



Wedding Etiquette: Who Do I Invite?

Nothing brings out tensions during wedding planning like that of the guest list. The struggle to agree on the number of guests to invite to the celebration frequently results in feelings of frustration for the bride, groom, and parents who traditionally have a financial stake in the wedding. “I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings” is a common reason given for guest list overload, putting pressure on the budget and emotional strain on relationships.

Wedding etiquette suggests the following guidelines be used upfront to help reduce the stress of deciding who to invite to the wedding:

- ***The level of intimacy desired for the wedding***
- ***The financial investment (budget) planned for the wedding***
- ***The number of guests that can be accommodated comfortably by the ceremony and reception venues***

With emotions running high, the guidelines are often times ignored. But here are some common questions and responses regarding the guest list that may help you avoid “the guest list blues”.

- ***Question #1 – How is the guest list divided between the bride, groom, and parents?***

Traditionally because parents hosted (paid for) the wedding, the guest list was shared evenly by the bride and groom’s families; with the bride’s family holding the higher percentage. But a more modern approach is for couples to have the larger percentage of the guest list while their parents are allotted an agreed number of guests to invite personal friends of their own. The best thing is to discuss how the guest list will be divided ahead of time to avoid misunderstandings later.





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- **Question #2 – Is it okay to ‘waitlist’ guests?**

Although there doesn't appear to be a hard rule on wedding etiquette concerning a waitlist of guests, it really puts you at risk of hurting someone's feelings if they were to ever find out they weren't part of your original list. While a waitlist appears to be a good solution for controlling the count and ultimately your budget, it requires proper planning to ensure your usage of it remains discreet. If you choose to take the waitlist approach, be sure to send invitations early enough and to set your response date accordingly to leave enough time to determine if you are safe to send an invitation to a waitlisted guest. This means incurring the expense upfront for extra invitations so you can promptly send the invitation to the waitlisted guest without it being obvious that they are receiving after others have received theirs.

- **Question #3 – Do I have to invite my co-workers?**

The short answer is NO.

Wedding etiquette is clear when it comes to including co-workers on a guest list. The guidelines for creating a guest list shared earlier will help tremendously with this decision, but it really comes down to your personal preference. If your budget is already stretched, or the venue is already tight, you may want to exclude co-workers unless they are part of your regular social network outside of work. If business politics are at play, you may want to consider at least inviting your boss and assistants if applicable. The main rule of thumb is to avoid situations where you invite a majority and exclude one or two. It can cause hard feelings that can linger and make your work relationships awkward.



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- **Question #4 – What should I do when people assume they are invited?**



With the average cost of a U.S. wedding at \$25,656, it is rude for anyone to assume they are invited to a wedding. Anyone that is bold enough to express their expectation for receiving an invitation to your wedding or anyone that has the nerve to ask if they can bring extra guests to your celebration is completely out of line and needs a lesson in wedding etiquette themselves. So what do you do? While it may be difficult, it is important that you shut this down immediately. Use tact but be firm in making sure they understand that you are not in a position to add headcount to your guest list.

While they may not like your response, they have no choice but to respect it. What you don't want to do is allow people to guilt you into an invitation that results in budget creep or puts you in a situation with others who may want the same exception.

There is so much more information to share concerning wedding etiquette as it relates to your guest list, so I will share more on the subject soon. In the meantime, if you have questions send them to Tia@theWEDucator.com. Thank you for joining me. Until next time, happy planning!