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The TUSCALOOSA BRIDAL DIRECTORY is a unique Directory full of useful information about planning your wedding. It includes checklists of what to do when, lists of who pays for what, and facts about invitations, announcements and much more.

Your Wedding Day is very special and we encourage you to use professionals like those you will find in the Directory. When contacting those professionals listed in the Directory, let them know how you found them. Finally, please let us hear from you—your comments will help us provide a better service to you and others in the future. **Congratulations!**

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The Dos and Don'ts of Wedding Planning During Coronavirus

by Sheriah Gibson

Owner of Posh Occasions by Sheriah, Certified Wedding Planner and Event Designer

Unbelievable, but surmountable! This is my personal slogan when it comes to wedding planning and the COVID-19 virus. No bride should ever experience a global health pandemic during wedding planning, but this is our reality. As wedding planners, we take every step to seamlessly reschedule while keeping the same elegance and experience intended for the original date. The impacts of COVID-19 will greatly influence how we enjoy weddings for a significant amount of time.

As wedding planners, we offer professional guidance for putting out fires regarding contract negotiations, keeping an eye out for stricter postponing terms and assisting with research for event insurance options. Additionally, we ensure our couples have someone to consistently put them first.

Here are a few of the top dos and don'ts for being confident in your wedding planning experience while being aware of COVID-19:

Don't Panic. Following official updates from the Center for Disease Control and your local government will give you specifics on guests counts and social distancing restrictions.

Do review contracts. Look for force majeure, cancellation and postponement clauses in each venue and vendor contract. When selecting vendors, keep in mind that added stress can be caused when working with someone who does not offer a structured contract.

Do be flexible. Flexibility during wedding planning is essential. Anticipate changes to

layout, guest counts, catering options and overall costs. Preparing a financial cushion can be helpful. There are cost saving tips to help create a financial cushion. For instance, rescheduling events to Fridays or Sundays is cost-effective and increases availability and rental/setup times.

Don't Cancel. Cancelling your wedding leads to heavy loss for all parties involved. Small businesses are especially challenged during this time; as a community we can all pull together to overcome these challenges!

Do have fun! Please, still enjoy your wedding planning process. Keep in mind the original reason for the experience. Take the time to nurture and bond with your partner. COVID cannot stop love!

Chaos and instability give experienced wedding planners the chance to really show our worth. Having a professional wedding planner to manage all of the complexities of rescheduling is irreplaceable. You gain access to expert guidance and decrease the stress on you and your loved ones. Happy planning!



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Grooming the Groom



There's no disputing that the wedding is the bride's day, but that doesn't mean the groom doesn't need to pay attention to his appearance. Take pride in knowing that you are a beautiful couple with a perfect sense of style.

Whatever the style and degree of formality you choose for your wedding, there are a few key points regarding fit when ordering formalwear for groom and groomsmen.

Shirts: Whether pleated front panels or traditional smooth-fronted ones, shirts should fit snugly around the neck.

Pants: The bottom hem of the pants should touch the top of the shoes.

Jackets: As a general rule, you should be able to cup your fingers under the sides of your suit jacket. Jackets should fit snugly, but comfortably with some room at the waist. Vents on the sides of the jacket should lay smoothly and follow bodylines.

Sleeves: Sleeves that drop below the thumb or come midway down the hand are too long; if the wristbone is showing, the jacket is too short.

Collar: The collar should hug the neck and the lapels should not buckle.

With all the attention given to the men's clothes, an important detail that is sometimes overlooked is the groomsmen's hair. Men are generally more casual about haircuts than women, but they should be sure to get a trim two weeks before the wedding to add the finishing touch to their wedding finery.

A Groom's Glossary

Tails: The ultimate formal attire, which should only be worn after 6 p.m., this ensemble features a winged-collar tuxedo shirt, ascot or bow tie, vest, tuxedo trousers and tailcoat. The full-dress ensemble comes in black, midnight blue, or grey, with a white shirt and matching or all white accessories.

Tuxedo: Either single or double-breasted, this formal suit has satin shawl or notched lapels. Matching pants sport a satin stripe down the pant-legs. Tailored in silk, mohair, wool or blend, in black, grey, ivory or white, tuxedos come in a range of styles sure to suit any taste.

Vest: This is often referred to as a waistcoat and comes in single- or double-breasted styles easily worn with nearly any tuxedo ensemble. With the open back vest, a band goes around the neck and another is fastened across the back. Tails, strollers, white-tie and director's suits require a different style of vest.

White tie: Worn only to the most formal evening weddings, this ensemble consists of a black tailcoat and black tuxedo trousers with a white bow tie, winged-collar shirt and white vest.





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The Perfect Wedding Toast



Serious, humorous, or poignant, toasts are an integral part of almost every wedding celebration. Every toast is different, and on such a special occasion, many will be eager to share their sentiments. You're not alone if you fear public speaking, but at your best friend's wedding, you're bound to want to say a few words in her (or his) honor. If you're truly prepared to speak in front of people, you'll find it's much easier to let the words flow.

Here are some tips to help you get ready:

The best toasts are those that are heartfelt. So start by pouring your heart out. List everything you want people to know about your friends. (Remember to talk about both the bride *and* the groom in your toast.)

Start with the best qualities. Include memories of good times together—especially the first time they spoke of their beloved. Scribble some thoughts about what makes them a great couple and your wish for their future.

You have two audiences. One is the bride and groom, and you can make them happy by not saying anything that would cause them embarrassment. Your other audience is the assembly of friends and family. Stories of drunken revels and bad relationships may be appropriate at the bachelor(ette) party, but *not* at the wedding reception!

