

## CREATING AND MAILING INVITATIONS

### General guidelines for creating invitations:

- Choose a traditional ink color. Black is the most correct choice and black is required if you are producing very formal invitations. Avoid light, bright or metallic.
- Type styles should be easy to read; the preferred and most correct font for formal invitations is script.
- The most traditional format is a plain card measuring. It is attractive and correct to print the institution's official logo at the top of the page.
- Invitations come from people, not entities. It is correct to say, "The Board of Trustees of..." because the board is made up of people. It is incorrect to say, "Major State University requests the pleasure of your company."
- All formal invitations are worded in the third person (and their acceptances and regrets are answered in the same form and by hand).

### The 10 basic elements of an invitation:

*Line 1:* The University or college logo.

*Line 2:* The names of the hosts. On formal invitations for official university entertaining, use the host's full name. The person's title goes on the second line. Omit honorifics such as Dr., Mr., etc. unless the person holds an official rank, such as mayor or judge; is a member of Congress or the President's cabinet; or is a diplomat or a military officer. When there are several hosts, the most senior person's name is listed first. If you want to list the hosts on the same line, the most senior person's name appears on the left-hand side. When the invitation is from a committee and the people are of approximately equal business or social rank, list the members alphabetically at the top of the invitation. Omit honorifics except for persons with official rank. List the names in two or three columns if necessary. Be consistent about the use of honorifics and the format of names. Examples:

#### From a university official:

**John A. Smith**  
*Dean, College of Arts & Sciences*  
requests the pleasure of your company

#### From a university president and another official:

**John A. Smith, President**      **Sy Sternberg, Chairman**  
request the pleasure of your company

#### From a university president and his spouse:

**Dr. and Mrs. John A. Smith**  
request the pleasure of your company

**Line 3:** This line extends the invitation. Phrasing is dictated by tradition. “Requests the pleasure of your company at” is the most often used. For very high-ranking or distinguished people, the phrase “request the honor of your company” is most appropriate. “Cordially invites you to” or “invites you to join us” are less formal.

**Line 4:** Tell the kind of event you are having. This is usually a one- or two-word statement. (Example: “dinner,” “a reception,” “lunch” or “a cocktail reception and dinner.”)

**Line 5:** Tell the purpose of the event: “in honor of the 2010 Presidential Scholars” or “to welcome ...”

**Line 6:** The date. On a formal invitation, write it out: “Friday, the twelfth of February.” Less formal invitations can use the more common version: “Friday, February 12, 2010” Only the day and month are capitalized.

**Line 7:** State the hour. On formal invitations, use words instead of numbers to indicate time: “at nine o’clock,” “at half past six o’clock,” “at quarter past seven o’clock.” You may also say “six-thirty o’clock,” or “from six-thirty to eight-thirty o’clock.” Noon is indicated as “noon” or “twelve o’clock.”

**Line 8:** Tell the place, including street address. For campus buildings, state the room within the building, building name and street address. (Example: Alumni Memorial Gallery, 13 Main Hall, 220 Campus Drive) If using off-campus property, state the full name, street and city. Addresses should be written out unless the number cannot be written in a few words: “Thirty-one Hill Street” but “1310 Hill Street.” Avoid using any numerals other than phone numbers.

**Line 9:** The bottom right-hand corner of the invitation is reserved for special instructions, such as “black tie,” “map enclosed” and “rain date.”

**Line 10:** The R.s.v.p. information. If you are issuing a traditional formal invitation without an R.s.v.p. card, print the address and telephone number of the person handling replies. If you are supplying R.s.v.p. cards, use the statement “R.s.v.p. card enclosed.” For more informal invitations, simply use R.s.v.p. and a phone number. Don’t use the phrase “regrets only.” It is typically acceptable to put a cut-off date with a request for response. It can be written in upper case (R.S.V.P.) or R.s.v.p. Be consistent on all of your invitations. Do not write *Please* R.s.v.p (it is redundant).

**Additional inserts:**

- Complete the invitation by including a matching printed R.S.V.P. card and a self-addressed envelope.
- It is not necessary to supply postage on the reply envelope.
- When you supply an R.S.V.P. card, do not print the reply address on the actual invitation.
- If maps, ticket-order cards, or other special instructions are needed, they should be printed to match.

**Addressing the envelopes:**

- Envelopes should be of good quality and match the invitation.

- Print your return address on the flap.
- Hand-written addresses in black fountain pen or a black roller-ball pen should be used. If hand-addressing is not feasible, the next best alternative is a computer-generated address directly on the envelopes using black ink.
- Never use labels, even clear ones, on formal invitations or reply cards.

**Stuffing the envelopes:**

- The invitation's front or printed side should peek out of the V cut into the flap side of the envelope so that when the person opens the envelope and pulls the invitation out, it is face up in reading position.
- For vertically formatted invitations, insert the invitation into the envelope so that the top of the invitation is facing front and left in the envelope. If it has a vertical fold, the folded side is at the bottom of the envelope.
- Stack the R.S.V.P. card and other inserts on top of the invitation so they cannot be missed.

**Mailing:**

- Send formal invitations by first-class mail, using an attractive commemorative postage stamp, preferably one that reinforces the event theme. Never use a postage meter.
- Mailing invitations four to six weeks in advance of the R.S.V.P date is standard for most events, like breakfasts, luncheons or dinner parties.
- Mailing three weeks in advance of the event is sufficient for an afternoon tea, a reception or a cocktail party.