

# It All Starts With the Wedding Invitation

Contributed by Nathan Sire  
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The envelope arrives in the mail. For most of your guests, it will be their first knowledge of the event, their first impression, the beginning of their appreciation for the importance of your special day.

The invitation begins to set the style and tone of your whole wedding. People will study your invitation, not only searching for the facts ' where, when, how ' but inevitably gleaning clues to the nature of the event. What will they wear? How will they feel there? How will they behave?

Will it be a sedate and elegant affair, funky and flamboyant, or laid back and casual? Your invitation conveys all this for you.

## Choosing Your Style

You'll want your invitations to reflect the nature of your wedding. At one end, if it's to be a large and more formal affair, you'll want to think of the elegance and beauty of traditional invitations.

At the other end, if you're planning a small, intimate gathering of close friends and relatives, and you enjoy creating your own designs, you may want to make your own invitations. You can make a truly personal invitation from materials you will find in arts and craft stores.

In between these two extremes, there are tons of variations available to personalize traditional invitations to suit the exact message you want to convey to your guests.

No matter what size your wedding will be, you will want to make sure that your invitations reflect the other important design aspects of the event. For instance, although your invitation provides first impressions, you may want to make other design decisions first to help inspire your invitation design.

## Finding Inspiration

One of the smart modern bride's favorite strategies is to begin by selecting the bridal bouquet. Having chosen, for example, the stunning "Victorian Lilac" bouquet, you'll be inspired to include some aspect of it on your invitation.

It could be an elegantly embossed version of the stunning white tiger lilies or delicately shaped lilac roses cascading among the buds and baby's breath in the bouquet.

It could even be a photograph of your bouquet, as many makers of wedding invitations now offer to include a personal photo in the design of your invitation.

Imagine your guests as they catch sight of you walking down the aisle with the exact bouquet that first impressed them on your invitation ' a lovely way to tie in first impressions with the lasting impression provided by a bouquet.

You may wish simply to select among the vibrant or delicate colors in your bouquet for the ink colors used to imprint your invitations. If you are making your own invitations, you might wish to press flowers that match your bouquet right into your invitations, every guest receiving a unique version of your personal creation!

## Anatomy of a Wedding Invitation

The rest is simply a matter of deciding on the details.

What will be included aside from the invitation itself? An rsvp card and postage-attached envelope are a must. A small map showing how to get to the wedding has become a snap with the advent of Map Quest. Companies offering wedding gift registries are only too happy to provide unlimited numbers of business cards to make gift giving as easy for your guests as possible.

How will the invitation be worded? Traditionally, that has been based on who is actually hosting the wedding. Is it Mom and Dad? In that case, the invitation starts with:

"Mr...and Mrs.....request the honor of your presence at the wedding of their daughter....." However, these days, many young couples foot the bill themselves and are more likely to opt for: "Jane... and Mark.....request the honor..."

Respect is still frequently given to parents by the inclusion of their names in some other way in the invitation. The exact words are a matter of taste more modern marrying couples as they opt for less traditional presentations, such as "Jane

and Mark are getting married and they want you to celebrate with them!"

Speaking of modern considerations, the great debate today rages around whether or not to offer guests the option to RSVP online. The general consensus seems to be go ahead and do it, but keep in mind that invitations go to many different people, some who would still prefer, or even require (think of old uncle Ned!), a more traditional way of responding, so always offer snail mail as a viable alternative.

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Nathan Drew Sire founded Le Rhee Bouquets. He handles marketing for the business and has years of experience in building websites. He has built businesses around wedding bouquets and pew bows. He's found a way to add value to all products to make weddings more enjoyable.