A toast is a speech. It should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and make sense throughout. When you stand up to speak, it's best to have a single card with a few notes written down to help you remember the key points. Rehearse before the big day.

Many wedding toasters aim for lyricism in song or rhyming poetry. That's a great idea, if it's you. But a direct, from-the-heart talk works well also. Be sincere and be yourself.

One of the classic rules of public speaking is to open with a joke. One of the classic rules of wedding toasting is to end by tugging on the heartstrings. If you can't be sentimental at a wedding, where can you be? On the other hand, while a couple of well-placed jokes can win the crowd, you're not there to do a stand-up routine.

A toast should last no longer than three minutes, which translates to no more than five double-spaced pages. Rehearse your toasts with a stopwatch. If it's five minutes or under, don't worry, since under the glare of the spotlight, you may speak faster.

At the Rehearsal Dinner, the first toast is made by the dinner's host, usually the groom's father, during the main course. The toast is often met by a "return toast" from the bride's father. Then it's open season—the mothers of the bride and groom, the best man and maid/matron of honor, other wedding attendants, family, and close friends.

The Groom's Toast: Keep it short. Be sincere. Thank everyone for coming, including your parents and hers. Share a brief personal (not too personal) story of experiences shared with your bride, but don't tell embarrassing stories or go on and on. Turn to your bride and look her in the eye, tell her how proud you are to be her husband, how happy you are today, and how much you love her!



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Adjusting to Differences

by Dick Hastings, M. Div., EDUCARE

An old marital adage suggests, *marriage is like a phone call in the middle of the night; first you get the ring, then you wake up!* How true. After the wedding is over and the ceremonial birdseed has disappeared, husband and wife *awaken* to the *contrasting* differences between them. These differences were present all along but may have been easily ignored or minimized. For example, a couple may now discover religious, financial or parenting diversities that clash; opposing family traditions or cultural variances which don't mesh; dissimilarities in communication styles, life experiences and personality idiosyncrasies. The list goes on and on.

In our early years of marriage, my wife and I had a *value* difference we had to quickly navigate. It centered around the celebration of birthdays. In her home, birthdays were very important! Family and guests were invited for a meal, gift giving and cake eating followed, all intended to honor the birthday person. We didn't celebrate like that in my home. So, you can only imagine how disappointed my new bride was when the first year we celebrated her birthday as newlyweds, I gave her a few bucks

and told her to go buy whatever she wanted. I can assure you, after 40 years of marriage I have gotten much better... now I go with her!

It may (or may not) surprise you to know that in first marriages it takes five to seven years to adjust to one another's differences. Tragically, most divorces occur five years and under. In a second marriage, the adjustment period takes eight to eleven years! This second statistic explains, in part, why melding a blended family can be such a challenge. Second marriages face numerous and unique adjustments that couples in first marriages don't encounter.

In either case, adjusting to one another takes time, patience and a whole lot of grace as we learn to embrace the differences. Embracing doesn't mean tolerating inappropriate behavior; it simply means seeing differences not as right or wrong, just different! Celebrating birthdays is important however accomplished. Celebrating and adjusting to a partner's uniqueness is equally important as it will help ensure a harmonious, mutually enriching and lasting marriage. And it could also help keep the "middle of the night" phone calls to a minimum!





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Addressing Formal Invitations Today

by Andrea Watson, *The Fine Hand: Calligraphy, Etc.*



Every issue of the Tuscaloosa Bridal Directory contains an excellent guide on “How to address invitations.” It is, however, necessarily brief, and inevitably questions arise as individual cases present themselves. Though formal wedding invitations maintain a sense of tradition, life in twenty-first century America has given rise to many changes in family life and nomenclature. Your guest list will have many variants from the usual *Mr. and Mrs.* As a calligrapher I have made a study over the years of correct traditional forms and contemporary practices. Following are a few special cases that should help you avoid common errors.

When a married woman retains her maiden name, the invitation should have her name first, followed by the word *and* and the name of her spouse. The *and* indicates that this is a married couple:

Ms. Mary Elizabeth Jones and Mr. Steven Smith

Married couples using professional honorifics who share the same last name:

Both are doctors:

Drs. Kathryn Anne and William Edward Coates
or

The Doctors Coates

If she is a doctor and he is not:

*Dr. Kathryn Anne Coates and
Mr. William Edward Coates*

If she retains her maiden name:

*Dr. Kathryn Anne Turner and
Mr. William Edward Coates*

Unmarried persons whose invitation will be sent to one address should have their names on separate lines:

*Dr. Kathryn Anne Turner
Mr. Steven James Smith*

Using *Mrs.* with a woman's given name is poor form. Whether married, widowed, or divorced, a woman should be *Ms. Mary Smith* or *Mrs. John Smith*. The *Mrs.* comes with the man's name. If a divorced woman retains her ex-husband's surname and wishes to continue to use the honorific *Mrs.* it should be followed by her maiden surname and her former husband's surname. If Mary and John Smith divorce, she may correctly be *Ms. Mary Smith* or *Mrs. Jones Smith*, but *never Mrs. Mary Smith*.

When using first names, it's ladies first: *Mary and John Smith*. This isn't merely etiquette, it logically keeps the man's name together.

When children are invited you will need to know their ages and sexes to list them properly. Age is a factor in deciding whether they should be sent separate invitations. The contemporary custom of giving surnames to girls as well as boys creates confusion. Note that double envelope sets make this somewhat easier, as children's names can be listed on the inner envelope. Single envelopes can't support more than two lines for names, so unless the children are of the same sex, separate invitations become a necessity.

There are bound to be other special cases that are real stumppers. An experienced calligrapher can help you sort these out while maintaining good form.





