

Wedding Etiquette

Cultural backgrounds and individual convictions heavily influence the decision-making in Wedding Etiquette. Nevertheless, the following is a general guide that should be construed as such...and adopted as you deem fit:

Who Pays For What?

The Bride typically pays for:

- The wedding ring for the groom
- Gifts for the attendants
- Accommodation for out-of-town attendants
- The wedding gift for the groom

The Groom typically pays for:

- The bride's rings including the engagement ring
- The honeymoon
- Wedding gift for the bride
- The marriage license
- The groom's men gifts
- Accommodation for out-of-town groom's men
- Flowers for the bride
- The going-away corsage, corsages for mothers, special ladies;
- The boutonnieres for men in wedding party
- The gloves, ties and accessories for the men in the wedding party
- Fee for clergyperson or judge

The Groom's Family typically pays for

- Clothing for the wedding
- Travel and lodging expenses
- Rehearsal dinner
- The wedding gift for the newlyweds

The Bride's Family typically pays for:

- The costs of the reception.
- The bride's wedding attire/trousseau
- Invitations, announcements, thank you notes
- The seating assignment chart, napkins and mailing costs
- Photographer
- Videographer
- Ceremony costs
- Bridesmaids, flower girl, ring bearer flowers and accessories
- Transportation for bridal party on wedding day from ceremony to reception.
- All gratuities for all services: parking, security
- Bridesmaid luncheon

The Attendants typically pay for:

- Their wedding clothes
- Travel expenses
- Wedding gift for newlyweds

Maid/Matron of Honor responsibilities

The maid or matron of honor is usually a sister or very close friend. Choose someone dependable. If you choose, you may have both a maid (single) and a matron (married) of honor, who takes precedence at the ceremony, signs as your legal witness and carries the groom's ring.

Advance Help

The maid of honor may plan your wedding and take care of details for you. If she lives nearby she might help address invitations, plan pre-wedding parties, make favors or table decorations, and keep track of gifts received and thank you cards sent. The maid of honor usually hosts a bridal shower. The bride can delegate care of bridesmaid's fittings and details. She attends pre-wedding parties. She attends the rehearsal and the rehearsal dinner.

At the Wedding

The maid of honor helps the bride with dressing and assists with the, train, veil and holding the bride's bouquet during the ceremony. The maid of honor wears the groom's ring on her thumb (or carries it in some other safe manner) until it is time for the blessing and exchange of rings in the ceremony. She is responsible for having an emergency kit with miscellaneous items such as a needle and thread, extra nylons, a roll of tape etc. The maid of honor holds on to a duplicate list of desired shots for the photographer and videographer as well as a song list for ceremony musicians and a copy of any special prayers or readings to be used during the ceremony. She walks in front of the bride in the processional and with the best man in the recessional and stands near the bride at the altar. She makes sure that all of the bride's clothing, make-up and personal belongings are removed from the changing room at the ceremony site and taken back to the bride's home. She helps to line up bridesmaids for formal photographs.

At the Reception

The maid of honor stands next to the groom in very formal receiving lines. The maid of honor is seated at the head table or table of honor. During the reception, she mingles with guests.

She dances with the best man at the reception. She helps the bride with her train, fastening it to floor length so it is out of the way for dancing, if necessary. The maid of honor keeps a duplicate copy of the list of names and pronunciations for the bridal party announcements. She also keeps a duplicate song list for the reception musicians or disc jockey. If the bride needs assistance in tossing her bouquet or in gathering single women to catch it, the maid of honor can help out. If requested, she helps the bride dress for the honeymoon and makes sure the bridal gown and other personal clothing items are returned to the bride's home after the reception. She takes the bridal bouquet for preserving and may take the gown for herir looming while the bride is on her honeymoon.

Expenses

The maid or matron of honor pays for her own dress and other attire. If travel expenses are involved, she pays for her own travel and other expenses. Although she may attend several pre-wedding parties, only one shower gift and one wedding gift are to be expected. She may share the cost of bridal shower.

Bridesmaid Responsibilities

Bridesmaids are usually close friends or family members. The number of bridesmaids usually depends on the formality of your wedding, with a dozen being the maximum for any wedding. Make friends feel special when you invite them to be part of your wedding, but make them aware that there are costs involved, as well as a time commitment. It is an honor to be asked, but may also be a financial burden. Bridesmaids pay for their own dresses and other attire. If travel expenses are involved, they pay their own cost involved in getting to the wedding and staying in town during the celebration. Although bridesmaids may attend several pre-wedding parties, only one shower gift and one wedding gift are to be expected. Bridesmaids share the cost of the bridal shower with the maid of honor. Girls between 8 and 16 are considered to be junior bridesmaids. Junior bridesmaids are not expected to help with details as much as bridesmaids.

