

How can couples ask that children not attend their wedding?

"There are some simple ways to politely tell people that children should not attend the wedding. While this may be a bit awkward, if you are proactive with communicating this early on, it will be less so. Firstly, on the wedding website there should be a line that states: 'This is an adult-only event' or 'Please join us for an adults-only wedding.' On the inside envelope of the invitation, it should also specify exactly who is being invited to the

wedding. Etiquette says that only people whose names are included are the ones being invited to the wedding.

Another great tip is to use a wedding babysitting service. These are licensed and bonded sitters and are a wonderful way to offer both local and out-of-town guests a night out without worrying about their children."

—**BETH MURRAY AND KIMBERLEY VINES, TWO GIRLS IN PEARLS EVENTS**

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As a bride, what's customary these days in terms of how to ask your friends to be your bridesmaids?

"Anything from hosting parties and 'popping the question' to mailing curated 'maid gifts.' Keeping it personal and thoughtful is the perfect way to kick off the festivities."

—**LOTTIE FOWLER, GRIT & GOLD EVENT CO.**

Is it still okay to ask your bridesmaids to pay for their dresses?

"Times are changing, and we are seeing more brides pay for their bridesmaids' dresses—especially if they have a very specific brand or vision in mind that might be on the costly side. However, should a bride wish to keep to the customary budgeting, we highly recommend the bride foot the bill for the hair and makeup services for her bridal party. Not only is this a nice treat to say thank you, but you can guarantee a consistent and quality look for all your crew." —**L.F.**

As a groom, are you still expected to ask for a father's hand in marriage?

"I would say it's not expected, as many couples are getting married later in life and don't rely on their parents in the planning process. However, it is certainly a sign of respect and a nice way to honor and include parents, especially when families are close. And if the father is not around or not involved, go to the next family member the bride is closest to—mom, stepdad, or older brother."

—**ELIZABETH GONZALEZ, AFTER YES**

"When selecting any vendor, it is important to make sure that you have some type of connection. Treat them like you would a first date and ask some probing questions—how long they have been in the industry, what's their taste in music; ask them to describe their style. This will help ensure that the people or companies you hire are experienced and are able to deliver what you are looking for on your day."

—**BRITTANY MCKINNEY, SOUTHERN AFFAIRS**

Can a bride ask a vendor to negotiate their price?

"Some vendors accept negotiations, especially if they are new to the industry. However, seasoned vendors often have packages that are pre-set based on the number of hours that a project will take. If a request is made for a discount, the likely response is that the vendor will eliminate something in the package. Sometimes, venues and caterers are better equipped to offer a reduced fee because they can more easily substitute a component of the meal service. Also, if a bride works with a wedding planner, vendors will occasionally give planners discounts to share with their clients." —**MARSHA BALLARD FRENCH, WEDDINGS BY STARDUST**

What are the top questions a bride should ask potential vendors?

"For a venue, ask what the vendor policy is. Do they require any type of insurance? Do they allow outside vendors? Are they all-inclusive? What is the standard venue rental period? And one of the most important, overlooked questions: Will I be granted a rehearsal prior to the day of the event?" —**B.M.**

The Etiquette of Asking

Once you're engaged, you're sure to have lots of questions—some fun ("How do I ask my friends to be bridesmaids?"), and some not so much ("Kid-free wedding, anyone?"). We turned to wedding-planning pros to get answers to common matrimonial queries.

by Lydia Brooks

What are the important questions to ask when signing with a venue?