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Changing Your Name After the Wedding

STEP 1: SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE

You will need to take: your birth certificate, a proof of identification, like your driver's license or passport, along with a certified copy of your marriage license and a completed SS-5 form.

Once you have changed your name with the Social Security Administration, you will receive your new card in the mail in a couple of weeks, and they will notify the IRS of your name change. Best part—this step is free!

STEP 2: IRS

Next, you will need to fill out the IRS 8822 form. This will update your name in their system, and you can update your address as well if you have moved into a new home with your spouse. Print, fill out and mail in this form and you are ready for the next step!

STEP 3: DMV

Once you have received your new social security card in the mail, you are ready to go to the DMV. Apart from waiting in the inevitable long line, this part of the process is a piece of cake. Take your old license, new social security card and a certified copy of your marriage license to get a new driver's license.

STEP 4: BANK ACCOUNT

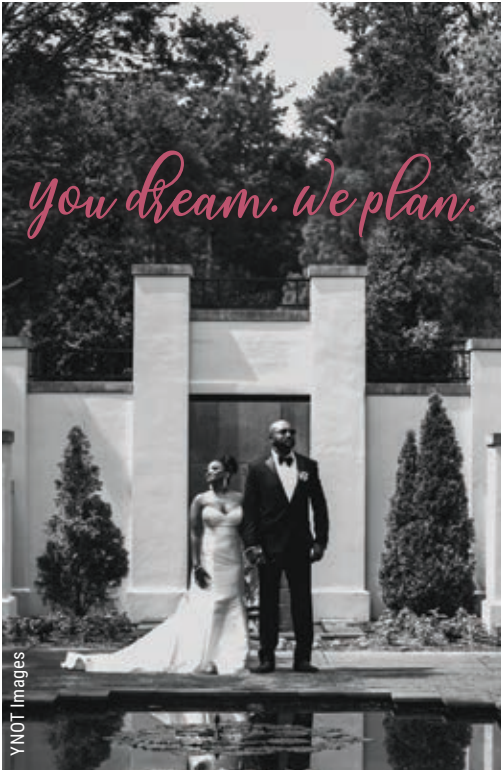
Once you receive your new driver's license in the mail, you can change over your name on your bank account. Go to your bank with your new driver's license and a certified copy of your marriage license to change your name on your accounts. Now is a good time to make a joint account with your spouse, and don't forget to order a new debit card and checks with your new last name on them.

STEP 5: EVERYTHING ELSE

Now that your name is updated with the SSA, the IRS, the DMV, and your bank, you are ready to do everything else! Luckily, these steps do not require you to go anywhere or bring any forms. Take a day and knock these out, and you will be good to go.

- Employer/payroll
- Landlord or mortgage company
- Insurance companies (health, auto, home)
- Title and registration
- Utility bills
- Credit cards
- Doctor's offices
- Voter registration
- Passport
- Post office
- Email and social media accounts





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Wedding Expenses—Who Pays?

The bride's family is entirely responsible for the wedding ceremony. The groom's family may offer to share in the cost of the reception, and the bride's family may accept, if they wish. By tradition, wedding costs are divided as follows:

The Bride (or family) pays for:

- Invitations and Announcements
- The Bridal Outfit and Trousseau
- Bridal Photographs/Video
- All Costs of the Reception
- Flowers for the Church, Attendants and Reception
- Music at the Church and Reception
- Sexton, Organist and Choir Fees
- Bridesmaids' Luncheon

- All Rented Equipment for Large Weddings and Receptions
- A Limousine for the Bride and Cars for Transportation
- Groom's Wedding Band
- Groom's Gift
- Gifts for the Bride's Attendants
- Lodging (if necessary) for Out-of-town Bridesmaids
- Bride's Personal Stationery

The Groom (or family) pays for:

- Bride's Engagement and Wedding Rings
- Marriage License
- Clergyman's Fee (\$10–\$100, inquire)
- Bride's Flowers
- Boutonnieres, Gloves, Ties for Men of Wedding Party
- Wedding Gift for the Bride

- Complete Wedding Trip or Honeymoon Expenses
- Gifts for Best Man and Ushers
- Lodging (if necessary) for Out-of-town Ushers

Optional Expenses:

- Bride's Bouquet, usually gift of the groom, may be purchased by the bride's family
- Corsages for mothers and grandmothers are usually provided by the groom, may be purchased by the bride for her mother and grandmother
- Bachelor Dinner is usually given by groom or family, but may be given by the bride's family or friends
- Rehearsal Dinner is usually given by the groom or family, but may be given by the bride's family or friends
- Attendants' Dresses are usually bought by each girl, but the bride may provide them, if she wishes

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Groom's Checklist

THREE TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ☐ Set budget and division of financial obligations
- ☐ Buy engagement ring
- ☐ Choose best man and ushers (one usher per 50 guests)
- ☐ Set appointment with clergyman
- ☐ Furnish family guest list to fiancée
- ☐ Plan honeymoon with fiancée (check passports and visas, if necessary)
- ☐ Order bride's flowers
- ☐ Order mother's flowers
- ☐ Plan correct formal attire with fiancée and groomsmen
- ☐ Make reservations for rehearsal dinner
- ☐ Take dance lessons
- ☐ Order groom's cake
- ☐ Reserve limousine and/or special transportation

TWO MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ☐ Select your wardrobe for honeymoon
- ☐ Select wedding rings with fiancée
- ☐ Choose gifts for ushers and best man
- ☐ Select bride's gift

ONE MONTH BEFORE WEDDING

- ☐ Arrange all needed insurance and review legal/medical/religious documents
- ☐ Arrange lodging and transportation for out-of-town guests
- ☐ Have medical examination and blood test

