

Kids or no kids? Enjoy a wedding that works for you

Weddings are a time for celebration and sharing good times. Some couples want to share their love and excitement with as many people as they can fit under one roof, while others may prefer a more intimate affair to enjoy with a select few. One difficult decision couples must face when planning a wedding is whether or not to invite children to join in the festivities.

Young guests can bring an energetic spark to the celebration, but kids unaccustomed to dressing up and enjoying a fancy night out may get swept away by the majesty of the night. Adult guests looking to have a good time may find it difficult to relax and let loose if they have to keep a constant eye on their children.

The topic of children at weddings is a tricky subject. Family and friends may have strong opinions on either side of the debate. Ultimately, the couple needs to come to an agreement regarding children at their wedding. Once a decision has been made, couples can employ some strategies to make the wedding as enjoyable as possible for every age group.

No children

Couples who decide to exclude kids from their guest lists should alert guests well in advance of the “no kids” edict. Be tactful when alerting guests. If you will be sending out save-the-date cards, include the phrase “Adults only, please” on the card. You also may want to include the information on a wedding website if you have one. A website affords you more space

to explain your stance on young guests.

When it comes to the wedding invitation, your indications should already be clear. However, you can reinforce that kids are not invited by addressing the invitations accordingly. Do not include the children’s names or “and family” on the envelope. Invitations should only feature the names of the people being invited.

Be consistent if you do not want children at the reception. It is not okay to allow one guest’s kids while excluding another’s. The only exception is children who are members of the wedding party. However, if you prefer a kid-free wedding, you may want to avoid a ring bearer and flower girl during the ceremony.

Chances are word will spread that the wedding is not for child guests. If you do not want to handle inquiries, ask a member of the bridal party to answer any kid-related questions.

Children allowed

Contrary to popular belief, children can be well-behaved at a wedding and add a youthful component to the celebration. Watching a child twirling on the dance floor or devouring a large piece of wedding cake can make a wedding day more memorable and special.

Couples who invite kids to the wedding should expect the unexpected from their youngest guests. Let the small things slide and speak with youngsters’ parents if any issues arise.

Arrange for some activities to keep children

entertained and out of trouble. Have the band or deejay incorporate some child-friendly dances or activities. Designate the kids’ table and arrange some small toys or activity books.

Be sure to choose some child-friendly foods during the cocktail hour. Hungry children can be that much more fussy. Arrange a special menu with the catering manager and be clear about how many kids are invited. Usually kids’ dinners cost substantially less than adults’.

Some reception sites may provide a separate room where children can gather. A television with a favorite movie or a few video games may be all that’s necessary to pass the time. Hire a babysitter to stay with the children and give adults in the other room peace of mind.

Limited children

You may want to include older children at the wedding but have younger ones stay home. As you would for a wedding without kids, spread the word that there is an age limit. On save-the-date announcements, request that “No children under age 12” attend the wedding.

Be prepared for some opposition from



guests whose kids fall under the age limit. Just be firm with your plans.

How to handle guests who don't RSVP

Wedding invitations are often a great source of information for guests. While wedding websites also provide a great opportunity for couples to get the word out about their weddings and share pertinent details like the date and location of the wedding, many people are still unfamiliar with the concept of a wedding website, and therefore they rely on invitations as their primary source of information about a wedding.

One of the most important bits of information couples must include on their wedding invitations is the RSVP date. The RSVP, which stands for “repondez s’il vous plait,” is a couple’s request for a response to their invitation. The RSVP is typically a specific date by which guests must let the couple tying the knot know whether or not they plan to attend the wedding.

There are no rules that govern how far in advance of the wedding couples should ask their guests to RSVP, but some venues might want a final headcount or at least a close estimate of the final countdown three to four weeks before the big day. As a result, it’s best to ask guests to RSVP at least

three weeks before the wedding and preferably four to five weeks before the festivities commence.

If invitations are mailed two to three months prior to the wedding, that gives guests ample time to determine whether they can or cannot join in the celebration. While many guests will respond immediately or in plenty of time for couples to arrange seating and notify their reception venue, nearly every bride and groom has been forced to deal with guests who simply failed to respond to their invitations, a potentially precarious position for couples to find themselves in as their wedding day quickly approaches.

When guests fail to respond on time, couples should maintain their composure and not take it as a sign of disrespect or indifference. Guests might not be planning a wedding, but chances are they’re busy, too, and their failure to respond is likely just a mistake. Before contacting those who failed to provide a timely response, wait a few extra days so responses that were mailed at the last minute can be counted among those that were received on time.

Once the deadline and subsequent extension has passed,

couples can begin to contact those guests who have not responded to their invitations. If it’s a close friend or family member who hasn’t responded, simply call them on the telephone and politely ask if they plan on coming to the wedding. They won’t need to mail the RSVP at this point, so just jot down their response and thank them before moving on to the next person.

When a person who hasn’t responded is less familiar to the bride and groom, such as a parent’s distant cousin or professional colleague, then it’s perfectly reasonable to ask for help. For example, if a parent’s neighbor has yet to reply, ask Mom or Dad to drop by their house or call them on the phone to determine if they plan to attend.

The majority of invitees, if not all of them, who fail to respond on time will understand when contacted directly and asked if they plan to attend, so couples need not be nervous or confrontational when making phone calls or writing emails. Keep things short and sweet and let guests know their attendance is appreciated or their absence will be felt if they cannot make it.