



The So Raise Your Glasses Wedding Etiquette and Planning Guide

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Wedding etiquette can sound daunting, but it's really just a few simple guidelines to follow so that everyone thinks you are the perfect wedding hosts. Because there are long established traditions about how wedding guests are treated, it helps to be informed, and avoids upsetting anyone!

There are now many more possible venues for the marriage ceremony than was once the case, and whilst a wedding in the religious setting that suits the couples' beliefs is still very popular, for those that do not follow a particular religion, or wish to find a location that suits their own requirements, the register office is no longer the only alternative option. Many hotels and places of interest have successfully applied for licences to hold marriage ceremonies, and it is worth checking whether such a licence exists or could be obtained if, as many people like to have both ceremony and reception at the same place.

Witnesses

All marriages and civil partnerships must be witnessed by at least two people over the age of 18 in addition to the authorised person performing the ceremony.

The ceremony

The type of ceremony, whether religious or civil, is decided by the bride and bridegroom. You can decide to have a religious or civil ceremony and there are many venues available from the traditional to unusual. Usually the celebrant will make the arrangements for you i.e. you will book the time and date of the wedding with a vicar, rabbi, registrar etc. and they will ensure that the venue is reserved for you and any necessary public notices such as the Banns are given.

The reception

Many couples organise and pay for the wedding reception themselves. Traditionally, the reception was organised by the bride's parents, and in the event that the tradition is to be followed, the bride's parents should be the first to be consulted. However, although many still follow this tradition, many will arrange the reception themselves or there will be joint responsibility, but whoever is paying needs to be consulted over all arrangements.

It is really important to bear in mind when planning your wedding the budget available and respecting the wishes of those who are paying for the wedding if it isn't yourselves. Compromises sometimes have to be made. Follow these guidelines and you will be assured of a happy day.

The date and time of the wedding are critical, and in setting a date it is, of course, vital to ensure that the key participants, the parents and close family, will be available on the day as well as the bride and groom.

The Spring and Summer months are still favourites for weddings, because flowers are plentiful and weather is more likely to be pleasant, but there is an increasing trend towards Autumn and Christmas weddings as well. It is important to remember that Church of England and Roman Catholic churches do not usually perform weddings during lent - the six weeks prior to Easter.

The favoured time of day for a wedding is mid-day or early afternoon. This allows plenty of time for people with any distance to travel to do so, and does not make the return journey too late for those that cannot stay for the evening.



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There is no 'right' number of people who should attend the reception, and this can be as large or as small as you want yourselves, and you can afford. The important thing here is that if you are going to limit numbers, don't pick an arbitrary number as a maximum, but rather choose the numbers according to who you most want to be there. If the budget won't allow large numbers at the reception, keep that small and have an evening party that allows you to invite all your friends.

The wedding breakfast, or reception meal, usually takes place after the ceremony, and can take a number of forms - a formal meal with place settings, a buffet, or something very informal.

The table plan

This can be a tricky matter, but good advice is always to consult as few people as possible regarding the seating arrangements - usually just parents of both bride and groom. It is an opportunity to get people to meet each other and mix as well as see old friends.

It is traditional for the top table to contain the bride and groom, the parents of both bride and groom, the best man and the bridesmaids. It is not usual for partners or spouses of the wedding attendants to be seated at the top table (even where bridesmaids are adult).

Traditional Responsibilities:

Bride and Groom jointly arrange the service with the clergyman or the official celebrant. They also draw up a wedding present list where there is to be one

The Bride arranges the decoration of church, decides upon the music, chooses the bridesmaids and both her own and her attendant's dresses

The Groom chooses the best man and ushers. He normally pays for the rings, all fees and expenses at the church or other marriage location, the bridesmaid's gifts, and those he may wish to give to his best man and ushers, bouquets for the bridesmaids and his bride, transport for himself and the best man to the wedding, and for himself and his bride to the reception, and the honeymoon.

The parents of bride and groom collaborate with the bride and groom to draw up the guest list, and although it is traditional for the bride's father to pay for the reception, as he is the official host, many arrangements are made around this significant cost according to the circumstances of the people involved. The hosts will also provide the invitations, orders of service, the cost of the flowers in the church, the photographer and the wedding cake

Planning and organisation

First, decide who is going to be involved in the wedding planning. Is it just yourselves, your parents and those of your partner, your family and friends or whom? Remember, it's much more difficult when lots of people are trying to plan it together because they will all have different views, so the best advice is to be strong to start with, make it clear who is making the decisions and who will be involved, and then stick to your plan.