TWO WEEKS TO ONE DAY BEFORE WEDDING DAY

- ☐ Get marriage license
- ☐ Provide final guest count for rehearsal dinner to caterer or restaurant
- ☐ Arrange for clergyman's fee
- ☐ Plan bachelor dinner or party with best man
- ☐ Pick up wedding bands
- ☐ Pack for honeymoon

Best Man's Checklist

- ☐ Take charge of ushers
- ☐ Be responsible for wedding rings
- ☐ Be responsible for clergyman's fee
- ☐ Be responsible for license
- ☐ Check on all travel arrangements for honeymoon
- ☐ Prepare to toast bride and groom

Setting Your Budget

There are many details to investigate before signing any contractual agreements for your wedding services. Once you've checked off the items listed below and made your decisions, get in writing everything you expect.

| | BUDGET | EST.COST |
|----------------------|---------|----------|
| Stationery | \$_____ | _____ |
| Invitations | | _____ |
| Announcements | | _____ |
| Thank You Notes | | _____ |
| Reply Cards | | _____ |
| Monogrammed Napkins | | _____ |
| Photography | \$_____ | _____ |
| Formal Portraits | | _____ |
| Engagement | | _____ |
| Wedding | | _____ |
| Wedding Album | | _____ |
| Parent's Album | | _____ |
| Extra Prints | | _____ |
| Videography | \$_____ | _____ |
| Reception | \$_____ | _____ |
| Food | | _____ |
| Beverage | | _____ |
| Wedding Cake | | _____ |
| Groom's Cake | | _____ |
| Gratuities and Taxes | | _____ |
| Valet Parking | | _____ |
| Officer | | _____ |
| Music \$_____ | _____ | _____ |
| Wedding | | _____ |
| Reception | | _____ |
| Soloist | | _____ |
| Bridal Attire | \$_____ | _____ |
| Dress | | _____ |
| Headpiece and Veil | | _____ |
| Undergarments | | _____ |
| Jewelry | | _____ |
| Shoes | _____ | _____ |
| Trousseau | | _____ |
| Garter | | _____ |
| Preservation-Gown | | _____ |
| Hair / Makeup | | _____ |
| Nails | | _____ |
| Wedding Consultant | \$_____ | _____ |
| Transportation | \$_____ | _____ |
| Limousines | | _____ |
| Carriage, etc. | | _____ |
| Parking | | _____ |

| | BUDGET | EST.COST |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Wedding Parties | \$_____ | _____ |
| Bridal Luncheon | | _____ |
| Rehearsal Dinner | | _____ |
| Out-of-town Guests | | _____ |
| Fees | \$_____ | _____ |
| Church/Synagogue | | _____ |
| Officiant | | _____ |
| Assistants (cantors, altar boys) | | _____ |
| Gifts | \$_____ | _____ |
| Maid of Honor | | _____ |
| Best Man | | _____ |
| Bridesmaids | | _____ |
| Groomsmen | | _____ |
| Other | _____ | _____ |
| Flowers | \$_____ | _____ |
| Ceremony | | _____ |
| Bridal Bouquet | | _____ |
| Attendants' | | _____ |
| (male, female) | | _____ |
| Mothers' Corsages | | _____ |
| Reception | | _____ |
| Miscellaneous | \$_____ | _____ |
| Hotel Accommodations | | _____ |
| (for out-of-town guests) | | _____ |
| Honeymoon | \$_____ | _____ |
| Transportation | | _____ |
| Accommodations | | _____ |
| Daily Allowance | | _____ |
| Total Budget | \$ _____ | |
| Total Est. Cost | \$ _____ | |

Typical Breakdown of Wedding Expenses

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Reception Costs | 30% |
| Clothes and Gifts | 30% |
| Ceremony Costs | 11% |
| Photography | 11% |
| Invitations & Stationery | 6% |
| Miscellaneous | 12% |

Wedding Planner

THREE TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ☐ Determine budget with parents / number of guests
- ☐ Create a website for your wedding
- ☐ Type of wedding (very formal, formal, semi-formal)
- ☐ Date, time and place for ceremony
- ☐ Visit officiating clergy for consultation
- ☐ Choose bridal consultant if desired
- ☐ Type of reception
- ☐ Reserve facility for reception
- ☐ Wedding dress
- ☐ Bridal attendants
- ☐ Attendants' dresses and mothers' gowns
- ☐ Start compiling guest list
- ☐ Wedding invitations and announcements / calligrapher if desired
- ☐ Thank you and personal stationery
- ☐ Choose photographer and videographer
- ☐ Register for gifts
- ☐ Buy a wedding album, gift and guest record file
- ☐ Find a new home and plan furnishings
- ☐ Start your make-up lessons, skin care, hairstyling program
- ☐ Start workout program with personal trainer
- ☐ Ceremony and reception music
- ☐ Take dance lessons
- ☐ Meet with florist
- ☐ Make appointment for pre-marital examination
- ☐ Consult caterer
- ☐ Discuss honeymoon with groom
- ☐ Reserve a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests

TWO MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ☐ Check state requirements for marriage license
- ☐ Order bride's cake
- ☐ Address and mail invitations
- ☐ Develop system for organizing RSVPs
- ☐ Wedding gown fittings
- ☐ Attendants' gown fittings
- ☐ Shop for trousseau
- ☐ Coordinate men's formalwear attire
- ☐ Select attendants' and groom's gifts

