

Chapter 1

Incorporating Etiquette into Your Wedding

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- ▶ Properly using technology during wedding planning
- ▶ Determining the budget and planning duties
- ▶ Coordinating all the details
- ▶ Acting appropriately on — and after — your big day

Now that you're newly engaged, it's time to start the planning! As exhilarating and fun as wedding planning can be, you need to keep in mind that weddings scream etiquette more than just about any other event in life, so, before you get started, take some time to understand the guidelines — which is where this book comes in.

From the moment you become engaged to the moment you and your beloved wave farewell to your guests after the reception (and beyond!), this book provides all you need to know to plan your wedding, walk down the aisle, and receive your guests with grace, dignity, and good manners. This chapter introduces you to the essentials. Gracious planning, and best wishes!



Etiquette (in other words, good manners) is a way of honoring and showing respect to other people in any circumstance, no matter what.

Sharing the News of Your Engagement

Announcing your engagement can be thrilling, intimidating, stressful, or all of the above, depending on whom you're telling. But properly announcing your engagement is more than just informing your family and phoning your friends: It's alerting the media. (Just kidding — sort of.)

Really, though, you need to give careful thought to how and when you tell your parents, children (if you have any), siblings, grandparents, other relatives, friends, and co-workers. What should you do if someone objects to your engagement? How do you word the newspaper announcement? And what about save-the-date cards — are those really necessary?

Chapter 2 covers all these concerns in detail. It also explains everything you need to know about the etiquette of having engagement parties and handling the unfortunate situation of calling off the engagement.

Putting Technology to Proper Use during Wedding Planning

A wedding Web site is an excellent tool for publishing details about your engagement and wedding. For example, you can provide a place for guests to select their meal preferences, as well as share information about accommodations for out-of-town guests. You can even tell your personal engagement story or the tale of how you met. And don't forget to share photos — just make sure they're appropriate for all your guests.

Chapter 3 gives you all the Web site etiquette and pointers you need to know. It also discusses the use of e-mail during wedding planning. In some instances, e-mail is completely inappropriate (such as in place of formal wedding invitations or thank-you notes), but there are a few times when using e-mail is okay.



As wonderful as a wedding Web site can be, know that such sites (along with e-mail) don't take the place of formal announcements and invitations. After all, Grandma probably doesn't have access to the Internet, and even if she does, she still wants a printed invitation for a keepsake.

Establishing the Budget and Planning Responsibilities

Over the years, the people responsible for funding the wedding have changed. Traditionally, the bride's family paid for a good portion of the costs, but today about 30 percent of couples pay for their own weddings, sometimes with a little help from both their families.

Knowing who pays for what can be tricky. Trickier still is graciously managing overly ambitious (yes, pushy) people who want to have a major say in how you plan your wedding. Fear not! You don't have to go at it alone. Chapter 4 focuses on handling budget and planning responsibilities with grace.

Making Plans for Your Ceremony and Reception

Although etiquette certainly plays a major role on your wedding day, good manners are also crucial when you're planning the basics of your ceremony and reception, as you find out in this section.

Understanding different ceremony styles

In addition to choosing whether to have a formal or informal wedding, you have to choose to have either a religious or secular service — both of these decisions somewhat determine your ceremony's overall style. Various faiths/denominations have unique customs. A Christian wedding is vastly different from a Hindu wedding, for example. Military weddings have a certain protocol. Destination weddings and commitment ceremonies involve their own etiquette guidelines. Each of these choices helps define your particular wedding style.

Chapter 5 gives etiquette considerations for a variety of wedding ceremony styles.

Deciding your ceremony's details

After you settle on a ceremony style, it's time for the fun stuff: figuring out the ceremony details. You have to choose everything from the date and time to the content of your programs — all while keeping your manners intact and ensuring that the ceremony itself is appropriate. Here are a few of the topics I cover in Chapter 6:

- ✓ Making sure your ceremony style matches your location
- ✓ Agreeing on a date and selecting a time that works for your ceremony's level of formality
- ✓ Graciously communicating to the officiant your desires for the ceremony and working well with the officiant throughout the entire planning process
- ✓ Selecting your music, special readings, and vows

- ✓ Appropriately honoring deceased loved ones
- ✓ Assembling wedding programs
- ✓ Planning your transportation to and from the ceremony

Preparing for your reception

After you become engaged, the ceremony and reception sites are among the first things you need to select and book (after the officiant, if possible). In fact, many couples pick their wedding dates from the list of available dates they get from their chosen venues. (Gee, how romantic!)

