



Wedding etiquette

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These dos and don'ts will place you firmly in the gracious guest hall of fame, according to Rachel Wagner, founder and director of Rachel Wagner Etiquette and Protocol in Tulsa:

Do RSVP as soon as the invitation arrives. After all, the bride and groom have many decisions to make based on the number of guests attending. Then, follow through on your commitment; cancel only for an emergency, not because "something better" came along.

Don't take uninvited friends or children. For couples, both names will be written on the envelope, but children should not attend unless their names or "and family" are also on the envelope. For singles, only take a friend along if "and guest" is after your name.

Do send your gift ahead of time to the bride's home. This polite gesture frees family and bridal party members from having to secure and tote gifts brought to the ceremony. Consider checking the couple's online bridal registry. Not only can you conveniently select and ship your gift directly to the bride's home, but many online registries, such as Macy's, Crate & Barrel and Pottery Barn, also offer gift wrapping for a nominal fee.

Do dress appropriately. No denim, please, or jeans or flip-flops. Women who opt for a strapless dress can wear a stylish jacket, dressy sweater or Pashmina during the ceremony, then remove the wrap at the reception. Also, let the bride wear white; she's the one in the spotlight. Wearing ivory is OK. Men should wear a conservative suit or jacket, and a not-too-flashy tie. However, if it's a destination wedding on the beach, then bring out the tropical attire.

Do arrive at the ceremony at least 15 minutes early. Allow for traffic, for finding your way in an unfamiliar city, for late-running taxis and for a long queue of guests waiting for ushers to seat them.

Do remember to turn your cell phone on silent and let calls go to voice mail. Marring the nuptials with your phone's latest ring tone will certainly land you in the wedding guest hall of shame.

Do introduce yourself to everyone at your table at the reception, and make polite conversation — i.e., you might ask how he or she knows the bride or groom.

Do be mindful of your alcohol consumption. Have a great time, but make sure that Monday morning's water cooler buzz isn't about you.

Do send a gift, even if you cannot attend the wedding. Be sure to write a heartfelt note of regret inside the card or gift enclosure.

For more about Wagner and her etiquette services, visit www.tulsaworld.com/rachelwagner.

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