Wedding Planner

ONE MONTH BEFORE WEDDING

- ☐ Begin dental treatments to whiten teeth
- ☐ Have programs printed
- ☐ Set appointment to have make-up and hairstyling
- ☐ Check with groom regarding wedding ring(s)
- ☐ Final fitting of wedding dress and all gowns
- ☐ Make sure musicians/DJ have playlists
- ☐ Send portrait to newspapers
- ☐ Complete arrangements for reception
- ☐ Arrange transportation for out-of-town guests
- ☐ Arrange for moving (if necessary)
- ☐ Arrange for party rental equipment
- ☐ Arrange transportation to ceremony and reception
- ☐ Arrange for your joint or new checking accounts
- ☐ Have all charge accounts changed / change of address to post office
- ☐ Acknowledge each gift as it arrives
- ☐ Arrange for yoga class to help with stress from the above
- ☐ Pick up marriage license

TWO WEEKS TO ONE DAY BEFORE WEDDING DAY

- ☐ Arrange final seating for the rehearsal/reception
- ☐ Write toasts for rehearsal dinner
- ☐ Check all gowns and accessories / break in wedding shoes at home
- ☐ Complete trousseau and going away clothes
- ☐ Write checks to vendors, put in envelope and give to event planner to distribute
- ☐ Give caterer final estimate of attendance at reception
- ☐ Discuss specific shots with photographer
- ☐ Make arrangements with Best Man to return tuxedo rentals
- ☐ Attend bridesmaid's luncheon and present gifts
- ☐ Deliver welcome bags to hotel
- ☐ Arrange any last minute transportation
- ☐ Put all wedding clothes in one place
- ☐ Provide any readers scripture for readings
- ☐ Arrange wedding day time schedule with event planner
- ☐ Get lots of beauty rest

WEDDING DAY

- ☐ Relax – Have a leisurely breakfast
- ☐ Take time to bathe and dress leisurely
- ☐ Make-up by an artist, manicure, hair styled
- ☐ Leave all details to those responsible... *This is your day. Enjoy!*

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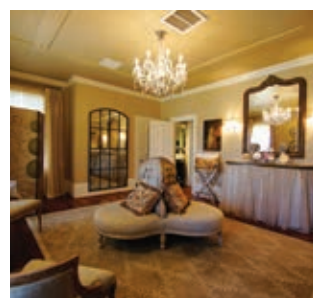
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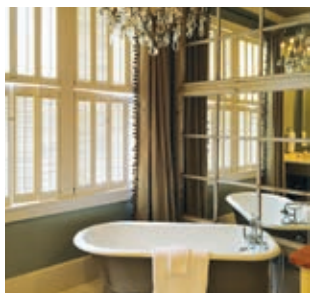
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Advantages of Friday and Sunday Weddings



If you decide to have your wedding on a Friday or a Sunday, you'll reap several rewards: both financial and otherwise. You'll save time, you'll probably save a significant amount of money, and you'll find that your guests may appreciate having a Saturday free to spend time with you and the other guests they know.

Maximize Your Dollar

For Friday or Sunday weddings, the majority of banquet facilities, photographers, video producers, musicians/entertainers and limousine services are much more willing to negotiate in order to reach a price that suits your budget. Vendors tend to see Friday and Sunday as bonus days, a time when they can earn income. Savings on these services can really add up, making this option a great way to save money without having to sacrifice the quality of your wedding.

Save Time

On a Friday, you'll probably have your wedding in the evening, which means that the ceremony is followed immediately by dinner. This means that you will avoid the extra cost and hassle of a one-to-two hour interim reception or cocktail party. Having the ceremony and reception back to back may ensure more people at the church ceremony.

Additionally, a Friday/Sunday wedding frees up at least one day of the weekend, generally making your family, friends and guests more appreciative of the extra time, especially if they are traveling.

Save the Date

Planning for a Friday or a Sunday wedding makes it much more likely that you will be able to reserve the church, hall, music and other services on the date of your choice. Choosing a Friday or Sunday date allows you to avoid making several calls to numerous vendors, only to hear, "Sorry, we're booked on that date."

Rehearsal Is Easy

Restaurants are usually thrilled to have rehearsal dinners booked on Thursdays or other evenings during the week, since those are typically their slower business days. You will find a more relaxed atmosphere and the staff will be more attentive to your party's needs.

In selecting a Friday or Sunday date for your event, you'll help both your budget and your odds of getting exactly the wedding you want, while also allowing for more time dedicated to finalizing last minute details. You can use the extra day to catch your breath, and use the extra money to purchase something special.





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Wording Your Invitation

by Andrea Watson, *Fine Hand Calligraphy, Etc.*

As a calligrapher I see a great many types and styles of wedding invitations, ranging from exquisitely engraved beauties to DIY specimens. Unfortunately, none of them is immune to error. When ordering invitations from a stationer or creating them yourself, you are the one who bears ultimate responsibility for the finished product. Don't rely on others; make it your business to know proper forms and usage.

Here are a few common errors to avoid, along with some other hints that will make your invitation not only beautiful but correct.

Honour of your presence/pleasure of your company: The phrase *honour of your presence* should be used only when the ceremony is held in a house of worship. This excludes even very formal weddings held in elegant hotels or clubs. If it isn't in a house of worship, the correct phrase is *request the pleasure of your company*. This is by far the most common error I see.

Time expression: evening begins at 6 p.m. That means that any time between noon and 6 p.m. is afternoon (*e.g.* half after five in the afternoon). Many etiquette mavens say that stating *in the afternoon* or *in the evening* is unnecessary. Their reasoning is that recipients will assume your wedding ceremony is at a reasonable time of day. These phrases sound so delightfully romantic, though, that using one may be irresistible. In that case, take care to apply it accurately.

State names: do not abbreviate in the wording of your invitation or follow the state name with a ZIP code. The return address on the envelope flap should also have the state name spelled out in full and should be followed by the ZIP code.

