

# **7 Ways to Make Ordering Wedding Invitations Easier (and Cheaper)**

by  
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**A Monkey + Seal Guide**

**[www.monkeyandseal.com](http://www.monkeyandseal.com)**

### Introduction

First off, if you're the one shopping for invitations: congratulations on your engagement! If you're downloading this for a friend or relative or just to be a better invitation peddler, congratulations on being super cool! Please don't be offended as I will now refer to you, the reader, as the person getting married.

Second, thank you for downloading this little e-book! This little guide is here as a tool to help you make the process of ordering wedding invitations easier. This is primarily focused for people who are going to go into a brick-and-mortar shop to do their invitation orders, but I'm sure people ordering online will find some use as well.

It's brought to you totally free, but I would appreciate you referring it to anyone else you think might be able to use it. Additionally, I will occasionally offer links to other sites, services, or products that we think may help you out. Monkey + Seal have a policy of only becoming affiliates of companies whose products we actually use, and disclosing whether or not we are affiliates. I don't want to pressure you to buy anything, but if you are going to buy it anyway, I'd appreciate you using the links from this guide, as it helps support the creation of more guides like this.

Thanks again, and enough introducing, on to the info!

-Rick

### Tip #1 - Know your timeframe

How soon do you need to send out your invitations? The first thing you should ask (or should be asked) is what sort of schedule you are on. You may be asked questions like “Did you send out a Save the Date?” or “Is it a destination wedding?” as these factors generally determine when you need to send out your wedding invitations. Hopefully, you did send out a Save the Date aka STD (yeah, go ahead and laugh and get it out of your system), as STDs usually should be sent out anywhere between 6 months to a year and a half. Generally, if it’s a destination wedding, it’s only common courtesy to give your guests as much time as possible to plan and save up for a trip out of the country (or into the country, if guests are coming in from other nations).

If you did send out a STD, then you’re probably good with sending out your invitations between 6-8 weeks prior to the Big Day. Knowing when you need to send your invitations out is very important, as some shops take up to a month or so to get your invitations back to you, and if you’re going custom, the process could take up to a few months. If you explain your deadlines to the person helping you, they should show you what brands/printing processes will and will not work for you (and will explain rush fees if they apply).

If you have questions on what sort of timeframe you’re looking for, the workbook at the end of the guide has a handy-dandy calculating tool for figuring out key dates for your invitation timeline. Use it! Woo!

### **Tip #2 - Figure out your style + preferred method of printing**

I don't mean that you need to know exactly what you want, but knowing whether you want a flat card with a clean design versus a card with an enclosure and sashes and ribbon and vellum sheets and all that is key to speeding up the invitation ordering process. Even if you just know what you DON'T want, it will make the process faster.

Things to think about: Do you like modern typefaces? Do you want an invitation that's in all script-fonts? What about imagery? Do you want a design that takes up an entire corner of the invitation, or just a small motif at the bottom? The workbook at the end of the guide includes more examples of questions to ask yourself and your partner that will help you to figure out what you're looking for.

Don't forget to make sure that the salesperson helping you knows your preference, so they can point you to the most appropriate places where you'll find the invitation of your dreams.

In terms of printing methods, there are generally four ways that most invitations are printed: flat/digital/offset, thermography, letterpress, and engraving.

Flat/Digital/Offset for non-printing enthusiasts basically means that the card is going to be printed on the cardstock just like a really good inkjet printer. There will be no texture due to the printing. This is always going to be the most inexpensive method. Flat printing is also the most cost effective if you want multiple colors, so if color is your thing, then flat printing might be for you.

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Thermography is a faux engraving process in which the image/text is printed and dusted with a powder that is heated (thus, the “thermo” in thermography) and creates a raised texture where the ink is printed. This gives the feel of the letters being raised off the page. It can be a bit plastic-y (the powder is a plastic base ) so the letters tend to be a bit glossy. If you go through someone like Crane & Co. or William Arthur (the two largest invitation printers around), it’s usually the same price as flat printing, but if you go to a smaller print shop, it may be a bit more.