After you've booked a site, what do you have to consider as you plan the rest of your reception? Chapter 7 is your go-to chapter for helpful etiquette guidelines about this step of the planning process.

Working Out the Details of Your Wedding

Working out the details of your wedding means selecting your attendants, choosing appropriate attire, assembling your guest list, putting together invitations and wedding announcements, giving and receiving gifts graciously, and attending a variety of festivities before the wedding. This section introduces guidelines on how to effortlessly navigate through these details.

Choosing your wedding party

After you know the style of your wedding, you can figure out the appropriate number of attendants to have. You probably have two special people in mind to be your maid or matron of honor and your best man, but you need to come up with a few more attendants, too. I discuss the main wedding-party considerations in Chapter 8.



Carefully considering the bridal party you want to surround yourself with on this special occasion is an important part of ensuring that your wedding day becomes a wonderful memory for years to come.

Shopping for wedding attire

Wedding attire doesn't have to translate to fashion disaster for your attendants. A little planning, a little compromising, and *voilà* — everyone wins.

You can have the wedding of your dreams without sentencing your attendants to the wedding of their nightmares. Chapter 9 covers the important points you need to know to help you choose wedding attire that's both appropriate and stylish. It also discusses how to outfit the happy couple.

Putting together the guest list

A cold, hard fact of life is that unless you're a gazillionaire, you have to make your guest list match your budget, which often means you can't invite everyone you've ever known. Some guests will be on your *must*-invite list; some will be on your *should*-invite list; others will be on your *could*-invite list. Chapter 10 explains all the etiquette details for assembling your guest list.

Assembling invitations and announcements

Invitations and announcements should, of course, match the style (formal or informal) of your wedding. But you're no longer forced to choose either white or ivory. Not at all. Today you can choose from a beautiful array of wedding stationery — something to fit every wedding style and budget.

But you can't stop after you pick out your invitation style. You have to word your invitation properly and then figure out how to stuff all the enclosures into one nice, neat packet to mail to your guests. And, of course, you have to address those packets correctly, too. Find out all these details in Chapter 11, which also explains when to mail your invitations, what to do if your wedding is canceled or postponed after the invitations are out, and when (and why) to send wedding announcements.

Giving and receiving gifts

Current research indicates that more than 91 percent of couples register for — and receive — gifts from an average of 200 guests. Most of these gifts are between \$85 and \$100. Not to mention you and your spouse-to-be have to give your own gifts to all your wedding party members and a few other special helpers. With so many people involved, you better believe you have a few etiquette guidelines to follow as you register for, receive, and give gifts. Chapter 12 includes details to help you get through the gift process gracefully.

Acting appropriately at prewedding parties

Wedding festivities aren't limited to just the big day. Prewedding celebrations include bridal showers and the all-important rehearsal dinner. Like at the wedding, guidelines for etiquette prevail at these parties, too. Have fun at your parties, but keep your manners intact! Chapter 13 discusses these events and the appropriate etiquette guidelines that go with each one.

Behaving on and after Your Wedding Day

You've finally arrived at your big day, and everyone's etiquette antennae are up and running. You just have to get through the ceremony and reception, and then you can focus on happily ever after. Here's what you need to know and where you can find it:



- ✓ **The ceremony:** Chapter 14 guides you and your star players through the nerve-racking event known as the ceremony.

Knowledge is power. Knowing what you're supposed to do will help you remain confident and radiant as you marry the love of your life.

- ✓ **The reception:** Finally; it's time for the party you've waited for all your life . . . your reception! Take note: The reception is no time to throw etiquette to the wind. After all, you've had a wonderful wedding up until now; why give your guests a lasting memory that, at best, embarrasses you or, at worst, seriously offends someone else? For all the details on reception etiquette, check out Chapter 15.
- ✓ **After the big day:** After the wedding day is over, you need to tie up a few loose ends to make your wedding experience a complete etiquette success and to give yourselves a positive place to start your new life together. Chapter 16 is your guide to a happy ending.