Advance Help

Bridesmaids help take care of details for the bride such as running errands, and making table decorations or favors. They usually join the maid of honor in hosting a bridal shower. Bridesmaids attend pre-wedding parties, the rehearsal and the rehearsal dinner.

At the Wedding

Bridesmaids walk in the processional and recessional, either single file, two together or with an usher. They stand near the bride during the ceremony. They are in formal photographs of the bridal party.

Flower-girl responsibilities

You may choose one or two little girls to be flower girls. The best age range is between four and eight. (Although younger ones are cute, they can create some real challenges during a processional or ceremony.) If you choose two girls, it looks nice if they are about the same size, but that may not be possible. It can be a special honor for a child to be chosen as part of you wedding.

Advance Help

Flower girls attend the shower and some pre-wedding parties. They also attend the rehearsal and may attend the rehearsal dinner with their families.

At the Wedding

Flower girls walk directly in front of the bride in the processional and in front of the maid of honor in the recessional. As flower girls walk down the aisle, they may scatter flower or rose petals. If petals are not permitted, sometimes flower girls will hand out single flowers to guests as they walk, or they may just carry a bouquet, a ring of flowers or a pomander ball. During the ceremony, flower girls may stand near the bridesmaids or younger ones may sit with their families. They are in the formal photographs of the bridal parties.

At the Reception

Flower girls do not usually stand in the reception line. They usually sit at a table of honor with their families rather than at the head table. They may dance with family members, friends or other members of the wedding party if they choose to do so.

Expenses

Families of flower girls are expected to pay for dresses and other attire. If travel expenses are involved, the girls' family picks up these costs. Flower girls are not expected to bring a gift to pre-wedding parties they may attend. If their parents attend, gift expectations would be the same as any other guest. If they attend more than one shower or party, only one shower gift is expected. Flower girls are not responsible for helping financially with bridal showers.

Groomsmen & Usher Responsibilities

The number of groomsmen/ushers is usually determined by the size of the wedding. One usher can comfortably seat about fifty guests. Groomsmen and ushers are usually brothers, relatives or best friends of the groom. In inviting people to serve as groomsmen/ushers, make sure that they are aware of the expenses involved. While it is not necessary to have an equal number of groomsmen and bridesmaids, it does balance nicely if they walk in pairs in either the processional or recessional.

Advance Help

Groomsmen usually help the best man plan the bachelor party for the groom. They attend pre-wedding parties, the rehearsal and the rehearsal dinner.

At the Wedding

Groomsmen

The Groomsmen may be part of the processional or they may take positions in the front with the best man or groom. They stand near the groom during the ceremony. They are in formal photographs of the bridal party. They escort the bridesmaids from the ceremony in the recessional.

Ushers

The main job of the usher is to seat guests. They should arrive at the ceremony site at least one hour in advance and should have clear instructions on the seating plan. In Christian Ceremonies, the bride's family and guest sit on the left and the groom's on the right. In Jewish services, the seating is opposite, with the bride's family on the right. Female guests are escorted by having the usher offer his right arm to her. Her date or spouse walks behind. Male guests are lead to their seats. If there are pew cards being used or a special reserved section, ushers should pay special attention as they escort these guests to their seats. They distribute any programs or ceremony handouts at the ceremony. Ushers direct those bringing gifts to the ceremony to a gift table. If there is a guest book at the ceremony, ushers direct guests to sign it. After all guests are seated, the ushers escort the groom's parents to the front row on the groom's side (Unless they are part of the processional.) Lastly, they escort the bride's mother to her seat, unless she is accompanying her husband in the processional. Once everyone is seated, the ushers unroll the aisle runner in readiness for the processional. One of the ushers should be responsible to roll the aisle runner back up after the ceremony and have it cleaned and returned. One of the ushers should collect any leftover handouts or programs and see that they get returned to the couple who may want to send them to family or friends who were unable to attend.

At the Reception

Groomsmen may be part of the receiving lines in formal weddings. They may be seated at the head table or a table of honor at the reception. During the reception, groomsmen mingle with the guests. They can dance with the bridesmaids at the reception. They assist by encouraging single young men to participate in catching the garter.