So, here's a simple guide - it is roughly in order but of course you need to decide when things get done. It's not exclusive - it's just trying to point out the major things that have to be thought about - you still need to decide the details.



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- Fix a budget and decide who will organise and identify who will pay for what - and make sure that those who are paying agree!!
- Check the availability of church, registry office or other venue and reception venues, and then fix a date.
- Book the venues well in advance - some reception venues require a lot of notice and get very heavily booked up.
- Arrange a meeting with the person who will perform the marriage ceremony to discuss outline details and book the ceremony venue.
- You might want to announce your wedding in advance, particularly to those you are sure you will invite, so they don't book anything else at the same time - the easiest way is "Save the date" cards - So Raise Your Glasses can supply these.
- Book a caterer if the venue doesn't do their own catering and discuss both food and wine to ensure they can meet your requirements and meet your budget.
- ALL THE ABOVE NEEDS TO BE DONE AT LEAST SIX MONTHS IN ADVANCE - although for certain venues you will need to plan significantly further in advance than this.
- Draw up a guest list and ensure you consult carefully with parents or those that are paying! It's easy to step on toes here if you don't consult those that have an interest. Don't forget your budget whilst doing this!
- Once you've agreed your guest list keep it as a record - invitations sent, replies received, numbers accepted etc.
- A wedding is a major expense, and if disaster were to strike - you broke a leg just before the big day and had to postpone - you could lose a lot of money. Wedding insurance is a very serious option to consider and is not expensive - there are many large companies that provide wedding insurance - just look up wedding insurance on the internet.
- Buy, order or make your wedding stationery - invitations, order of service, place cards, thank you cards. The invitations need to be sent out about two - three months before the wedding, so start preparation for this well in advance. We have a great range of pre-printed and printed to order wedding stationery for you to choose from.
- Make sure you keep your invitation list up to date and tick off those that are coming when the replies arrive. Check carefully that you know exactly who is coming and who is not. You'll need this for numbers, table plans etc.
- It's a good idea to find out about local hotels, guest houses etc., as some people may travel a long way to attend your wedding, or simply prefer not to travel after the reception. Details of accommodation should be sent with the invitations as should a map of the venue for both the ceremony and the reception.
- Book a musician, band and/or disco for both the ceremony and the reception if you require them.
- Select a photographer and, if desired, a videographer. Don't forget to check whether use of cameras is acceptable in the church or civil venue.



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- Think about how you and your wedding party are going to get to the church and reception and book the cars or alternative transport. It's also worth thinking about how you will travel away from the reception at the end of the day if you are planning to stay overnight somewhere special so arrange this too.
- Decide on the cake you want and order it.
- Choose your bridesmaids, best man, ushers and page boys.
- Decide on the colours you want to be used at your wedding, as they will influence many decisions.
- Choose your wedding dress and what your wedding attendants will wear, including whether the groom, best man and ushers will wear morning suits, lounge suits etc. Order the suits if you need to hire them. Make sure you get the members of your party properly measured for their clothes - nothing worse than a best man that can't get into his suit!!
- Choose your decorations - flowers are a great favourite of course and if you plan to have flowers talk to your florist and arrange for them to be delivered to your home, your wedding venue and your reception venue as required. Other decoration options that look really great include balloons, petals, table confetti etc. Decide what you want and either buy it or book it. Don't leave yourself with too much to do on the day, or even the day before. Get help!
- Think about your honeymoon, and remember to book early if your destination is popular at that time of year. Organise passports, inoculations and visas early.
- Sort out your wedding gift list.
- Choose your wedding rings.
- Book another short meeting with the celebrant for your wedding. Decide on the order of your service, what readings, hymns and music are to be used, and discuss this with the celebrant. Decide whether you will have a printed order of service and decide how much detail it will contain.
- Choose what you and your partner are going to wear to leave if you are going away from the reception, and remember to organise someone to take your dress home and return hire suits to the hirer for you.
- Buy gifts for your bridesmaids, best man, ushers, pageboy and you may want to do the same for your parents to say thank you for their help. So Raise Your Glasses has a great range of gifts for all your helpers.
- Remember that if you are changing your name you need to inform all those people and places that have you registered on their records with your existing name - including your passport - send it off early if you intend to travel in your married name and have booked tickets in your married name.
- Book a hairdresser for yourself and your bridesmaids. Many will come to your house on the day to make life easier for you.



