

Experts argue the importance of newlyweds writing thank-you notes



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"Dear Jennifer, Thank you for the lovely gift ..."

We've all received the obviously obligatory thank-you note that's handwritten but generic in sentiment. Although it gets a gold star in the good manners department, such thank-you cards end up in the recycling bin within seconds after reading it. Hence, some newlyweds have completely renounced the thank-you note, or defaulted to verbal or email thank-yous.

Angela Dupont of Top Shelf Weddings doesn't think this is kosher. "The thank-you note is the one etiquette tradition that no bride or groom should ever skip or forget. Weddings are still steeped in tradition and etiquette, no matter how unique or modern the wedding itself turns out to be," she says.

But other people feel differently. Darlene Axtell has attended hundreds of weddings, and says a verbal thank you, in most cases, is perfectly fine. "If I am around when they open the gift and they express their gratitude, that's enough for me. An email would also be fine," she says.

Dupont believes a post-wedding email is only appropriate if sent to a close friend who did something small like loaned the couple a gift card box. Also, she says the popular belief that a couple has a full year to mail thank-you notes is in poor taste.

"Thank-you cards can be written while you're traveling for your honeymoon or should be done as soon as you return back to newlywed life," she says.

Although Axtell is laid back about the thank-you-note issue in general, she feels that the couple should acknowledge any gifts received through the mail.

"I had an experience where I ordered a gift from an on-line bridal registry, had the gift sent, was charged for it, but never knew if it actually arrived," she says.

Deciding how to handle thank-you notes is one of the seemingly infinite number of details involved in wedding planning. It's a decision to be made by the bride and groom, and like all decisions, it won't please everyone.

Here are a few things to consider regardless of where a couple stands on the issue:

Decide how the task is going to be divided. Is one person going to take care of it entirely -- in exchange for another post-wedding duty -- or will the thank-you writing get split in half? Some couples divide it into two jobs: writing the note and addressing/stamping/mailing. Or, if choosing all email, perhaps divvy the thank-yous so the groom responds to his friends and the bride to hers.

Thank-yous should be personalized, even if they are brief. Writing more or less the same words to everyone is a waste of time. For some guests, specifically mentioning their gift is important, so consider doing this.

Don't stress about it. Whatever you choose to do, make sure it feels natural and right. For example, if sending out some handwritten cards as well as emails feels manageable, go for it. After the hype of a wedding and honeymoon, the reality of married life can be blissful as well as challenging, so don't let something as trivial as a thank-you note stress you out or take you away from your most important job: hanging out with your life partner.

"Let's remember it has to be in the giving of the gift that we are happy, not in the receiving of the thank you," says Axtell.