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GENERAL WEDDING ETIQUETTE

A wedding, whether traditional or contemporary, is full of customs and practices for which guests and the bride and groom establish their plans and expectations for the special day. While today's weddings are a combination of new and old traditions, certain rules of etiquette have withstood the test of time and are customary elements in a wedding. The following tips are general etiquette guidelines for guests, family, the bridal party, and the bride and groom.

The Guests

- It is an honour to receive an invitation to a wedding. The bride and groom have carefully chosen the people they wish to include in their special day. Be courteous and respond to the invitation by the designated date.
- Gifts should be sent to the bride's house before the wedding day. If it is not possible to send the gift to the bride's house, it is acceptable to bring the gift to the reception or send it to the bride and groom's address after the wedding.
- It is important to dress appropriately for the wedding. Weddings may vary from very formal to informal. Consider the time and setting for the wedding when choosing attire. It is better to be overdressed rather than underdressed.
- Upon arriving at the location of the ceremony, guests are ushered to appropriate seats according to their relationship to the bride and groom. The first several rows are reserved for parents of the bride and groom and immediate family. The left side of the room is for the bride's guests, and the right is for the groom's.
- Arrive early for the ceremony. There should not be any disturbances during the ceremony due to tardy guests.

The Bridal Party

- Generally it is not the responsibility of the bridesmaids to host the wedding shower; however, they may do so. Family members do not usually host the wedding shower, as it may seem like a conflict of interest.
- The Bridesmaids and groomsmen are responsible for last-minute details at the ceremony and reception. The bride and groom will be occupied with their own roles during the day and they will not enjoy their wedding if they must worry about minor details.
- Each bridesmaid gives a personal wedding gift to the bride and groom and the group of bridesmaids also gives a joint gift to the bride.
- Each groomsmen also each gives a gift to the bride and groom and a joint gift from all the groomsmen.
- Members of the bridal party greet guests in the receiving line.

The Bride & Groom

- The bride and groom, with possible input from their families, plan the entire wedding, from pre-wedding events to the honeymoon.
- The bride and groom must write thank-you notes for each gift received. Although telephone calls and electronic messages are appreciated, they are insufficient responses to wedding gifts. Write thank-you notes as gifts arrive prior to the wedding. Try to have all notes written a few weeks after the wedding, and all should be complete within three months. Each note must make specific reference to the gift for which the guest is being thanked. Notes should be hand-written and personally signed, not computer generated.
- It is appropriate to give gifts to bridesmaids, attendants, and parents for their involvement in the wedding.
- It is also customary for the bride and groom to exchange wedding gifts.