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- Think about your table decorations and whether you want to provide wedding favours for your guests. There are many ways to decorate the tables as well as flowers and these can include centrepieces, flower petals, balloons, wedding bubbles and much more, all of which So Raise Your Glasses can supply.
- Wedding Favours are a tradition that is very common in the UK these days, and if you do decide to have wedding favours we can supply favour boxes and organza bags together with wedding favour confectionery to suit all tastes and colour themes.
- Prepare a seating plan and give this task some time and thought. Making sure you put people in the right place, where they will be comfortable and if they will get on with those placed next to them can be quite a trial!
- It's quite important to draw up a table plan that will help people to find their table easily - and then prepare place cards - there are a wide range available, but you do need someone with great writing to write all the names on the place cards.
- Make sure you've got all the accessories you need for the day - a handbag, a garter, a wedding ring pillow etc - So Raise Your Glasses have some lovely options here.
- Give your ushers tasks for the day and make sure it covers all that you need to have organised - like parking, where people will sit, directions to the reception venue, getting the wedding guest book signed etc., and often it can be valuable to give your ushers written instructions so that they can't go wrong.
- About 2-3 weeks before the wedding confirm all the arrangements with the venue and the caterer, with the entertainment and the transport, the florist etc., and make sure that the caterer retains flexibility just in case your final numbers change at the last minute.
- Book a rehearsal for the wedding and make sure that the key participants can attend - then your wedding day will go much more smoothly as people will know what they need to do.
- Arrange the stag night and hen night, but not the night before the wedding!!
- Don't forget to write the speech.
- Make sure you are packed for the honeymoon well ahead of the day itself, particularly if you are going away straight afterwards.
- Enjoy the preparation and have a great day!

In church

Make sure that anything you plan to occur in church or other ceremony venue has the blessing of the clergyman. Not all churches are happy to see cameras or video recorders inside, and many will insist either that no confetti is thrown, or that only biodegradable confetti is used, and they may be specific about where it can be used. Do make sure that the church or location you choose can accommodate all of your guests, and that they can be seated in such a way that there aren't people who cannot see what is going on.



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Normally friends and family of the bride sit on the left as you face the altar and those of the groom on the right

Wedding Invitations

The wording for invitations is important, and the selection below shows the most common forms of wording that are in use:

if the hosts are the bride's parents:

Mr and Mrs Peter Forbes
request the pleasure of your company
at the marriage of their daughter
Rachel Elizabeth
to
Mr. Alistair Duncan
at St. Peter and St Paul, Everington
on Saturday 17th July 2006 at 2.00pm
and afterwards at The Grand Hotel, Everington

R.S.V.P.
12 Silas Way
Everington
PL12 1BP

OR

Mr and Mrs Peter Forbes
request the pleasure of the company of
.....
at the marriage of their daughter
Rachel Elizabeth
to
Mr. Alistair Duncan



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at St. Peter and St Paul, Everington
on Saturday 17th July 2006 at 2.00pm
and afterwards at The Grand Hotel, Everington

R.S.V.P.
12 Silas Way
Everington
PL12 1BP

If the hosts are the bride and groom themselves, then the wording would be altered to read:

Miss Rachel Elizabeth Forbes and Mr. Alistair Duncan
request the pleasure of your company
at their marriage
at St. Peter and St Paul, Everington
on Saturday 17th July 2006 at 2.00pm
and afterwards at The Grand Hotel, Everington

R.S.V.P.
12 Silas Way
Everington
PL12 1BP

alternatively, if the bride's parents are not the hosts, or have died the host issuing the invitation will be substituted for "Mr. and Mrs. Peter Forbes" and the "marriage of their daughter" will be changed appropriately -e.g. if the host is the bride's Aunt:

Mrs Patricia Forbes
requests the pleasure of your company
at the marriage of her niece
Rachel Elizabeth
to
Mr. Alistair Duncan
at St. Peter and St Paul, Everington
on Saturday 17th July 2006 at 2.00pm



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and afterwards at The Grand Hotel, Everington

R.S.V.P.
12 Silas Way
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PL12 1BP

Of course, the wording that is used for an invitation is a personal choice, and no-one is bound by tradition or etiquette. The suggestions shown above are simply those that would be used traditionally, and it is perfectly correct to alter the wording to suit the circumstances and the wedding. The important thing to remember is to ensure that all the vital information is included - the names of the hosts and of the bride and groom - the date, time and location of the wedding and of any reception or party that follows the ceremony and to which the recipient is also invited, and the place, email address and/or telephone number to which the recipient should reply, and, if appropriate, by when.