Expenses

Groomsmen or ushers pay for their own formalwear and accessories. If travel expenses are involved, they pay their own costs involved in getting to the wedding and staying in town during the celebration. Although groomsmen may attend several pre-wedding parties, only one shower gift and one wedding gift are to be expected. Groomsmen may share the cost of the bachelor party with the best man.

Responsibilities of the Wedding Party

Maid of Honor/Personal Attendant:

(Usually special friend or sister of the bride.)
Helps bride with shopping, invitations and other details as requested.
Attends all pre-wedding events
Pays for own wedding attire
Takes charge of groom's ring during ceremony
Witnesses, signs wedding certificate
Helps bride in arranging veil and dress at ceremony and reception
Returns bride's gown to designated place after wedding.

Bridesmaids:

Purchases and completes fittings of gowns
Performs tasks as assigned by bride
Attends rehearsal and rehearsal dinner

Best Man:

(Assists groom with all details of the wedding day.)
Pays for own attire
Transports groom to the church.
Supervises the groomsmen, regarding their dress and duties at ceremony
Takes care of bride's ring until ceremony.
Presents the clergyman with fee.
Signs and witnesses the marriage certificate
Offers the first toast to the bride and groom.
Dances with the bride after the groom and both fathers have danced with her
Prepares the honeymoon car, packs suitcases in car.
Holds for safekeeping, any tickets, keys, etc. for the groom.
Returns groom's tuxedo to rental shop.

Groomsmen:

Pays for their own wedding attire
Attends rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
Attends bachelor dinner if there is one
Escorts bridesmaids during the ceremony

Ushers:

Pay for own wedding attire
Make sure principles have flowers before being seated. (Unless this task is assigned to another)
Distribute wedding programs. (Unless this task is assigned to another)
Seat guests on appropriate side of church.
Assist elderly guests to seats.
After all guests are seated, unroll aisle carpet.
Check church or synagogue for any items left behind.

Ring bearer and Trainbearer Responsibilities

Neither of these is required positions and may be boys or girls. Usually only one ring bearer is used, but two with one ring per pillow will work if you have an abundance of four or five year children that you would like to have involved in the ceremony. Although the rings on the

pillows are usually not the actual wedding rings, you could have two ring bearers if you are having a double ring ceremony, one for the bride and one for the groom. Trainbearer or pages usually walk in pairs but a single trainbearer can be used.

Advance Help

If ring bearers and trainbearer are little boys they are not likely to be interested in any pre-wedding parties. If they are girls, they might want to attend the shower and some other parties. They attend the rehearsal and may attend the rehearsal dinner with their families.

At the Wedding

The ring bearer(s) carries a pillow with a ring or rings sewn to it. (These are usually not the real wedding rings but symbolic ones for show only.) They walk either directly in front of or beside the flower girl(s) in the processional and the recessional.

If real rings are tied to the pillow, the ring bearer takes the pillow directly to the maid of honor and the best man who will remove the rings. The trainbearers follow the bride in the processional and recessional, and carry the bridal train. During the ceremony, the ring and trainbearers may stand near the groomsmen or sit with their families. They are in the formal photographs of the bridal party.

At the Reception

Ring and train Bearers do not usually stand in the reception line. They usually sit at a table of honor with their families.

Expenses

Families of ring and trainbearers are expected to pay for attire. If travel expenses are involved, the children's families pick up these costs. Ring and train bearers are not expected to bring gifts to any pre-wedding parties they may attend. If their parents attend, gifts expectations would be the same as any other guest. If they attend more than one party, only one shower gift is expected.

Rules of Etiquette for Mother's Attire

1. Tradition holds that the mother of the bride chooses a dress first, followed by the mother of the groom. Their dresses should complement each other, as well as the bridal party. For instance, having one mother in a floor length dress and another in a mini-skirt is a major no-no. Likewise, your mother wearing an orange dress next to your bridesmaid's light green ensembles are bound to make your wedding pictures look tacky. While your mothers shouldn't be wearing the same style and color, their dresses should coordinate.
2. Generally, at formal weddings, your mother and mother-in-law should be in floor or tea-length dresses. Semi-formal or informal weddings allow them to get more creative with the length, but they still need to make sure they are complementing one another.
3. Unless your bridesmaids will be wearing black, a mother of the bride or groom should avoid this color. Until recently, black at weddings was considered a social blunder and many guests will still look at the color choice with suspicion. Steer them away from choosing a color that will raise eyebrows as to whether or not they approve of the marriage.
4. Don't forget to finish the look with a matching corsage or a small bouquet.