

Stationery

Unit 12

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Wedding invitations are usually issued by the parents of the bride or groom, or by the bride and groom themselves (or whoever is hosting the event). Generally, one invitation is sent to each family unless there has been a divorce in the family.

The wedding invitations are usually sent about 8-12 weeks prior to the wedding. This allows the guests ample time to RSVP, and to arrange accommodation and transport, if required. It will also allow you time to organise other aspects of the wedding that will be governed by guest numbers, for example, the size of your cake, how many bomboniere to order, and reception venue numbers.

Station Elements and Etiquette

Stationery elements are present throughout the wedding process and play ongoing roles in setting and carrying out the theme of a wedding. Stationery elements also bookend a wedding, in that they are generally the first thing the guests see, with save-the-date cards and invitations, as well as the last, with thank-you cards.

As a consultant, it is important to remember the spelling of stationery, which ends with an “ery” and not an “ary,” as it is often mistakenly spelled. This section provides an overview of the different components and purposes of stationery, including common rules of etiquette. While only taking up 3 percent of an average wedding budget, the wardrobe of stationery elements is quite broad including: save-the-date notices, invitations, calligraphy, ceremony programs, seating stationery, menus, personalized paper products, wedding announcements, and thank-you notes.

Save- the- Date Notices

Save-the-date notices, which are usually sent out 6 to 18 months before the wedding, have become an increasingly popular trend in the past five years. As discussed in Chapter 8, they are particularly important for destination weddings or those taking place over a holiday weekend. The use of refrigerator magnets is quite popular, since they can act as a constant reminder but cards or postcards are also commonly selected. Save-the-date notices generally indicate the name of the bride and groom, the date, and the location. The time of day may be included, as well as the wedding Web site should the couple have one. Often the phrase, “Invitation to follow,” is included so that the recipient knows that this is not the actual invitation. Save-the-date notices are usually informal and fun, but should still tie into the overall theme of the wedding.

Advise your clients that all potential guests should receive save-the date notices. Some clients may want to save by just sending them to out-of-town guests, but the schedules of local friends and relatives are just as busy. Furthermore, people know each other in these groups. If one friend comments on how clever the notice was, another might think, “I didn’t get it. I must not be invited to the wedding.” So it is important to be consistent.

Invitations

Invitations involve a significant number of decisions. This section covers the parts of the invitation, printing style, paper, font, wording, ordering, and delivery. The decisions that are made for the invitations are commonly carried over to other stationery elements.

Parts of the Invitation

The most formal invitations include the following: outer envelope, inner envelope, invitation card, reception card, and response card. Invitations may also include additional information such as a directions card or a card with lodging options. Lynne Sandler from Lettering by Lynne, featured in Vendor Spotlight, Case 18.1, explains that the dual envelopes originated from the time when mail was delivered by horse and carriage. Unpaved, muddy roads and the open elements would cause the outer envelope to become stained. The outer envelope was discarded upon arrival, and the invitation was then presented to the homeowner with the clean inner envelope. Now outer and inner envelopes are used for different wording purposes, which will be discussed in the wording section of this chapter. The outer envelope is gummed so that it can be sealed. The inner envelope is never sealed.

The invitation card gives the specifics of the event, which will be discussed thoroughly in the wording section of this chapter. A reception card is needed primarily when the ceremony and reception are held at different venues; if they are at the same location, the words “Reception to follow” are often included on the invitation itself. The response card, also called the reply card, has an interesting background in that traditionally this was never included; instead, the recipient of the invitation would write a formal letter of acceptance to the event. The response card emerged as a time-saving device in light of a more hurried pace of life. Furthermore, some response cards will include a listing of entrée options so that each guest can select his or her reception meal. The response card must include an addressed, stamped envelope for return purposes.