Capitalization: avoid unnecessary capitals. Some word-processing programs and online services automatically capitalize the

first word of every line. Take the time to check and manually change these supplied, but often incorrect, capitals.

Punctuation: avoid unnecessary commas. In names that are followed by numerals it is not necessary to use a comma before the numeral. Strictly speaking, it is not incorrect to do so, but neither is it necessary, so don't clutter up the name. When a man's name includes Jr. it may be so abbreviated and should be preceded by a comma. If you choose to spell the word out, the comma is not required, nor is capitalization. Thus, Mr. James Richard Gibson, Jr. is correct and so is Mr. James Richard Gibson junior.

Choice of font: there are countless fonts available and choosing one for your invitation can be both time-consuming and dizzying. For script fonts, one shortcut is to check the capitals that will be frequently used in your invitation and addresses. Obviously, M is everywhere (Mr. and Mrs.). The capitals in your and your fiancé's names are of paramount importance. Those in your hometown and state will appear in your invitation, return address, and the addresses of many recipients.

This is a very basic set of rules. For complexities, particularly in the case of names of those giving the wedding (*e.g.* divorced parents, the bride and groom themselves, etc.), you should consult a definitive etiquette source, such as *Crane's Wedding Blue Book* or *Emily Post's Wedding Etiquette*. Beware of sites available online; they themselves are often imperfectly edited.





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Wedding Program Pointers

by Andrea Watson, *The Fine Hand Calligraphy, Etc.*

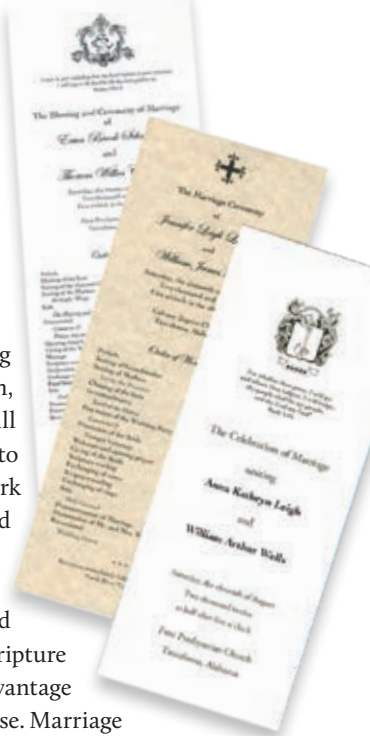
Wedding programs are becoming increasingly popular today. Although they may not be absolutely essential for a traditional wedding ceremony, they are a virtual necessity for ceremonies that combine elements from different religions and cultures or if the bride and groom have written their own vows. Should special songs or prayers be included, a wedding program will enable guests to participate more fully in the service. In any case, an attractively designed and carefully thought-out wedding program that complements your other wedding stationery will serve as a lovely record of the event and its participants.

Essential items to include are (1) the title of the event, (2) the names of the bride and groom, (3) day and date, (4) place, (5) the order of the service which also notes titles of musical selections and soloists if any, as well as citations to sources of readings, (6) officiants, (7) parents and grandparents, (8) members of the wedding, and (9) any helpful translations and explanations of rituals. The first four elements can easily be combined in a title phrase with appropriate line breaks, *e.g.* The Celebration of Marriage / uniting / Anna Kathryn Leigh / and / William Arthur Wells / Saturday, the eleventh of August / Two thousand twelve / at half after five o'clock / First Presbyterian Church / Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Other optional elements that you may wish to include are expressions of thanks to parents, tributes to deceased relatives, a special verse of scripture or poetry, and other useful information, *e.g.* directions to the reception venue and/ or your new names and address following the

phrase *At home*. If your wedding will be in a church, the pastor will likely want to approve any artwork you wish to use and proofread your program to check terminology and the citations to scripture readings. Take advantage of this free expertise. Marriage may be properly called a sacrament in some churches, not in others. Presbyterians have cross bearers; Episcopalians have crucifers. Your clergy will know the correct forms and be happy to help you. Music directors can also provide advice for the accurate listing of musical selections.

It is possible to produce an attractive wedding program yourself at very little cost using your own computer and printer. You should be proficient with word processing or layout software and be absolutely certain that you have the time and patience to do a thorough job. Good design skills and meticulous attention to spelling and punctuation are essential, also. Cutting and assembly require tools and time. If you are unsure of your abilities and resources in any of these areas, seek help from a professional graphic designer or a reputable printer who offers these services. Even when working with a professional, you must still exercise your own best judgment and taste. When it comes to creating a wedding program that will become a treasured keepsake, remember always that there is much elegance in simplicity.



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Reception Checklist

*When planning your wedding, set a budget and stick with it.
The following checklist will help you keep track of your expenses.*

The Location

- ☐ Proximity to the ceremony site
- ☐ Date availability and discount days to consider
- ☐ Rental fee and what it includes
- ☐ Time allowed to decorate the space for the day of the wedding
- ☐ Using the location for a ceremony as well, if desired
- ☐ Whether there will be other receptions that day
- ☐ Number of guests the space will accommodate comfortably
- ☐ Terms of liability insurance
- ☐ Ratio of staff to guests
- ☐ Overtime charges
- ☐ Postponement/cancellation refund policy
- ☐ Gratuities and taxes
- ☐ Availability of valet parking
- ☐ Clean restroom facilities
- ☐ Room for changing
- ☐ Means of handicapped access
- ☐ The availability of a nursery or babysitter

