



10 Things You Must Know *Before Ordering Your Wedding Invitations*

Picture this: You get your invitations, put them all together and everything that you've been working on for your wedding seems real and so exciting. You run to the post office so that your guests can get them ASAP and start to share in your day. When your guests open their mail you want them to be as excited as you are. It's the first time that they will see something real from your event too. How they respond to the invitation will help make your event the best it can be. Get them excited before they even come and the event will be a huge success. Your wedding invitation sets the tone for the entire day—it signals the formality and style of the event, reflects the personalities of the couple, and has the potential to make the invited guests super excited to be included.

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 in your mind of your dream wedding and of your personal taste and style.

Vision is a big-concept word and not everyone starts out having one, but don't let that stand in your way. Close your eyes and think about what you want your day to look like. Is this a black-tie affair, a beachside party overlooking the ocean, a garden gathering with flowers blooming? Is this a daytime or nighttime event? Is it in your hometown or a destination wedding?

Think about your own style and your spouse to be (yes, they count too!) Are you white-space modern, traditional with a twist, classic and preppy? Are you a neutral or a bold color person? Do you like adornments or are you attracted to clean lines? Just start to think about what makes you say "That's gorgeous. I love it!" and your vision will start to come together.

2. Determine if your wedding will have a theme or a symbol.

Did you grow up sailing in Nantucket and want a nautical theme? Did you travel around Europe and want to bring that into your day? Is your husband-to-be obsessed with Star Wars and you're going to let him run with it (just joking...)? There is a world of possibilities of things that are meaningful to you that could be incorporated into your wedding and invitation. Are you interested in using your monogram or first initials as a symbol that can be carried throughout the wedding? A custom monogram or duogram (two first initials) can become a great "logo" that can be used in a myriad of ways. (Your stationery consultant can show you different amazing ways to use them at your appointment.)

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

Do you want to carry a specific color combination into your invitations and accessories? Are you monochromatic or a multicolor person? Do you like patterns or white space? Do you know what color the bridesmaids' dresses will be? What season are you getting married in and would you like to pick up colors from nature? You can know this before the appointment or you can also use your invitation as a basis for the entire event. If you do already have an idea, then feel free to bring any pictures or swatches with you to your appointment. They make a great jumping off point.

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

The number of invitations is different from the number of people. You don't have to have everyone's addresses all ready, but it helps to have an idea with whom you want to share your day. Couples and families will get one invitation and individuals will get one invitation, so when you are counting, count the number of households. For example, if you have 200 people coming and three-quarters of them are married, then you will need about 125 to 150 invitations. And always order extra invitations. Guest lists have a way of subtly growing and there are frequently changes as the process goes along. Also, it is *much* less expensive to order just a few more versus going back to print more at a later date.

During the appointment with your wedding invitation consultant:

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

An experienced wedding consultant will help you understand what the different choices are all about: letterpress, engraved, foil stamping, embossing, thermography and flat/digital printing, among others. And they will be able to help you understand how your choices will affect your budget. Before your appointment, go online to wedding blogs and start to flip through magazines to get an idea of what appeals to you. You can even print or pull pages and bring them with you.

A good wedding stationer will also be able to show you different paper weights, paper stocks, as well as different shapes, die cuts, and possible embellishments, such as round corners, edge printing, ribbons, and much more. If you are interested in learning about the eco-friendliness of your invitations, your stationer should be able to help you select papers that are easier on the environment if this is important to you.

6. Decide what other cards and features to include with your invitations.

The invitation is the starting point, but there are other things to consider. Do you want a response card with envelopes or an rsvp postcard? Will you need a reception card? Do you need a directions card? An accommodations card? A single envelope or a double envelope? Do you like pocket folds, ribbons, envelope liners or a little sparkle? You can see and touch all the choices and we can help you figure out what works best for your event.

There are also same day paper goods that you can start to think about such as: menu cards, table numbers, place cards, guest books, and more.

7. Have a rough idea of your budget.

You do not have to come to your meeting with a specific number but it will help you as a starting point. However, different printing methods and design choices will affect the price of any invitation. Also, keep in mind that bridal magazines frequently show the lowest amount that an invitation will cost before it is a complete set to be sent and can frequently set unrealistic expectations. A good stationer will be able to help you find something that is really perfect for you that also works within the parameters of your budget.

8. Determine who will be sending the wedding invitation.

There are so many ways this could go! The most traditional way is for the bride's parents to issue the invitation but we've come a long way from having every family follow traditional lines. Will both sets of parents send it out. Are your parents divorced? Is someone remarried? Deceased? Are you paying for the wedding yourselves?

Your wedding consultant can help you sort out all the different ways of wording your invitation and believe us, there are a lot of different ways! There are etiquette guidelines for just about every circumstance and it helps to get it just right so that no one is confused or offended. Of course, the most important thing is that your stationer helps you get to a place that makes you feel comfortable and that you are doing it the best way for your own family situation.

Also give a thought to whom do you want the rsvp to come. That person's address will go on the reply envelope. And the outer envelope also gets an address, which is typically the person/s who are sending the invite.

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

Do you have a friend who has great handwriting? Do you want to hire a calligrapher? Have the addresses computer printed on the envelopes? Each style will give a different look and feel to the final invitation. Also, always order extra envelopes to cover any errors in addressing and last-minute changes to your list. This is typically 15% extra.

10. Make your decision.

You may be thinking, "How will I ever decide? There are so many options out there!" but your stationer will be very helpful in guiding you through the process and helping you narrow down your choices until you come to something that you know is just right. Trust your instincts. If you keep thinking about it when you're awake at night then you've picked the right one. Ask yourself three questions about each of the invitation options that 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? and 3) Which invitation do I see my guests getting really excited by when they find it in their mailbox? One of them will definitely fit and you'll know you've done it!

All of these decisions may seem a bit overwhelming at first. Just take a deep breath and take them one at a time. Before your wedding appointment just give some thought to your style and what you want from the day. During your appointment, your wedding stationer will walk you through and educate you on all of the other variables to help you make an informed decision that feels comfortable for you and your families' budget.

Your wedding invitation consultant should be a valuable part of your wedding planning team. You should accept (and expect) help from a knowledgeable, professional and friendly wedding stationer. A good consultant will ask lots of questions to get a better understanding of your vision for your special day. They will want to be helpful to you. An expert consultant has seen many styles of wedding invitations and will be able to recommend invitations that fit your style, personality and budget. Your consultant should make you feel comfortable and at ease to express your own opinion. From the moment you enter the boutique, be mindful of the way you are being treated and of the way the people there make you feel. Do they seem knowledgeable? Do they treat you with respect? Do they respect your time and are on time themselves? This is your special day and you deserve help from the person who makes you feel comfortable and happy. Your wedding invitation is too important to settle for less than a wonderful stationery consultant.

With these ten tips, and helpful advice and education from a great wedding stationer, the creation of your perfect wedding invitation (the sneak peak into your special day) should be an exciting, creative and wonderful experience. Have fun with it. It's *your* day!