Letterpress is awesome. (Okay, I admit that as a printmaker I am biased towards letterpress). It is an antiquated printing method that presses ink down into the paper. Traditionally lead or wood type is used, but most modern day printers create polymer plates to letterpress with. It looks great on fluffy, cottony paper, and will generally cost at least 30% more than flat printing. Extra costs are associated for each ink color, as you can only print one color at a time, and cleaning the press is quite labor intensive (it’s the worst part about printing letterpress!)

Engraving is a printing method that requires metal plates to be cast that press the text/image up from the paper. If letterpress creates valleys, engraving creates mountains. Engraving gets quite costly to do multiple colors. It is also the only method of printing in which you can have light colored inks (ie usually white) on dark paper. It is also the most expensive printing technique due to the resources required, and you’re looking at around twice (or higher) the cost flat printing.

There is also screenprinting (ie. silkscreen printing), but this is a rarity in wedding invitations. The only time I’ve seen this is if someone is printing it themselves, or if they want invitations on some sort of non-paper substrate, like fiberglass or wood veneer. It will look as if it was flat printed, but is able to print on practically anything flat. Prices are going to vary wildly depending on quantity, number of colors, and what you’re printing on, but I’d imagine it would usually run around the cost of letterpress or engraving.

### Tip #3 - Know your budget and stick to it

You definitely want to make sure that you have a clear idea of your budget for your invitations. If your parents or someone else is paying for it, there's generally still a budget that they're looking at, and you want to make sure that you're clear on what that is - and if there isn't one, there's this store called Monkey + Seal that you should go visit ;)

When figuring out your budget, be honest with yourself. There's no reason to go into debt because of your wedding invitations. I recommend taking the absolutely highest amount you can afford to spend on invitations, and then multiplying it by .85. This will give you a good target price to shoot for, as when you get quoted, often times the cost of shipping and tax will not be included. That's what the 15% (or .15) is for. You can probably budget 4-8% more (ie. multiply by .89-.92) if you're not in a region that charges high sales tax (like San Francisco's 9.5%, woof). Also, make sure you account for postage and calligraphy/labels/ink/address related stuff, so if you want to splurge on that fancy calligrapher, then subtract that cost as well.

This new number is what you should be aiming for. Let the sales associate know this lower number, so when tax and shipping and everything else pushes the final total higher, you'll still be within budget. The clearer in your head you are with the budget, the easier it will be to make decisions regarding "extra" options like envelope liners and ribbons and enclosures.

Additionally, if you give the sales associate a ceiling to work with, they should be able to find ways that you might still be able to get the invitation with all the bells, but just not the whistle (ie. you might be able to get letterpress invitations, but maybe no envelope liner - if they're good, they'll get creative for you).

### **Tip #4 - Figure out how many invites/pieces you need**

Knowing how many invitations you plan on sending as well as how many pieces you need will make doing price comparisons much easier. (ie. invite = one piece, RSVP = one piece, reception card = another piece, etc.)

Keep in mind that the number of invitations you need to send out is usually only 50-75% of the actual number of people being invited. So if you're having a 200 person wedding, you probably need between 100-125 invitations (couples and families only need one invitation). Also, most invitation sellers will only place an order in quantities of 25 (or sometimes 50). If you have 124 invitations to send and can afford it, I would most definitely get 150 instead of 125 in case of addressing errors, mistakes, accidentally sitting on some invites, etc. In any case, if you're planning on hiring a calligrapher, they generally need 10-15% coverage on the envelopes.

Traditionally, you need at least two pieces - the invitation itself and the RSVP. If you're shopping around to compare prices, make sure you note whether or not the price includes envelopes, and whether or not return address printing is included.

Additional pieces could be a rehearsal dinner invitation, a reception card, an accommodation card, a map/directions card, an activities card (for destination weddings), and/or a brunch card. None of these are mandatory, of course (technically, neither is an invitation), but can add an extra punch to your invite (but can also add an extra punch to your pocket-book).

A very modern way of condensing the number of printed cards is the wedding website, which brings me on to Tip No.5...