Some clients will ask you if it is appropriate to include a registry card in the invitation. This card offers the details regarding the stores where the couple has registered for gifts. While becoming more commonplace, etiquette suggests that it is highly inappropriate for couples to include this information in a wedding invitation, as it implies to the invited guests that they are required to purchase a gift and, moreover, that the gift must come from a certain place. Guests who wish to honor the couple with a gift should not feel constrained to a predetermined listing. For those who prefer to select something from the couple’s registry, this store information can be readily requested and obtained through word-of-mouth or e-mail.

Printing Style

For wedding invitations, four primary printing styles are used: engraving, letterpress, thermography, and flat. Engraving is a traditional printing style that is very formal and expensive. Typically, brides that request engraved invitations are encouraged to do so by their mothers, who recall this classic style. With an engraved invitation, when you run your hand over the wording, you will feel a texture that is slightly raised and when you turn the invitation over, there is an impression. A metal plate with the wording etched in is made specifically for the invitation.

The paper, which is usually all cotton and watermarked, is pressed into the inked plate, and the impression is made. A second style, which was also historically common, is letterpress. Letterpress is a process that is essentially the opposite of engraving, where the letters are raised and then pressed into a soft paper, leaving an indent on the front of the invitation. When you run your hand over it, you can feel the ridges. Letterpress is a classy and very expensive style of printing, in part because few companies now offer this technique.

Thermography, in contrast to the first two styles, is inexpensive and accordingly is also the most commonly chosen printing style. Similar to engraving, thermography is raised printing that can be felt, but if you turn the invitation over there is no impression. The invitation is printed through a regular printing press, allowing for a very fast process. While the ink is still wet, it is sprayed with a powder, and then it moves to another phase that has heat. The heat allows the powder and ink to chemically react, which results in the raised ink. Some companies do not thoroughly brush off the remaining powder, and a gritty residue may remain. Flat printing is also inexpensive and is chosen when the couple wants to include design elements that do not lend themselves to a raised style. Contemporary invitations with photographs, graphic designs, or large images are not well suited for raised printing. Invitations may also include an embossed image, which is a raised image that does not include ink and is used for monograms or thematic images such as cultural symbols, flowers, shells, stars, leaves, or snowflakes. These types of images may also be printed using the styles mentioned above.

Invitation Paper

The paper selected is determined in part by the printing style but is largely a matter of personal choice and budget. The cost of invitations is determined not only by the printing style, but also by the quality of the paper. Paper that is 100 percent cotton or linen rag will be significantly more expensive than a synthetic blend of paper. Bond weight of paper is another indication of quality, and 32 or 40 pound paper is a good letter quality (Stewart, 1999). As a point of comparison, typical computer paper is 20 pound. Handmade paper and/or features such as ribbons, gold leaf edging, vellum overlays, dried flowers, and envelope liners add significantly to the cost. When selecting paper, color is another

consideration. In the United States, ecru-colored stock, which is a soft ivory shade, is the traditional choice, while in Europe white is more frequently chosen. For contemporary invitations, a full spectrum of colors is available, and a couple can readily find invitations to match the theme and tone of their wedding.

Font

The range of fonts has grown significantly, and whether a classic or contemporary font is chosen will be based on the style of the invitation itself. Options to consider include: (1) cursive or printed style; (2) all uppercase letters versus a mixture of uppercase and lower case; (3) the inclusion of monograms or other large specialty fonts; and (4) ink color. The traditional ink color for the font is black, but colored inks have become very common. For example, a fall wedding might include a rust or olive green ink on an invitation with a leaf motif.

