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# ask the expert

THE WEDDING PLANNER, INC.

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### REGISTRY ETIQUETTE

We recently went to register for our wedding and the store clerk offered us registry enclosure cards to include in our invitations. Is this acceptable?

No, no, a thousand times, no! It may seem helpful, but it is never acceptable to enclose a registry notice or gift wish list with your invitation. Never. Ever.

One of the major etiquette questions is the method of informing your guests about your registries. Stores perpetuate this etiquette no-no by offering you these invitation enclosures, which can be offensive to guests. Your gift registry can be one of the most fun aspects of planning your wedding ("Here, honey, just point this gun at things and voila, they're on our wish list!"), but it can also prove to be an etiquette minefield.

You may prefer to receive money, which is traditional in many cultures, or contributions to your honeymoon fund, but you cannot tell your guests what to give you. It is just not polite to request gifts of any kind. Giving a wedding gift is the socially acceptable thing to do—but no one is really obligated to buy you a gift. Informing your guests what kind of gift you would like at the same time you are inviting them to your wedding is like telling them the gift is more important than their attendance.

The way to let people know where you're registered is via word of mouth. Make sure your bridal party and family know where you are registered or if you have a preference for a more non-traditional gift. Then you have to wait until someone asks where you are registered, and just cross your fingers! It is also acceptable to put registry information on your wedding website if you plan to have one during your engagement.



A gift registry card and several wrapped gifts. The card is white with a black header that says "GIFT REGISTRY". Below the header, the text reads: "We were a bit unsure what to choose when we made our gift registry. Help!". The card is surrounded by several wrapped gifts in gold and white paper with white ribbons.

#### BRIDESMAIDS

I'm having trouble choosing a dress for my 10 bridesmaids. I want them all in the same dress but how do I choose one that will look good on all of them? Do I have to pay for all of them? Should they match my wedding gown?

Just like most things in life, one size usually doesn't fit all—and one dress won't suit all, unless your bridesmaids have similar body types. When it comes to your attendants' attire, uniformity is nice, it's expected, but it's absolutely not necessary. In fact, mixing up the styles a bit is practically the norm these days. At the very least, it is nice to set your maid of honour apart by choosing a different dress in the same colour or the same dress in a different colour.

Choosing a bridesmaid dress shouldn't be looked at as an opportunity for retribution for that frilly sea-foam green number taunting you from the back of your closet. Be nice. These are your friends. Most women are initially thrilled when asked to be a bridesmaid, but if they've ever been a bridesmaid before, inside their head they're groaning, "What is she going to make me wear?" Consider choosing a colour and/or style grouping from one designer and letting your bridesmaids choose which one they feel best suits them. That way, as it will be the same fabric and the same general style, they will look similar, but your best friend won't be hiding in the corner all evening for fear of falling out of the strapless dress you've chosen for her.

The bridesmaid dress should match the formality of your dress—so don't put them in a sundress if you're wearing a formal gown with a train—but it is no longer necessary to have your attendants' dresses emulate your gown. Bridesmaids' dresses not only used to match the wedding gown, but were identical to it, as the original purpose for a bridesmaid was to confuse the evil spirits. These days, they're there for moral support and to look pretty walking down the aisle.

It is expected that the bridesmaids will cover the cost of their own attire; however, some brides opt to pay, depending on the cost of the dress they've chosen or the financial circumstances of their friends. So, unless you are planning to foot the bill yourself, be kind with both style and price. And, by the way, feel free just to have three or four bridesmaids, not ten—you don't need all of your guests standing at the front with you!

**TODAY'S ENGAGED COUPLES** often have established households of their own, so a registry is an excellent way for your guests to know what you actually need ("Oh look! Another toaster! Everyone needs four toasters, don't they?"). Make sure you think carefully about what you actually need and make a wish list that is agreeable to both you and your partner. Your guests have different budgets, so register for items in a variety of price ranges. You cannot expect all of your guests to spring for that \$400 food processor, or that they will be happy buying you one teaspoon at \$100 a piece because it is the only thing on your registry they can afford. A thoughtful gift registry gives everyone the opportunity to buy you something you will love.