### Tip #5 - Get a wedding website (with a short URL)

A relatively easy way (assuming you can blog, and know your way around the internet) to get all the information you need to your guests is to create a website. Popular sites that offer free web hosting include [www.theknot.com](http://www.theknot.com), [www.mywedding.com](http://www.mywedding.com), and <http://sites.google.com>. All will let you customize your site and put up photos, directions, accommodation info, etc., etc. The Knot and My Wedding are created specifically for wedding websites, so I find they have a lot cooler features, but google sites is still another option if you want more customization and are a bit more web savvy. However, the “dark side” to these sites is that generally your URL is going to look something like: <http://www.sitename.com/yournames20xx/sites/blahblahblah>. Which is all good and fine when you’re just clicking on it, but when it’s on a printed card with limited space you don’t want to ask your guests to type that long URL in.

Enter the domain forwarding. By buying a domain and the smallest amount of hosting space from someone like [www.bluehost.com](http://www.bluehost.com) or [www.1and1.com](http://www.1and1.com), you can get a much shorter URL and have it forward you to the longer URL. What this means, is that instead of typing in <http://sites.google.com/site/eveandrick2014>, you could just type in [www.wedding.monkeyandseal.com](http://www.wedding.monkeyandseal.com).

Okay, so granted, it’s not much shorter in our case, but it is still easier to remember and if you end up with a long URL and want a shorter one, I’m sure you can figure something out (if I wanted to buy something like [www.eveandrick20xx.com](http://www.eveandrick20xx.com) I could have ended up with an even smaller URL.

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You can get a domain plus hosting for \$24 for sixth months from [www.1and1.com](http://www.1and1.com). Just so you know, they bill 6 months at a time, so if you're getting it a year in advance, it is an investment of \$50 a year. However, when each additional printed piece is going to probably run you about \$125 each, if you can save on a single accommodations card, it's totally worth it.

From what I've seen, 1&1 is cheap and reliable, which I'm a big fan of (it's what we run our illustration and fine art portfolio sites off of). Bluehost is great as well, but it's more for people who know their way around html and such.

PS - We are affiliates of 1&1 and Bluehost, but it's Monkey + Seal policy to only become affiliates of products we actually use ourselves so you know 1&1 and Bluehost are legit. Seriously, no pressure to buy from them. But if you are going to get a domain and hosting, you might as well get it from 1&1 though - save yourself money, and we get some support to keep creating guides like this one. Either way, I'm glad you're still reading this, so thank you!

### Tip #6 - Get your text ready

Seriously, you have no idea how much time you can save by working on your wording at home. I know you probably don't have a whole lot of references for wording, but I'll provide you with some in the workbook, so don't stress out.

Other things to think about are the little things like "Do you want an ampersand (&) or "and" between your names?" or "Do you like large and small caps, or just lowercase, or just small caps" etc. etc.

One thing that you can do to make sure that your wording is all gravy is to talk to whoever is funding the wedding. If your parents or soon-to-be-in-laws will be kicking in some cash, then I would recommend running the wording by them. Parents will usually (especially if they're paying) want to have their names on the invitation, so a quick call might circumvent any issues about names after the invitations are printed.

Things that you'll need to have finalized before you order:

- Time of the ceremony/reception
- Location of the ceremony/reception
- URL (if there's a website)
- RSVP date
- RSVP address
- Accommodations information (if doing an accommodations card)
- Do you want menu choices on your RSVP card? If so, what are they?

### Tip #7 - Know how you're going to address your envelopes

This seems like such a little thing, but it can really have a far-reaching affect on what sort of envelopes you get, what other pieces you can or can't afford, etc. Most invitation companies will not address your envelopes for you. This leaves you (usually) with three options: calligraphy, hand writing them yourself, or labels. Calligraphy can be expensive (the least expensive I've found for writing addresses is \$1.50 per envelope), and clear labels are definitely NOT the way to go (as a designer, I plead you, do not use clear labels on white envelopes - it looks like a junk mail solicitation).

If you must use a label, you'll want to make sure you're integrating it into the design and overall look of the envelope, and not just using it because it's fast and easy. Also, sometimes just writing the addresses by hand is as quick as it is to copy and paste and print all the address on the labels. If you are going to get labels for your recipient's address, [Paper Source](#) has some cool ones if you like bright (yet muted) colors, and for really spiffy wrap-around return addresses, you can find some over at [Minted.com](#). FYI, both are affiliate links, and I've actually been employed by both these companies at some point in time (and believe me, they both have some great options to offer).