Wording

Wording begins with the envelopes. The outer envelope is the most formal, with full names and titles used. For the addresses, there should be no street or state abbreviations. For example, use Road rather than Rd. and Colorado rather than CO. The outer envelope should be addressed to the primary recipient or recipients, while the inner envelope can include additional invitees using formal or informal names. For instance, the outer envelope might be addressed to Mr. Gregory Aabas, while the inner envelope states Greg and Guest. Similarly, an outer envelope might state Commander Robert Ariza and Doctor Linda Tighe-Ariza, while the inner states Rob, Lynne, Cindy and Joey, which includes the names of the guests' children. However, the most formal invitations would use the full titles on both the inner and outer envelopes. The wording of the invitation itself can get quite complicated when considering changing family dynamics. Geller (1999) explains that the decorum of the traditional wedding invitations, which suggest uniformity and a patriarchal society, is challenged in an age where individualism and egalitarianism are widespread; when stable, nuclear families are giving way to divorce; when second marriages and blended families are commonplace; and when cross-cultural unions are prevalent. For example, some brides have two sets of parents or even three, so it is not feasible to list all of their names on the invitation. In general, there are six parts to the invitation wording with associated lines: host; request; bride and groom; date and time; location; and special instructions (Stewart, 1999).

The wording of the response card should mimic the formality of the invitation wording. Three elements found in most response cards include a space for guest name(s); an indication of attendance; and the date by which a response is desired. If the guests are able to choose an entrée or if other decisions are to be made, information regarding their selection options is also included.

Following are three examples of how the invitation might be worded, each accompanied by a response card that reflects the invitation's tone. Figure 18.1 is the most traditional and formal, with the parents of the bride acting as hosts. Furthermore, the R.S.V.P. in the request line means that the guests are to send a personal reply; therefore, no response card will be included. A formal invitation without the R.S.V.P. line would include a response card with wording such as that found in Figure 18.2, where the guests would write a formal reply and the assumption is that they will know the information to be included. The open response card can also be used for less formal weddings, as it allows guests to write creative notes that are often saved by the couple in a memory album.

Figure 18.3 offers an option of wording for a couple with blended families and therefore too many hosts to list on the invitation. The wording also gives one example of how couples can inform their guests that children will not be invited to the wedding. The associated response card, seen in Figure 18.4, has directed wording, offering a line for the names, where the uppercase “M” can be used to indicate Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Guests are to check whether or not they will attend in the space provided, indicate the number of children they will bring, and select the desired meal for each guest. The fact that child care will be provided on site reinforces the adult nature of this wedding. Figure 18.5 illustrates how a casual invitation can be worded, where the bride and groom are acting as hosts and the reception is held in the same location as the wedding, so no reception card would be included. Notice that in this example the numbers are not spelled out and the lettering includes lower case. The response card, seen in

Figure 18.6, is similarly casual and consistent with the beach theme. Note that, as seen in this example, most invitation specialists are now suggesting that couples use “Name(s)” rather than the uppercase “M” because it avoids the problem of what to do for doctors, attorneys, religious leaders, those with military ranks, and others with titles that do not begin with an “M.”

The wording of the reception card is the most straightforward and includes the location and time of the reception. If there are going to be a significant number of out-of-town guests, it is also advisable to include a directions card. Also, if it is an adult ceremony and/or reception, this is generally repeated on the reception card. Couples who feel very strongly about not having children at their wedding should indicate this in two or three different places. Ambiguity may arise as to what age represents the cutoff: some couples do not want young children, such as those under the age of 5, whereas others do not want guests under the age of 18. Often word of mouth and e-mail communication are used to clarify any questions that arise.

Ordering Invitations

Suggest to your clients that they start working with a stationery specialist four to six months before their wedding. As pointed out by Lynne Sandler, stationery companies can work within a shorter time frame, but the creative options become limited the closer couples get to their wedding date. It is also important to allow plenty of time to go through the proofing process. Some invitations take multiple proofs before the desired look is achieved. Remind your clients that once they have approved the proof, they accept full responsibility for the information, spelling, print style, font, punctuation, layout, and color separation.