Food and Drink

- ☐ Meal options, from a seated dinner to a dessert-only reception
- ☐ Special meals to accommodate restricted diets
- ☐ Price per guest
- ☐ Method of payment
- ☐ A date for tasting menu and tour of the site with a wedding in progress
- ☐ Dessert table policy
- ☐ Availability of non-alcoholic beer, wine, and beverages
- ☐ Top-shelf wine and alcohol vs. house brands
- ☐ Cost of open bar vs. one/two hour cocktail service or host's per-drink tab arrangement

- ☐ Possibility of bringing in your alcohol and amount of corking fee
- ☐ Supplier of the wedding cake and cutting fee
- ☐ On-site wedding coordinator

Miscellaneous

- ☐ Musicians
- ☐ Florist
- ☐ Photographer
- ☐ Videographer
- ☐ Cake knife/server
- ☐ Food for band, etc.
- ☐ Wedding guest book
- ☐ Seating plans
- ☐ Place cards
- ☐ Decorations
- ☐ Favors
- ☐ List of photos

Basic Rentals for Off-site locations

- ☐ Tent
- ☐ Chairs
- ☐ Tables
- ☐ China
- ☐ Cutlery
- ☐ Glassware
- ☐ Tableskirts
- ☐ Dance floor
- ☐ Serving trays and dishes
- ☐ Linens
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Heaters and/or air conditioners
- ☐ Restroom facilities
- ☐ Electrical outlets
- ☐ Bar equipment



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Don't Forget to Write!

by Andrea Watson, *The Fine Hand: Calligraphy, Etc.*

You lucky girl! You've got a great guy, a stunning diamond ring on your finger, fabulous wedding plans in the works, and tons of people offering to give parties and showers for you. No princess ever led such a charmed life, and you deserve it, don't you? We'll see.

All these people who are being so wonderful to you are going to have to be thanked, and thanked promptly. Don't think for one minute that you have a year in which to acknowledge wedding gifts. That particular etiquette theory applies to gift-giving only. Gifts, once received, should be acknowledged within two weeks. Two, count 'em, weeks!!!!

So...don't forget to write! In this era of electronic communication, it's tempting to send thanks via e-mail. That may be adequate for some of your contemporaries, but those who truly love you will treasure a handwritten note, however brief, that is heartfelt and timely.

Your own immediate reaction to a present (provided it is not "EEUWWWW!!!!") is the best subject matter for your thank-you note. For those writer's-block days, here are a few stock phrases to get you started:

Dear Katie, Leave it to you to pick the perfect gift for us! The luxurious towels are our favorite color and will look wonderful in our new place...

Dear Mrs. Urquhart, Josh and I are honored to have received the crystal epergne that belonged to his great aunt Arabella Stanhope. We will cherish this heirloom throughout our lives, and it will remind of us of our heritage..."



Dear Aunt Patrice, You were so kind to offer to house two of my bridesmaids during the wedding weekend. It's nice to know that they will be staying under your protection in your beautiful home...

Dear Uncle Harry, You are the most generous of uncles! Josh and I are going to use the money you sent us to buy ...

Lay in a supply of attractive informal notes and pens you like to write with. Don't forget to buy lots of pretty postage stamps. Keep an organized list of each gift or special kindness (remember, not every gift is tangible), its giver, date received, and the date thanks were sent. When you've been to a shower and received fifty gifts, write three or four notes a day, and you'll be finished in two weeks. Think of the motherly chiding you'll spare yourself. Think of the good will you'll create with your mother-in-law to be. Best of all, think of how smug you'll feel!



Thank-you notes don't have to be a chore and a bore



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How to Cut a Wedding Cake

The most important info is to

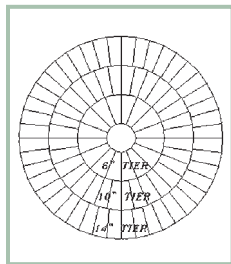
- (1) remove the top tier which is usually saved and
- (2) obviously remove the topper and any other non-edible decorations, then
- (3) start from the top and work your way down the cake.

Finally, if there are more than 3 tiers, remove the tiers before cutting to avoid having the tiers slip off while cutting.

General Guidelines

The first step is to use the right knife. Always use a sharp, thin knife. The cuts should be made by first inserting the knife straight down into the cake, and then by pulling the knife at an angle toward the outer edge. Before the next cut, wipe the knife clean with a damp cloth.

Three-Tiered Round Cake



1. Start from the top by removing the 6" tier, which is usually the bride and groom's cake to be saved.

2. Cut a circle about two inches from the outer edge of the 10" tier.

3. Work from this circle and make vertical cuts about one inch apart, until the ring is completely sliced.

4. Use the same starting procedure and cut another two-inch ring, again slicing into one-inch pieces.

5. Repeat the procedure until the tier is completed; then repeat entire process on 14" tier until all the cake has been served.

Source: <http://www.elegantaffair-ca.com/weddingcake.php>

Three-Tiered Square Cake

1. Start from the top by removing the 6" tier, which is usually the bride and groom's cake to be saved.

2. Work from any side to cut a horizontal line about two inches from the outer edge of the tier.

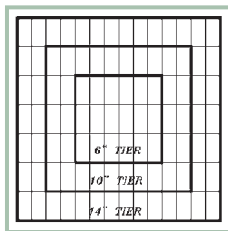
3. Slice from right to left to make vertical cuts about one inch apart, until the entire row has been sliced.

4. Cut another horizontal line two inches from the new edge, and slice this row.

5. Repeat until the entire tier has been cut.

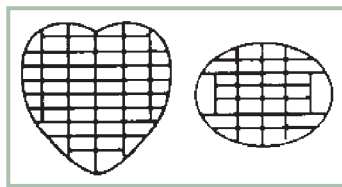
6. You should produce five rows in the 10" tier.