Envelopes are a great way of adding color to your invitations. If you really want a dark color, just be aware that they are hard to print on (printers don't have a white ink) and you may end up spend more money addressing them (whether it be for special pens/inks or labels). I might suggest going with a lighter color envelope and seeing what your options are with a dark envelope liner. Yes, this might tack on an extra cost (in time, if not in money), but it is a cost that you should compare when considering your envelope choices.

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Make sure you ask about any recommendations they have, but I guarantee any wedding invitation shop will recommend calligraphy or some other product (at Paper Source they might recommend labels). Otherwise, start figuring out if you have any good friends that do calligraphy, or hammer them out yourself if you have handwriting that is either a) really legible, or b) spunky with lots of character. Just don't forget to budget this in when you're figuring out how much you want to spend on invitations.

### **Tip #7a - Budget some time for ordering**

Even if you come uber-prepared, most likely the ordering process is going to take at least 30 minutes. Any sales associate worth their weight in salt will want to make sure that they go over everything with you in detail in order to make sure that you're getting what you want. After all, if you walk away upset, that's either a lost sale or a whole lot of work they have to do later to make it up to you.

Take your time. Everyone's busy, but the more time you can allow yourself, the less rushed you'll feel and you'll be less likely to skip over something important. There are horror stories of couples who breeze through the ordering and proofing process, and then find out that a name is misspelled or an address is wrong. Once you approve a proof (which I highly, highly, highly recommend getting at least one, even if you have to pay for it), any printing errors then become your fault, and it's a lot better to spend the time proofreading things carefully and making sure the order is as perfect as possible than rushing through it and having a disaster occur.

### Conclusion

Well, that's it for now. Thanks again for reading, and if you are interested in any of the affiliate links, here they all are for your convenience:

- [Minted.com](#) - wrap around labels (also a great selection of invitations)
- [Paper Source](#) - fun labels, also great envelopes and some nice invitations
- [1&1.com](#) - \$3.99/mo. domain hosting including 1 domain name
- [Bluehost.com](#) - A bit more expensive, but they have more tools if you're a more experienced web designer (ie you know your way around html, can use Dreamweaver, etc.)

Other non-affiliate resources:

- [www.theknot.com](#) - a huge wedding resource, allows site hosting and user-friendly site builders
- [www.mywedding.com](#) - another large wedding resource with site hosting and easy site builders
- [http://sites.google.com](#) - the big G strikes again with free web hosting and a Blogger-like interface

Monkey is always interested in hearing your feedback (good or bad)! Please feel free to email him at [risk@rickkitagawa.com](mailto:risk@rickkitagawa.com). Thanks again, and enjoy the workbook!

If you'd like to sign up for our weekly updates on new products, our art, and specials, please sign up for our [e-newsletter!](#) Thanks!

# Monkey's Wedding Workbook

## Figuring out your timeframe

This will help you determine some key dates for getting your invitations and RSVPs printed. You'll be counting backwards since the frame of reference is a future deadline, so make sure you have a calendar handy. You'll be figuring out two dates: 1) the date you want people to send their RSVPs in by (the RSVP deadline), and 2) the date on which you want to have all your invitations sent out by (the invitation send-out date).

Note: When I say "Add a week" count backwards a week (ie. If your wedding is on July 8th, "adding a week" would make it July 1st).

Step 1. When do you absolutely need a final head count? (hint: usually has to do with the caterer and food quantities, or the venue for seating)

Step 2. Count back at least 2 -3 weeks. This is your RSVP deadline.

Step 3. Do you have a lot of guests who you think won't RSVP on time? If so, add a week to the RSVP deadline.

Step 4. Do you have a lot of guests who live outside the country? If so, add a week to the RSVP deadline.

Step 5. Do you have a "second-tier" of guests (don't worry, I won't tell)? If so, add a week to the RSVP deadline.

Step 6. Take the RSVP deadline and add at least 3-4 weeks. This is when you need to send out your invitations.

Step 7. Did you have a lot of guests who live outside the country? If so, add a week or two to the invitation send-out date.

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Step 8. Is it a destination wedding? Add 3-4 weeks to the send-out date (generally, they can go out up to a year in advance).