When ordering invitations, the couple should count the number needed based on households rather than individual people. A common mistake is to order the number of invitations based on the number of guests, but if they are inviting 100 people, they typically will not need 100 invitations. They probably need between 50 and 75 depending on how many singles, couples, and children will be invited. At the same time, encourage your clients to make sure they do not under order, for it is much more expensive to reorder invitations than it is to have 10 or so extra invitations printed. Once a company has the initial order off the press, the order is done, and if it comes back, it is a brand-new job. Remind your clients that the first 25 of any stationery item will be the most expensive and the price drops significantly after that. Furthermore, most high-end companies will not accept invitation

orders of less than 50. For example, 50 high-quality invitations will cost \$12 or more each but when ordering 100 of the same design, the price can drop to \$10 apiece. Less expensive invitations follow the same pattern and can drop from \$6 each for orders of 25 to \$2 each for orders of 100.

Delivery

Encourage your clients to have the invitations weighed for postage purposes. Many invitations weigh more than one ounce with all of the inserts, and the last thing a couple wants is for their invitations to arrive with postage due. Even if the mailing weighs less than one ounce, additional postage will still be necessary if the envelope is bulky or the invitation is oddly shaped; for example, square invitations require additional postage. You should also advise your clients to have the invitations hand canceled, again because the number of inserts can cause bulk and can be mangled going through the postage meter. For etiquette purposes, the hand cancellation is also a more elegant look. Suggest to your clients that, before sending out the full mailing, they mail one invitation to themselves as a test run. They should include all parts of the invitation. This test will allow them to see how long the invitation takes to reach them and determine if it arrives in good shape.

The post office carries an array of floral and “Love” stamps that are popular for mailing invitations. In addition, your clients can order custom-designed postage stamps through Web sites such as Photo- Stamps.com. The stamp might be the couple’s engagement photo or an image that ties into the theme of the wedding. For example, if the couple is having a beach theme, the stamp might include a photo of an ocean, shells, or palm trees.

Couples should also consider to whom they want the response card to be returned. Traditionally it was returned to the parents of the bride, but today it is just as likely to be returned to the bride. Two recent trends do not involve a surface mail return, as guests can respond through 1–800 numbers managed by companies that track RSVPs or through Web site addresses. Invitations should be mailed anywhere from 6 to 10 weeks before the wedding. Some couples will mail to their “A” list 10 weeks out, then their “B” list, and sometimes even a “C” list, based on rejections from the earlier groups. A tiered guest list has significant etiquette implications, as peer groups talk and people can quickly become aware that they are not in the top group, which can cause hurt feelings.

Calligraphy

A calligrapher’s hand printing is a very elegant and personal way to create stationery elements. Guests have been known to talk for years about invitations they received that were hand lettered by a calligrapher. A calligrapher can be hired to letter any stationery element but is most commonly brought on to address the envelopes. If a calligraphy specialist is hired for the invitation, menu, or other item that can be used for all guests, this person will hand design a template that will then be typeset and printed. Because envelopes are unique to each guest, the time investment and cost are significant, with the charge for each set of inner and outer envelopes ranging from \$5 to \$7. This beautiful touch is therefore usually reserved for weddings with above average budgets.

Because hiring a calligrapher can be cost prohibitive, couples generally explore other options for addressing their envelopes. Handwriting is considered to be more personal, and some couples even have gatherings where friends or family members with elegant handwriting will help them with this task. Etiquette dictates that black ink should be used

when addressing envelopes by hand. Be certain to have your clients order plenty of extra envelopes if they plan to use hand addressing, as this process is subject to error. Because of the wasted envelopes and time associated with handwriting, couples are increasingly turning to computerized addressing. Most stationery vendors can assist with this task, and calligraphy fonts now exist that are nearly as beautiful as hand calligraphy. The address should be printed directly on the envelope and labels should be avoided.

