

Facts of Wedding Etiquette

The guidance notes below are for your information but need not be followed in full should you prefer less formality at your reception:

The Top Table Seating Arrangements

The top table should comprise the wedding party only but should you wish any other guests to be seated here they should be seated on either side of the wedding party.

From left to right facing your guests: Chief Bridesmaid, Bridegroom's Mother, Bride's Father, Bride, Bridegroom, Bride's Mother, Bridegroom's Father and Best Man, it is recommended that you limit your table to 12 people.

The Bride should always be at the left side of the Bridegroom.

The Receiving Line

It is advisable to limit the receiving line to: Bride's Mother, Bride's Father, Bridegroom's Mother, Bridegroom's Father, Bride and Bridegroom.

Guests move along the receiving line after being announced, by the Toastmaster, shaking hands with each member of the wedding party in turn. To make a softer approach to formality it is advised that only first names are used. It should be remembered not to stage a full blown "Reunion" at this time as the meal, having been set for an agreed time, may be spoiled.

The Wedding Breakfast

When all the guests have passed through the receiving line and made their way to the appropriate tables, the Toastmaster will request everybody to stand to receive the Bride and Bridegroom.

The Toastmaster then leads the Bride and Bridegroom to their places at the top table. If required, he will say grace or introduce a reverend or family member to do so.

The Toastmaster will then ask everybody to sit. At this stage, the Toastmaster will now make a short informal announcement regarding 'throw-away' cameras or items that may have provided for your guests.

The meal is now served.

During your Wedding breakfast some quiet background music will help your guests to relax.

The Cutting Of The Wedding Cake

If you require your wedding cake to be served with your coffee it is normally cut after the main course has been cleared. Once cleared the Toastmaster will make an announcement that the Bride and Bridegroom wish to cut their wedding cake and invite any photographers to come forward. If, however, you would prefer your wedding cake to be served with the evening buffet it should be cut after the Best Mans speech.

It is suggested you think carefully about having the wedding cake served with the coffee. After a buffet-style or sit-down meal wedding cake sometimes gets wasted as diners are, by this time, too full to enjoy it.

The Speeches

When liaising with your speechmakers it is worth remembering that the most popular speakers are those with the shortest speech, i.e. no more than five minutes per person.

Once the coffee and champagne is served the Toastmaster will announce:

1) The Bride's Father, a relative, or close family friend to say a few words about the Bride, and to welcome the Bridegroom into the family. Before finishing his speech he toasts, " The Bride and Bridegroom".

2) The Bridegroom replies on behalf of his wife and himself, thanking all guests for attending and for all the gifts and cards they have received. He should also include special thanks to any guests that may have traveled some distance, i.e. from abroad.

Thanks must also go to the Parents, Bridesmaids, Pageboys, Best Man and Ushers for their contributions to the day; not to forgetting to thank your wife for turning up looking so wonderful, and marrying you. You may, at this point, wish to propose a toast to your Bride.

When thanking the relevant persons, should you have a gift for them, ask them to make their way to the top table to receive it on behalf of you both.

The Bridegroom, before sitting down, should propose a toast to the Bridesmaids and Best Man.

3) The Best Man then stands and thanks the Bride and Bridegroom on behalf of the Bridesmaids and himself for asking them to be part of their special day and for the gifts they have received. He may then talk about the Bride and Bridegrooms younger years!

Before closing his speech any tele-messages / faxes may be read. Should you wish any cards to be read, it is advisable to have no more than six. Finally your Best Man should then propose a toast to the parents of the Bride and Bridegroom.

4) Should the Bride wish to thank anybody personally, now would be the time the Toastmaster would announce her. She may wish to propose a personal toast.

Once all the speeches are completed and the wedding cake is cut, the Toastmaster will ask all guests to stand, whilst he announces the end of the wedding breakfast and escorts the Bride and Bridegroom from the dining area. The Toastmaster should return to the dining area and ask all guests to retire from the tables and to join the Bride and Bridegroom.