

The wording of a wedding invitation should respect the importance of the event. It should be straightforward yet personable and reflective of the couple's cultural, traditional and spiritual values. Here you will find some guidelines to help you decide the words that are right for you:

It can seem a daunting task to choose the wording for your wedding invitation, but when analysed, there are distinct sections that can be approached independently, making it a far less formidable task.

The Host Line

The Invitation should be sent by the people who are hosting the wedding. Commonly it is the bride's parents, but it may well be the groom's parents, both parents or even the couple themselves. The wording becomes a little more complicated if there are divorced or family hosts who will need to be recognised individually.

The following are some guidelines for your consideration:

Bride's Parents

Mr and Mrs David Smith

Bride's Parents – Divorced and not remarried

Mr David Smith and Mrs Susan Smith

Bride's Parents – Divorced and mother remarried

Mr David Smith and Mrs Susan Williams

Bride's Mother together with new husband

Mr and Mrs Samuel Williams

Bride's father with new wife together with bride's mother with new husband

Mr and Mrs David Smith
and Mr and Mrs Samuel Williams

Bride's father with new wife together with bride's mother not remarried

Mr and Mrs David Smith
and Mrs Susan Smith

Groom's Parents

Mr and Mrs Simon Parker

Bride's Parents together with Groom's Parents

Mr and Mrs David Smith
together with Mr and Mrs Simon Parker

or

Mr and Mrs David Smith
and Mr and Mrs Simon Parker

The Bride and Groom

Lilly Smith and Jacob Parker

or

Lilly and Jacob

Deceased Parent

A deceased parent is not normally named on a wedding invitation, but more likely in the wedding program.

Request Line

Traditionally, this line should read 'request the honour of your presence...' if the ceremony is to be held in a place of worship and 'request the pleasure of your company...' if the ceremony is to be held anywhere else.

You may choose to word this section less formally such as 'would like to extend this invitation...':

Recipient Line

This is the area left blank for you to handwrite or calligraph your guest's name. If you choose not to write your guest's name on the invitation, you must be sure to address the envelope in which the invitation will arrive, carefully and precisely, with only the name/s of the guest/s whom will be invited to the wedding, written on the envelope.

The degree of formality in addressing the Invitation should be reflective of the event you are planning. Typically, it would read –
'Mr and Mrs Robert Hilditch'

or

'Robert and Sarah Hilditch'

Bride's name

Traditionally this line includes the bride's first and middle names, but not her surname as this would be indicated by her parent's name in the Host Line – Lilly Louise...

If the bride is hosting the wedding or the host is unrelated by name to the bride, it is acceptable for her to include her surname – Lilly Louise Smith...

To or And

Traditionally this line is worded ...marriage of Lilly Louise 'to' Mr Jacob Alexander Parker

or

...wedding of Lilly Louise 'and' Mr Jacob Alexander Parker.

Groom's name

Traditionally this line states the groom's full name, including his title and surname – Mr Jacob Alexander Parker...

In less formal weddings it is acceptable to leave off the title – Jacob Alexander Parker...

Date and time lines

Traditionally the day of the week follows the month of the year, and the year is spelt out in full on the following line –
Saturday, the twenty sixth of March
two thousand and five

This line may begin with 'on' but it is equally correct to omit this preposition.

The time line usually begins with 'at' and follows – 'half after four o'clock in the afternoon' or 'seven o'clock in the evening'.
Alternatively am and pm abbreviations, set in lower case with or without punctuation, may be used but this is less formal.

Location lines

Whenever an address is well-known, a street address is not necessary, however the suburb or city can be included. A postcode is never included even if stating the full street address –

'The Church of England

Davis Road, Toorak'

Reception lines

If the reception is at the same location as the ceremony, it is appropriate to write – 'Reception immediately to follow' or 'Reception to follow' or 'and afterward at the reception'.

This would imply the reception was to commence in a reasonable time after the ceremony. If the ceremony is much earlier than the reception, the time of the reception should be indicated to allow guests to plan accordingly –

'Dinner Reception

Half after seven o'clock in the evening'

or

If the reception is at a different location to the ceremony, you may include 2 lines such as –

'Reception to follow

Grand Hyatt, Melbourne'

or

'Dinner reception

Half after seven o'clock in the evening

Grand Hyatt, Melbourne'

More formally the reception details would be included on a separate Reception Card. The advantage of using a separate card is the opportunity to include more details if required such as –

‘Dinner reception
Half after seven o’clock in the evening
Ballroom
Grand Hyatt, Melbourne’

If using a Reception Card, the attire line (if required) is included on this card and not on the Invitation.

If the reception is to be a meal, this should be indicated – ‘Dinner and dancing’ or ‘Dinner reception to follow’.

Response lines

Traditionally, the request for a reply is positioned discreetly in the bottom left hand corner of the invitation and reads – ‘R.s.v.p.’

This stands for the French words ‘Repondez, s’il vous plait’ which translates as Please respond, so the preface of ‘Please’ before ‘R.s.v.p.’ is unnecessary and incorrect.

This is usually followed by an address and date for return of the reply. This address is usually the bride’s mother’s address or the host of the wedding’s address :

‘R.s.v.p. 12th of May
42 Esperance Terrace
Melbourne VIC 3000’

or if the replies are to be sent to another party –

‘R.s.v.p. 12th of May
Ms Alice Peters
24 Broadview Drive
Sydney NSW 2000’

Occasionally a telephone number or email address is also included but this is less formal.

Alternatively, you may choose to send a Response Card together with your Invitation. A Response Card will have pre-formatted text that your guest completes to indicate their attendance or non-attendance to your wedding.

It is useful to write – in very light pencil – a number on the reverse side of the Response Card that you can match to your guest list in the event a guest does not include their name on the returned card.

If using a Response Card, the Rsvp details are included on this card and not on the Invitation.

Attire line

There is an unspoken rule that the dress code should never be written on the Invitation, but should be determined by the time of day for the wedding – morning or afternoon weddings would suggest lounge suits for the male guests and if the wedding is set for after six o’clock, this would suggest black tie. At a particularly formal wedding where dinner is followed by dancing, white tie would be appropriate.

With that said, guests should dress to match the occasion – it would be incongruous to wear formal attire to a relaxed wedding and likewise to wear casual clothes to a formal event.

As a courtesy for guests who may not understand these guidelines, many couples choose to write ‘Black tie’ or ‘Black Tie preferred’ or ‘Lounge Suit’ discreetly positioned at the bottom of the Invitation on the right hand side.

If you are using Reception Cards, the attire line is included on this card and not on the Invitation.

Parking details

If you are able to provide valet parking (pronounced Val-et not Vallay’ for your guests, you may like to include a line on the Reception Card to this affect such as – ‘Valet parking’ or ‘Parking available’.

It is not considered appropriate to include this information on an Invitation.

Envelope addressing

An invitation to a wedding is a personal and special piece of correspondence. As such it should always be handwritten or calligraphed. Computer printed envelopes or labels have no place in wedding stationery. If you do not like your handwriting, consider asking a family member or friend who may be happy to address your envelopes as a gift to you both.

The wording on an envelope should be the same as on the Invitation –

‘Mr and Mrs Robert Hilditch’.