Ceremony programs

Approximately 70 percent of couples use programs to guide guests through their ceremony. Programs come in all different shapes and sizes and are often designed and printed by the couple to save on costs. The purpose of the program is to introduce the guests to the wedding party and set forth the organization of the ceremony. If held in a house of worship, it is important to determine if there are any restrictions regarding program wording. Generally, all members of the wedding party will be listed, and information regarding readings, prayers, responses, music, and vows will be included. Some programs will give details regarding special ceremony elements. For example, if the couple will be jumping the broom, an African American tradition, a paragraph regarding the history of this tradition might be included. Many couples will also include a dedication or message of thanks in their program. A sample ceremony program can be found in Chapter 13 with the discussion of ceremony specifics. For the most part, guests do not want to read *War and Peace* during the wedding ceremony, so advise your clients that they do not have to go overboard. Too much reading will draw guests' attention away from the ceremony itself. If the couple is cross-cultural and there are guests present who speak different languages, it is a very welcoming touch to have the program printed in both languages, side by side. For more casual weddings, the program is also a place where the personality of various members of the wedding party can be shared. For example, one sports-loving couple wrote the following dedication in their program:

Todd Jamis and Lorna Cantillon introduced us to each other. Five traumatized dog sitters later and with enough good luck to see the Steelers win a Super Bowl, we stand before you today. We share fond memories with each person here and many have traveled a great distance to be with us. Good fortune and good friends brought us together and it is a true gift to share this day with each of you. This same program gave fun little pieces of information about members of the wedding party. For example, under the name of the maid of honor it stated: "An avid Broncos fan and rock climber, Jules is a pediatrician and long-time friend of the bride." This type of program humanizes the wedding party and gives people something to talk about when they interact during the reception.

Program design is frequently initiated late in the planning process, as the ceremony is often finalized only a few weeks before the wedding. However, if your clients are creating their own programs, advise them not to wait until the last minute as they do not want to be tying raffia or ribbons on programs the night before the wedding. Beyond the program, other specialized ceremony elements require stationery. For example, pew cards can be used when reserving special seats for honored guests or if the immediate family needs more than the first two rows. Many stationery professionals also can design a personalized ketubah, which is the Jewish marriage contract introduced in Chapter 13. Furthermore, couples who

write their own vows often like to have them printed and framed. Finally, guest books are often specially designed and can be used for the ceremony and/or the reception.

Seating stationery

If a couple wishes to designate where guests will sit at the wedding reception, seating stationery should be used. For example, if cocktails are over at 6:45 P.M. and dinner is going to be served at 7:00 P.M., then that leaves only 15 minutes to navigate what might be several hundred people into the dining area. Seating stationery can include a seating chart, escort cards, place cards, and table markers. A seating chart gives an alphabetized listing of guests. Next to each name, the table where each is seated is indicated. Seating charts are large and can be mounted on foam board or placed in a rented frame, but can cause congestion if the number of guests is more than 100.

Photograph by Escort cards are a different seating option, and list the person's name and table number on an individual card. Table markers tell guests when they have reached the right place. If using numbers, options such as #1, ONE, or Table 1 can be selected. Advise your clients to avoid using Roman numerals because in a muted ballroom, numbers such as XI, XII, and XIII look too similar and cause confusion for both guests and staff. Keep table markers simple and make the font big and bold for easy location. Table markers are often placed in stands or frames that can be rented from your stationery specialist, catering company, or floral designer if incorporated in the centerpiece.

A place card will also be used if the guests have not only a specific table, but also a designated seat. When reaching that level of detail, remind your clients that they will need to allow plenty of time to work on the site layout, which is discussed in Chapter 17. Seating stationery allows for design touches that tie into the theme of the wedding. For example, a winter theme might have escort cards embossed with a snowflake, while a Parisian theme might use tourist sites such as the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre to designate tables. A couple that loves to hike may use the names of rivers, mountains, or trees to differentiate the tables.

Menus

Formal receptions often include menu cards, which are used to indicate the names of the dishes to be served and may also designate the primary ingredients. Menus heighten guests' expectations, create a sense of culinary anticipation, and can promote understanding of cultural traditions.

