

When you embark upon the momentous task of planning a wedding, there is much to consider and many decisions to be made. Here you will find some interesting information on wedding stationery which will help you decide on the items of stationery that best suit your needs.

There are a multitude of individual items that make up a suite of wedding stationery. You may choose as many or as few as you like, but whatever your choice, it is wise to consider them all in the planning stages as they often form the common thread that visually ties a wedding together.

Whilst the invitation is most often the first piece of stationery in your wedding suite, there are many different pieces you can choose to complement the event.

You may decide to use matching stationery throughout the day with Order of Service booklet covers at the ceremony or Placecards and table numbers at the reception.

Your stationery should set the tone of the event you are planning and most importantly it should reflect your tastes and personalities. Wedding stationery can be as formal or as relaxed as you choose but it would seem incongruous to choose a formal invitation if you are planning a relaxed wedding, and likewise to choose a simple invitation if you are planning a grand event.

Consider the season in which the wedding will be held – autumn suggests rich reds and deep auburns whereas spring and summer suggest clear, bright blues and greens. The colours you chose will also suggest a tone for the wedding – sophisticated, muted colours hint at a more formal occasion whereas fun, bright colours suggest a more relaxed event. Whatever your colour choices, you must feel comfortable with them and know that they represent your personalities.

It is helpful to compile a palette of colours that you will be using throughout your wedding – the bride's dress, the groom's favourite shade, the bridesmaids' dresses, the flowers and also the architectural colours of the ceremony and reception locations. You can then easily refer to your palette when out shopping for related items such as accessories and decorations. It is surprising how often we can be 'certain' of a colour in our mind's eye only to be sadly mistaken when comparing it to the actual colour.

The following items represent a small selection of the many items that can make up a wedding stationery suite, but are most likely the most popular items:

### Save the Date Card

If you are planning a wedding where guests will need to make plans to travel to the ceremony or reception location or make accommodation reservations, it is both wise and courteous to send out advance notice of your wedding in the form of a Save the Date Card. Sent out at six to eight months prior to the wedding, this card simply announces the names of the couple intending to marry, the location and the proposed date with a suggestion to 'save the date'. The line 'Invitation to follow' is usually positioned discretely on the card to inform guests that further details will arrive in due course.

The Save the Date Card is often more relaxed in style than the 'official' wedding stationery. You could simply choose a colour or typestyle and carry that element through to your wedding stationery or you may choose to use the Save the Date Card as an opportunity to set the tone for the wedding to come.

You may also choose to accompany this card with travel and accommodation information that may be helpful for your guests when making their plans.

### The Invitation

Your invitation is an opportunity to provide valuable information to your guests regarding the style of event you are planning. The colours, the typefaces and the imagery will all hint at the formality of the wedding you are organising and your plans for this special event. This is also an important document that will form part of your family history so it is worth considering the finer details.

Not so long ago, the wording on a wedding invitation followed a strict format and waverings from this standard were frowned upon. These days however, there are many variations and the wording should reflect your cultural, traditional and spiritual values.

Today weddings can be more relaxed and rather than the bride's parents alone hosting the wedding, couples may choose to host the event themselves or in conjunction with both their parents. Whatever the situation, the wording on an invitation can be broken down into distinct sections making it easy to work your way through the entire process. We have compiled some straightforward guidelines to help you arrive at a correctly worded invitation which can be found in our drop down menu 'Learn About'.

Ideally, you should send out your invitations 6 to 8 weeks before your wedding date but be sure to allow yourselves enough time to properly plan your wedding including ample time in which to work with venue managers, dressmakers, caterers and the like.

If you have more family and friends than you are able to invite, you may choose to compile a second list of guests you will invite if any guests on your first round advise they will not be able to attend. If you plan to do this you may need to omit a RSVP date from the invitation.

Guest's names should be handwritten or calligraphed directly onto the Invitation or the Invitation should be left as printed with the guest's names handwritten or calligraphed on the envelope. If choosing to leave the guest's names from the Invitation, addressing of the envelope must be precise – with only the name/s of the guest/s whom are invited written on the envelopes.

Computer printed envelopes or labels are not acceptable for wedding stationery. This is a special, personal event that deserves the time and effort required to correctly and aesthetically address invitations and envelopes.

## Response Card

Whilst it is a poignant reminder of the busy pace we lead today, a Response Card invites your guest to fill in the relevant details regarding their attendance or non-attendance at your wedding, saving them the time and effort involved in writing their own reply card. Admittedly, most people today would not be well versed in the etiquette of formal replies so a Response Card offers them a simple and easy way to advise you of their decision to attend your wedding.

It is also a valuable resource when it comes to compiling your final guest list and you may choose to keep the returned cards as a memento of the occasion.

If using a Response Card, RSVP details are usually omitted from the Invitation and included on this card. In Australia, envelopes are not normally supplied for Response Cards as it is assumed the respondent will address their own envelope when replying. It would also mean the enclosed envelope would need to be folded in order to fit inside the Invitation envelope which detracts from the overall presentation of the stationery suite.

## Reception Card

A Reception Card is useful if you are inviting one set of guests to the ceremony and another to the reception. This way, you can send an Invitation and Reception Card to those guests whom you would like to attend either event.

A Reception Card is also helpful if you have a lot of information you would like to include about the reception location, time and details that would not otherwise fit on to the Invitation without crowding the card.

If using a Reception Card, reception and attire details are usually omitted from the Invitation and included on this card. This card is also where you would include any parking instructions, simply worded as 'Valet parking' or 'Parking available'.

## Menu Card

A Menu Card serves as an exciting prelude to the event about to unfold. Whether you are planning a formal sit-down dinner or a relaxed cocktail reception, it is customary to provide your guests with a Menu Card outlining the dishes to be served.

Menu Cards can be all shapes and sizes and may be professionally printed or handwritten. If you are planning a large wedding you may consider placing a number of Menu Cards on each table for guests to share between themselves. More often, each guest will be given their own Menu Card, positioned at their place setting.

If you have a large number of Menu Cards, it may be best to have them professionally printed as handwriting can take considerable time and expertise to ensure they look beautiful.

A Menu Card will also often include a summary of cocktails, champagnes and wines to be served, especially if a special vintage is to be enjoyed. It is not necessary to include details about non-alcoholic beverages.

## Placecard

A Placecard is a way of directing guest's to the seat you have allocated for them. Placecards can be many different shapes and sizes, but usually they will have some visual connection to the other stationery items used for the wedding, and they should be complementary to the table setting you have chosen.

Guest's names can be handwritten or calligraphed, depending on the tone of the event. Clear computer printed labels are most appropriate for the office, but definitely not for a wedding table. If you do not like your own handwriting, consider asking a favour of a friend or family member who's writing you admire. This favour is a good way of incorporating your loved ones into the planning and could be given as their very personal gift to you.