting really excited about discovering in their mailbox? {You do want them as excited about your Big Day as you are, don't you?}

Once you've found an invitation that fits all of these criteria.... Smile and relax – you've done it! All of these variable and tiny decisions may seem a bit overwhelming at first. Just take a deep breath and take them one at a time. Making a few of the basic decisions before your appointment will help alleviate some stress about the decision {e.g., your personal style, number of invitations, colors you want to incorporate}. During the appointment, your wedding invitation consultant will walk you through your options and help educate you on the other options that are available. Eventually, they will lead you to make an informed decision that feels right for you and your family's budget.

Your wedding stationer should be considered a valuable part of your wedding planning team. You should accept {and expect} help from a knowledgeable, professional and friendly wedding invitation consultant. A good consultant will ask plenty of questions to get a better understanding of your vision for your Big Day. They will want to be helpful and will likely have some recommendations or suggestions for you {and not just in the invitation department}. A seasoned consultant has seen a great variety of styles and types of wedding invitations and will be able to guide you to one that fits your style, personality and budget. Your consultant should make you feel comfortable and free to express your own opinion, not feel pressured to purchase something that you don't love. From the moment you enter the stationery boutique, be mindful of the way you are treated and the way the people there make you feel. Do they seem knowledgeable? Do they treat you with respect? This is your special day, and you deserve help from a person who is going to only enhance this happy experience. Your wedding invitation is too important to settle for less than a wonderful stationery consultant – it is after all, a preview to your guests of all you've taken so much time to plan for the wedding day! With these ten tips in mind, and a little help from your expert wedding invitation consultant, finding the perfect wedding invitation suite should be an exciting, creative, and stress-free experience. Have fun and remember:

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