

How to Address Your Wedding Invitations

Before you begin addressing, make sure that you have a well organized guest list, complete with full names and addresses. Using 3 x 5 cards gives you flexibility and a simple way to record names and addresses, acceptances, regrets and thank you's. This also allows you to separate your guests into three categories:

1. Those to receive a wedding announcement.
2. Guests to receive an invitation to the ceremony only.
3. Guests who will be invited to both the ceremony and the reception.

Your invitations should be addressed by hand in black ink. To create an added touch of elegance, you may wish to call upon a friend with beautiful handwriting or hire a calligrapher to do the addressing.

Traditionally, two envelopes are used for wedding invitations and announcements. The inner envelope, which may be plain or lined, is without glue and remains unsealed. It is used to enclose the invitation or announcement and any accompanying cards. It also insures the delivery of the invitation itself in a clean envelope. The outer envelope has a glued flap and is used for the complete mailing address. The guest's full name is always used on the outer envelope followed by the street address.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Smith
908 South Main Street
Hingham, Massachusetts 02043

Nicknames or abbreviations should be avoided when possible except for Mr., Mrs., Dr., Jr., etc. and for military rank. You may use an initial if you do not know the full name, or if the person never uses his given name. Cities, states, and numbered streets are written out in full. Remember to include zip codes.

The inner envelope always carries the last names only with no address.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith

The phrase "and family" should be avoided. If you wish to include younger children, they should be mentioned by first name, according to age, on the line following that of their parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith
Thomas, Cynthia, Mark

These names should appear on the inner envelope only. The outer envelope would be simply addressed to the parents. Never write "No Children" on the invitation or envelope. If you do not want children to attend, the situation should be handled verbally.

Formally, dates of single guests should be sent separate invitations. You may wish to enclose a personal note in the invitation of a single guest saying, "Please bring an escort" or "Please bring Miss Marie Thompson".

Two unmarried people who reside at the same address may be sent a single invitation. Their names would appear on separate lines in alphabetic order.

Miss (Ms.) Laura Jones
Mr. Thomas Smith

This same format may also be used when inviting a married couple, if the wife has kept her maiden name or uses a professional title.

Divorced women are formally addressed by their maiden name plus their married name.

Mrs. Jones Smith

However, contemporary etiquette does allow for the use of the woman's first name.

Mrs. Laura Smith

A widowed woman is always addressed using her husband's first and last names.

Mrs. Thomas Smith

In addressing clergymen, military officers and medical doctors, always use their titles in full.

The Right Reverend William Prentice
Doctor and Mrs. Martin Swift
Colonel and Mrs. Quinlan Roberts

The return address may be written, imprinted or embossed on the flap of the outer envelope. Your return address should be included on the outer envelope so the invitation can be returned to you if the address is incorrect, or if the invitation is not deliverable for some reason.