



The Perfect *Wedding Guest*

It's spring, and love is in the air. It is the ideal season for a wedding. The bride and groom have checked and rechecked every detail for the big event from the marriage ceremony to the reception and on to the honeymoon. The last few months have been an exciting, albeit exhausting, whirlwind of activity for them both – especially the bride.

Lucky you. You've been invited to share in the celebration of their matrimonial union. You cannot wait to attend but you are a bit unsure of all of the rules of etiquette that apply to wedding guests. That's why the editors of Solutions™ assembled the answers to commonly asked questions. By following the responses, you can be confident you will be a perfect wedding guest.

The invitation was addressed to me only; may I bring my boyfriend as a guest?

In a word, “No.” The bride would have addressed the envelope to your name and guest if she had intended for you to bring a date. By the way, it is poor etiquette to call the bride and ask if you can bring someone else. The same rules apply for bringing children.

How long do I have to respond to the invitation?

Virtually every invitation has an imprinted RSVP date. Respond as soon as possible, but certainly not later than that date, so the wedding couple can finalize their plans with the caterers, etc. Should your plans change, notify the bride immediately so she can adjust accordingly.

Should I take the gift to the reception or mail it ahead of time?

It’s your choice. By sending the gift ahead to time, the bride and groom can take their time opening and enjoying it. If you bring it to the reception, they will not, in all likelihood open it until after the honeymoon. Tradition says you have up to a year to send your gift; typically though, most gifts are sent within three months of the wedding.

What types of gifts are appropriate?

Many brides register for gifts at specialty stores at a variety of price

points. You may, however, select your gift from that list or from any other place you wish. You may also elect to give money; it’s perfectly acceptable. The amount you should spend depends on your financial circumstances -- \$25 or \$2,000 it’s up to you.

How should we dress for the ceremony?

Most invitations indicate the type of dress, i.e. formal, semi-formal or casual, and those guidelines should be followed. If no attire preference is indicated, men should wear a dress shirt with tie, slacks and a sport jacket. Women should wear a sundress for daytime or a cocktail dress for evening. Ceremonies in religious venues may require women to cover their shoulders; a Pashmina-type wrap or dressy jacket is a good solution since either can be removed during the reception. Don’t wear all white; it’s reserved for the bride.

Are there any special rules for the reception?

After you have greeted the newlyweds in the receiving line, mingle with the other guests. Have fun; it’s a celebration. Your hosts want you to have a great time, but they would really appreciate it if you didn’t make a spectacle of yourself. In other words, don’t go overboard drinking just because the alcohol is free. If you do imbibe, make certain you have a designated driver.

