



ANATOMY OF *A Wedding Invitation*

I'm guessing when it comes to wedding invitations you have style, colors and design in mind, but also have a lot of questions about what to include and how to say it.

At client meetings, we often talk about how invitation planning marks the turning point from the big picture planning (color scheme, venue, style), to the fine details (ceremony time, are we providing a shuttle, what's the hotel cut off date, what specific chicken dish are we serving). It can get overwhelming fast.

That's why we put together this guide that covers the questions we answer over and over again. I hope it makes this process feel manageable and brings you a sense of peace in the craziness of planning a wedding.

Jarah

Photo by Electric Lime Photography

Here's a list of each piece making up an invitation suite and tips on what to include:

INVITATION

- Obviously this is the centerpiece of the whole suite. You're welcoming guests to your wedding AND setting the tone for the feel of the day and the formality.
- Besides the design, the wording conveys the formality of the invitation. See our wording guide here: www.amilestonepaperco.com/wording-guide
- The fonts and graphics or art included here will help to showcase your style and give guests a sense of what to expect.
- The wording should include: hosts, the couple, date, time, venue.
- If the reception and ceremony are at the same place, a line like "reception to follow" or "dinner, drinks and dancing to follow" is included. If the reception is at a different location than the wedding that information is often included on a separate card or on the details card.

REPLY CARD **when guests will be mailing back a reply card*

- The date by which they should reply – we typically suggest one month before the wedding. That gives you time to track down the stragglers and organize your seating chart and the entrée order for your caterer.
- A line for guests to write their name(s) followed by a "number attending" line and a "regretfully declines" line.
- If you are asking your guests to choose an entrée that comes next. We suggest: "Please initial an entrée choice for each guest" followed by the choices.
- When it comes to listing the choices you have options. Some people just use a small icon for each entrée (cow, chicken, pig, etc). Rather you could use the name of the entrée, or the name with a brief description.
- Some optional items to include:
 - Song Request Line: "This song would get me on the dance floor _____". It can help when creating the music list for your dj or band.
 - Shuttle Service: It can be helpful to get an idea of how many people plan to use provided shuttle service. That could be as simple as: "We plan to use the provided shuttle service. _____ Yes _____ No"
- Most of our clients choose to use a post card format for the reply card, so we print the address to which the card should be returned on the back. Alternatively, the card is returned in an envelope printed with the address. Most couples receive the reply cards at their home, but sometimes the bride's parents receive the reply cards.

REPLY CARD **when guests will be replying online*

The vast majority of Milestone couples ask guests to return a printed reply card, but some choose to request an online reply.

Here are some things to consider:

- Evaluate your guest list regarding their comfort with technology. If there is a sizable number of people who will feel uncomfortable replying online, it might be best to stick with a card to return.
- Do you need to collect entrée choices for each guest? If so, you have to be tech savvy enough to set up the online reply in a way that accommodates that.

If you decide to proceed with the online option, we prominently call attention to the reply information so guests understand the need to reply even though they don't see a card to return.

Include the following:

- The date by which guests should reply.
- The web address, and any special instructions.
- A phone number to call in case of any issues or questions.
- If you are offering entrée choices we suggest listing them so that the person replying for a couple or family knows to ask family members for preferences in order to complete the reply.

RECEPTION CARD

If the reception is at a different location than the ceremony the reception location and time can be noted on the details card or on a separate reception card.

DETAILS CARD

This card should be set up to make your wedding day easy for your guests. I think of the invitation suite as a chance to set the tone, but also the first opportunity to show genuine hospitality by providing all of the information your guests need.

The contents of this card vary greatly. Here are some things often included:

WEDDING DAY ITINERARY

- This is a run down of the day's events often including little icons for each event (a heart next to the ceremony time, a fork and knife next to dinner time, etc).
- Note this is optional and noting times beyond the start time for the ceremony and reception usually isn't a necessity, but is a sweet addition from a design perspective.

ACCOMMODATIONS INFORMATION

If you have rooms blocked for your guests list the following:

- Hotel name, address, phone, website.
- Date by which guests need to make reservations.
- Any code or reference guests should use when making reservations.
- Room rates are not typically included.

DIRECTIONS AND MAP

Couples often ask if this is necessary in the age of cell phones. The short answer is no, but in the spirit of making things easy for your guests it's often nice to include either directions or a map. Guests can easily reference the card en route and be sure they're using a tried and true route to get to your venue(s).

If you choose to include directions, we suggest you include:

- Directions to the ceremony from a major interstate convenient for most guests.
- Directions to the reception from the ceremony.
- If there is a gap of time between your ceremony and reception, it might be best to give your guests directions back to the hotel so they don't assume they can go directly to the reception.

If you choose to include a map, we suggest you including:

- Ceremony and reception venues and suggested hotels.
- Optional: include a few favorite restaurants, bars, or things to do.

WEDDING WEBSITE

-If you've created a wedding website, it should be listed here. I am often asked if all of the other details are necessary to include on the invitation details card if the website is thorough. That's tough to answer without knowing your guests and their level of comfort with the internet. I do think many guests appreciate at least the accommodations information in hard copy so they can refer to that when traveling.

OPTIONAL

The above items are fairly standard. Then there are a few other things that are sometimes included:

- Parking information - If there is anything challenging about the parking situation at your venue(s) it's best to provide parking details for your guests. Also, if you have arranged for complimentary valet parking, note that or guests will be in the awkward position of not knowing if it is covered.
- Shuttle information – Let your guests know about a provided shuttle so they can make a decision about using the service before your wedding day. If you don't know the exact shuttle schedule, let guests know where they'll be able to find the information on your wedding day (i.e. on your website, at the hotel front desk...)
- A note about suggested attire. Sometimes this relates to the formality (black tie, cocktail attire, etc) but another consideration is that if your ceremony and/or reception will be outside it's thoughtful to note that so guests can dress accordingly and choose shoes that make sense for the day.

OTHER SITUATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

ADULTS ONLY

According to etiquette guidelines, your guests are supposed to know who is invited by who is listed on the envelope. Some couples worry that they need to be more clear though. Some options include:

- Adding a line on the reply card after the name line that reads: "We have reserved _____ seats in your honor." You would then fill in the blank for each invitation before sending.
- Using the following for the reply card wording: "Circle the number attending: 0 1 2"
- Adding "Adult Reception" on the Details Card. Some couples add a note to the effect of "Due to space constraints, this is an adults only reception."

REGISTRY INFORMATION

According to etiquette guidelines registry information should not be included on this card. The thinking is that it implies you are expecting or asking for a gift. Some couples decide to include this information anyway. The choice is yours.

WEATHER/VENUE RELATED INFORMATION FOR OUTDOOR WEDDINGS

If you're having an outdoor ceremony it's thoughtful to note that so your guests can bring a sweater or coat if necessary and choose shoes that will be comfortable for the terrain.

DESTINATION WEDDINGS

If most or all of your guests are traveling for your wedding, you might consider adding the following:

- Any additional events your guests are invited to and/or an itinerary of the weekend.
- Travel arrangements, including suggested airports, approximate travel times, whether a rental car is necessary, suggestions regarding public transportation if it's a viable option for your guests.

If you have any other questions please email or call any time:
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