



# *first* *impressions*

Invitation style and etiquette are a guest's first look into your wedding.

by Shannon Cooper

Ask any bride what is the most important part of her big day and she will probably say her dress or maybe even the reception. Very seldom is the invitation first on the list. If you think about it, it is the invitation that sets the tone of the wedding and builds the anticipation and perception of the guests. Your invitation set deserves just as much attention to detail as all the other elements of your wedding.

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Look in any bridal magazine and you will find an array of invitation styles that can be reproduced for hundreds of events. However, the current trend with brides is that they are looking to stand out with original ideas that reflect their personality and that of their groom. Brides want a unique and memorable wedding from beginning to end. It all starts with an invitation that is exclusive to your wedding.

You should begin by finding an invitation that sets the tone of your wedding and represents the personalities of you and your fiancé. “Try to envision your dream invitation with no limitations,” says Amy Morelli, President of The 2u Collection of invitations and stationery. “People say first impressions are lasting impressions and your invitations are the first impression of your wedding to your guests. Make it count.”

When considering your invitation design, think of answers to these questions: Do you want your invitation to reflect your wedding colors, your wedding location or perhaps your honeymoon destination? Should your invitation include a family tradition? Does the invite tell your special story? Remember, there are no limits, so think outside of the box.

Popular trends with today’s brides are custom-designed invitations that incorporate artistic interpretations of the couple’s cultures or a family tradition. According to Morelli, “More brides want invitations with a distinct expression of individuality. Our invitation designs have included crystals and lace. One elegant invitation included a rosary accent meant as a keepsake for the guests.”

You can also consider sending your invitation in a lush silk box with wedding keepsakes like the couple’s photo along with a memento from their first date or playing cards for a Las Vegas theme. Consider 3-D embellishments like rhinestones and fur fabrics. Giving dimension to your invitation can add a serious wow factor while building anticipation of the actual event.

Elaborate banding of rich velvet or textured ribbons can dress up an invitation without increasing the cost beyond your budget. Some brides have opted for suede and linen-textured paper. Vellum overlays can add a nice touch of elegance to your invitation as well.

A recent bride and groom were planning a two-week honeymoon in Italy and decided to theme their entire wedding accordingly. Their invitation incorporated an elegant grapevine border with merlot-colored wording and was placed inside a miniature wine bottle. ➤➤



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“Our guests were blown away at how it all came together from start to finish,” says Jennifer, a recent Orlando newlywed of eight months. “Our idea was to have it all come together with the very first thing people saw, which were the invitations. There was authentic Italian food paired with Italian wines and flowers that resembled the colors of Italy. It was beautiful.”

Once you have a clear idea of the direction for your invitations, determine which matching stationery components you will need. For example, will you need save-the-date cards or engagement announcements? What about menus, programs and thank you cards? It is important to know this from the beginning so you can work within your budget and know precisely how much you can spend on each item. Some other items to consider are table numbers, pew cards, place cards, rehearsal

dinner invitations, rain cards, travel cards and accommodation cards.

Now that you have a vision of your dream invitation and you have determined everything you need to accompany them, it is time to shop around. While collecting catalogs from all the magazine vendors is a great time saver, also plan to visit with local printing and stationery companies. Each company can offer custom-designed invitations with creations they specialize in. Also, the approval process can be more convenient and thorough when dealing with a local company. Ask to look at their work portfolio and ask detailed questions about their approval, payment and return policies.

Regardless of the style of invitation you select, there are a few basics that you need to keep in mind.

Be sure to include all the necessary information that will guide your guests through all the festivities surrounding your wedding.

You must make sure to include dates, times, locations, exact addresses, phone numbers, hotel information, and event location maps.

Proofread everything and then proofread again. There is nothing worse than having 300 invitations with your future in-law's name spelled incorrectly.

After you have finalized the invitation, be sure to order extras. Reprints are costly so a good rule of thumb is to order at least 25 extras. It never fails, as the date approaches, the guest list may grow and change several times. You'll want to be prepared.

When addressing your invitations use proper titles on the outer envelopes and informal names on the inner envelopes. You can handwrite, print or use calligraphy.

From fun and whimsical to elegant and formal, custom designed invitations offer you an invitation that is truly your own and can never be duplicated. This is the first impression you make when presenting your plan of a new life together. So, do it with your own personal style and flair from the very start.