Step 9. Add a 1-3 weeks to stuff, address, assemble, etc. your invitations, depending on how busy you are, and how much assembly you might have.

Step 10. If you're planning on having calligraphy done, add at least a week or two (or add the standard turn-around time if you know it).

Step 11. This is the day you need your invitations in hand.

Step 12. Make sure whoever is helping you knows this, and ask about production times. Make sure this is very clear, and order invitations accordingly. Yay!

### **Questions to ask yourself and your partner about style**

- What colors do you want? For the ink? For the envelopes? For the paper stock?
- Do you like san-serif fonts? Serif fonts? Script fonts?
- Do you like enclosures, or do you want just a flat card?
- Do you like envelope liners?
- Are there any themes you want (ie. Victorian garden, beach sunset, black and white gothic, zombie superhero, etc.)?
- Do you want the invitation to be image based or text based?
- Do you like monograms?
- Traditional or modern?
- Any specific imagery that you want?
- Do you want a long card? A rectangle? A Square (square envelopes do cost more for postage)?

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### Budgeting

Maximum amount you would pay for invitations \_\_\_\_\_ x .85 (for shipping, tax, wiggle room) – postage for mailing – \*estimate for any addressing-related-costs = target budget.

\*ie. calligraphy services, ink, special pens or labels, etc.

Divide this number by the number of invitations you need = cost per invitation. Some stores have price listed as a total quantity, others by price per invitations. It's good to know what you can afford in both pricing styles.

### Wording

Here are the examples of different invitation wording. General rules to follow (assuming you're going for a more traditional style) are:

- no punctuation marks except for periods after “Mr.” and “Mrs.” and when you have to separate phrases on the same line, (ie the date, or “city, state”).
- numbers in dates are spelled out (ie. the fourth of july), but in street addresses, it's okay (ie. 1459 Sampson Street).
- spell out the year (ie. two thousand and twelve)
- if it's in a church, you ask for the “honour” of the guests' presence, and you similarly ask for the “favour’ of a reply on the RSVP card
- you probably don't want to refer to the event as a “wedding,” but more properly as a “marriage.”

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### Wording Samples

**Traditional and/or formal weddings being held in a church and hosted by the parents of the bride:**

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Skylar  
request the honor of your presence  
at the marriage of their daughter

Eve Seal  
to  
Rick Monkey Kitagawa

Saturday, the second of October  
two thousand and ten  
at half-past five o'clock

Church of the Jungle  
San Francisco, California

**For more formal and/or traditional weddings being held outside of a church and hosted by parents of the bride:**

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Skylar  
request the pleasure of your company  
at the marriage of their daughter

Eve Seal  
&  
Rick Monkey Kitagawa

Saturday, the second of October  
two thousand and ten  
at half-past five o'clock

Banana Fish Inn  
San Francisco, California

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**For more formal and/or traditional weddings being held outside of a church and hosted by both sets of parents:**

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Skylar  
and Mr. and Mrs. Pops Kitagawa  
request the pleasure of your company  
at the marriage of their children

Eve Seal  
&  
Rick Monkey

Saturday, the second of October  
two thousand and ten  
at half-past five o'clock

Banana Fish Inn  
San Francisco, California

**For less formal or non-traditional weddings being hosted by both sets of parents and the bride and groom (there are tons of ways to word this combo due to the modern nature of this arrangement, so feel free to spice it up yourself):**

Together with their families

Eve Seal Skylar  
and  
Rick Monkey Kitagawa

invite you to share in their joy  
at the celebration of their marriage  
Saturday, the second of October  
two thousand and ten  
at half-past five o'clock

Banana Fish Inn  
San Francisco, California

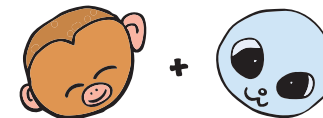
## 7 Ways to Making Ordering Wedding Invitations Easier (and Cheaper)

**For less formal or non-traditional weddings being hosted by the bride and the groom:**

Eve Seal Skylar  
&  
Rick Monkey Kitagawa

invite you to share in the celebration of  
their marriage  
Saturday, October second  
two thousand and ten  
at half-past five o'clock

Banana Fish Inn  
San Francisco, California



**Thank you and congratulations again!**