7. Move to the 14" and repeat the process for seven rows.



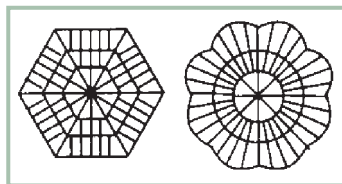
Heart and Oval Cakes

Heart and oval shaped cakes are cut in a similar fashion as square and rectangular cakes.



Hexagonal and Petal Cakes

Hexagonal shaped and petal shaped cakes are cut up in the same way as for round cakes.



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Honeymoon Along Alabama's Gulf Coast

by Linda Holloway

The Beach Club: The best day of your life has come to an end, and memories replace the “to do” list. Post wedding fatigue is real, and the last thing you need is to wait in line at the airport. Enjoy a destination that fulfills your honeymoon dreams that is only a few hours away. The Beach Club Resort and Spa delivers the atmosphere and amenities you crave. Play and relax on 86 acres of natural beauty with private, white-sand beaches spanning the length of nearly five football fields. Here, nature and activities combine to celebrate romance.

Located along the Fort Morgan Peninsula, The Beach Club is known as a premier full-service resort. The Beach Club offers 1–5-bedroom condos, in Gulf-front towers and lakeside cottages. Our 1-bedroom condo, overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, was where the balcony became

our oasis. Below, there are two swings overlooking the wind-swept dunes—claim your spot early for sunset.

The Beach Club has a bounty of amenities. To qualify for all of them, book your stay through Spectrum Resorts. An acclaimed Spectrum Resorts “Clean Bed Guarantee” promises every guest will be greeted with a freshly laundered white duvet on every bed. The resort’s GEMs (Guest Experience Managers) are ready to assist with all things romantic. How about flower petals and champagne in the room when you arrive?

Additional amenities include priority reservations in the resort’s restaurants and advanced beach chair reservations that guarantee first row. Call ahead and the staff will save time by grocery shopping for your selected items, and they will be waiting in the fridge



Photo courtesy of
Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism



Photo courtesy of
The Beach Club by Spectrum Resorts

and cabinets upon arrival. Be sure to dine at the resort's romantic Coast restaurant, and request the veranda overlooking the Gulf.

There are five outdoor pools, each with a hot tub, as well as an indoor pool. Poolside service is available seasonally offering food and drink options. For privacy, cabanas are available for rent at the Clubhouse Pool, and they come stocked with fresh fruit and cold water. If you are visiting late spring through fall, check out the hub of the resort, The Village Lawn. You'll find multiple food trucks and nightly entertainment.

Adventure seekers can try water sports such as jet ski rentals, parasailing and paddle boarding. Tennis anyone? The Racquet Club is amazing. Relax at the Spa and Salon with a couple's treatment. Nothing evokes honeymoon memories like your last moonlight walk along the surf at The Beach Club.

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach

Be sure to visit Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, with scenic undeveloped beachfront and Historic Fort Morgan. Hiking meets dramatic views in Gulf State Park. Try the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trails system with 28 trails that wind through the park connecting the cities of Gulf Shores and Orange

Beach. Here, enjoy biking, hiking or jogging and end with the great finale...stunning sunsets from the Gulf State Park Pier.

Visit the unique Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo, and stop by the giraffe feeding station. For lunch, try the zoo's Safari Club restaurant. For fresh seafood dining options, request outdoor seating at Ginny Lane Bar & Grill in Orange Beach located at the Wharf. For an upscale dinner experience, reserve a corner seat at Fisher's Upstairs—an adventure in culinary excellence. Here, Orange Beach Marina serves as the perfect backdrop for a romantic evening to celebrate the first days of forever.

For Beach Club reservations, visit
<https://thebeachclub.spectrumresorts.com/>

For Gulf Shores tourist information, visit
www.gulfshores.com

Ginny Lane Bar & Grill



Photo courtesy of
Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism

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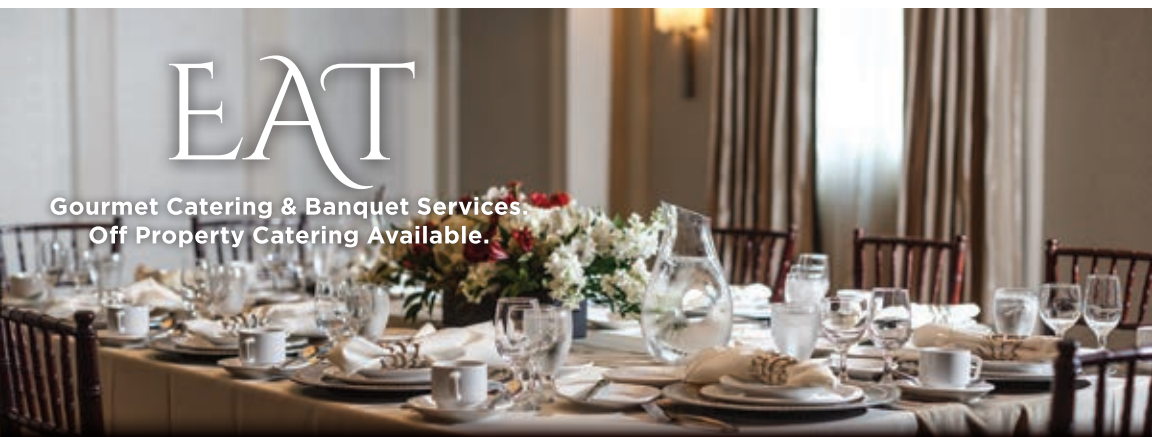
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