In terms of design, menus often include the monogram of the newlywed couple and can also include creative terminology. For example, instead of using the expression "First Course" this meal stage can be called "Romance" or another term related to the couple's theme. Similar to signature drinks, caterers will work with couples to create specialty entrées with clever, enticing names. Menu cards can be printed on cardstock or, alternatively, a fine parchment paper that is rolled and then tied. They are often tucked inside each guest's napkin, placed on a charger plate, or leaned up against the water glass. Your clients should order menus with plenty of time to spare, so as to avoid situations like the one presented in Consultant in Action, Case 18.2. personalized paper products

Personalized paper products such as napkins, boxes, bags, or matches can further develop a wedding theme. Napkins are the most commonly chosen and come in a multitude of colors and styles. They are generally placed on the cake table and in the bar area. Often the napkins just include a monogram or the newlyweds' names and the wedding date, but they can also include a touch of humor. For example, one couple had the phrase, "Eat, drink and remarry" printed on the napkins, as it was the second marriage for both bride and groom. Personalized boxes and bags are often purchased for use with favors and are typically filled with mints, chocolates, or some other treat. Matches have become less common, in particular because most reception venues now prohibit smoking; however, when the favor is a candle, personalized match books can add a nice touch.

Wedding announcements

Many couples elect to have small weddings for personal reasons, based on budget constraints or because they held a destination wedding where many friends and family member were not invited or could not attend. In cases such as these, a wedding announcement is a courtesy notice sent to those not invited, informing them that the wedding took place. The announcement simply states the names of the bride and groom, the date of the wedding, and the location where it was held.

Announcements are only sent to those who were not in attendance at the wedding because it would be redundant to send these notices to those who were present. They are usually mailed within a week after the wedding. Announcements should never go out until after the wedding, on the off chance that it does not take place.

Thank-you notes

Thank-you notes are a type of social stationery and are also known as informals. Informals can match the invitation or they can be generic, which allows them to be used for other purposes. As stated earlier, small stationery orders cost significantly more than larger orders. For instance, 50 informals might cost \$100, while 100 are priced at \$130. Informals commonly include the monogram of the couple. If the bride is taking the last name of the groom, her first initial is on the left, the initial of the shared last name is in a larger font in the middle, and the groom's first initial is on the right. If she is not taking his name, it is common to have her initials or full name printed on the left followed by a large ampersand and then the groom's initials or full name. Some couples will include a wedding photograph in their thank-you notes. Every guest might receive the same picture, or the photos can be personalized, which is common with weddings where an instant camera is left at each reception table. This allows the couple to share moments that were documented by their guests.

Thank-you messages should never be preprinted or generic; each note should be specific to both the guest and the gift. For large weddings, consultants often assist with gift documentation and thank-you note writing so that the information is correct and the notes go out in a timely fashion. Advise your clients to keep each card with the associated gift, so as to avoid the situation found in Consultant in Action, Case 18.3.

In terms of etiquette, informals should be sent out within one month after the wedding. However, a late thank-you note is better than no thank-you note, so inform your clients that

they should not use tardiness as an excuse for bypassing this important task. Separate shower and wedding gifts from the same person should be acknowledged in different notes; furthermore, monogrammed informals indicating a changed last name should never be sent out until after the wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Stationery Elements

- Remember that stationery ends with “ery.”
- Note that printing style and paper quality will dictate the cost of stationery.
- While the wording of stationery elements is etiquette driven, reassure your clients that they should select wording that fits their personalities.
- Remind the couple that does not wish to have children at their ceremony or reception to make this clear in their invitations and response cards.
- When ordering invitations, base it on the number of households rather than the number of individuals.
- Order enough invitations to prevent the need for a reorder.
- When mailing invitations, be aware of increased postage for bulky or square-shaped envelopes and have them hand canceled.