

WHAT ABOUT: DIVORCED PARENTS? FORMAL GOWN?

Many twenty-first century brides face decisions and challenges that their great grandmothers could never have imagined. Divorce and remarriage; brides with their own professional careers; couples who have children from previous marriages; same sex couples, etc. are among the many dilemmas facing couples planning their wedding. The traditional formula that guides every step of the wedding experience from engagement to honeymoon often needs adjustment. In this column we will address a broad range of questions from readers and, hopefully, help to smooth out some of the bumps in the wedding planning process.

DEAR KATHY:

Q: My parents were divorced when I was two years old. Three years later my mother remarried. My stepfather has been a wonderful parent and I have had no contact at all with my birth father in all of these years. Do I have to include his name on my wedding invitation?

A: Put simply, no. The wedding invitations are sent by the person or persons who are giving the wedding. Since your birth father is in no way involved, his name should not appear on the invitation. It seems that your stepfather is the true father figure in your life, so, the invitation might read:

*Mr. and Mrs. John Adams
request the honour of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Abigail Prudence Jefferson*

Q: Can I wear a formal wedding gown for a tiny wedding? I can't afford a big extravaganza, but I have always wanted to look like a bride.

A: The word formal is open to definition, but you can certainly wear a beautiful traditional gown with a manageable veil. Just forego the train. Use your own good judgment about the extent of decoration on the gown - beading, pearls, etc. Think about the venues where the wedding and reception will take place. You should shine like a precious jewel in the setting, not totally overwhelm it.

Q: At the last few bridal showers I have attended, guests were asked to address envelopes to be used for the thank you notes. I did not mind this, but other people seemed to disapprove. Now, my maid of honor has suggested doing the very same thing. What do I say?

A: You say a resounding NO. The guests at your shower have put their time, thought, and money into the gifts which they brought. Asking them to address their own thank you notes gives the impression that you don't think they are worth the effort it would take to perform the most basic act of good manners. The thank you notes must be handwritten by the bride-to-be (or in some cases, the groom-to-be.) The envelopes can be addressed by the couple, the maid-of-honor, the bridesmaids, siblings, parents, etc. Some of the old rules are flexible, some are not.