

Wedding gift etiquette has changed little over the years

Not much has changed over the years when it comes to wedding gift etiquette. Despite trends and some increased flexibility, the rules are still the rules.

Gift-giving etiquette “remains one of the more traditional ‘rules’ of a wedding,” said wedding consultant Elizabeth Bailey, owner of Elizabeth Bailey Weddings in Lutherville. “A gift is never requested for any social event in writing or any other form.”

“If a guest needs gift ideas for a bride and groom, they should call the groom’s mother or the bride’s mother who then should direct them to the couple’s registry,” Ms. Bailey added. “It is never appropriate to list registry information in a social invitation.”

Others, however, like wedding consultant Lonnette Harris, who owns and operates 2 Have and 2 Hold Bridal Consultants in Abingdon, believe it is acceptable to enclose a card with the wedding invitation listing the couple’s registries.

And registries, she said, signify the primary difference between traditional and modern etiquette.

Ms. Bailey said the most popular registries continue to be Crate and Barrel, Williams Sonoma, and Target, among others.

“(Registries) make it a little bit easier for guests to be able to give (the couple) things they’re actually going to use,” said Ms. Harris.

She said, with changing times and couples marrying older, couples “already have the items that would typically be part of the home, so they don’t necessarily need those things.”

As a result, there is a lot more to choose from on today’s registries “than traditional china and flatware,” said Megan Howard, editor in chief of Gifts.com.

Ms. Howard said “gifts that reflect a couple’s eco-consciousness like recycled housewares, organic linens, and donations to an environmental cause” are becoming increasingly popular.

She also said, “Some couples are registering for gadgets, outdoor equipment, or contributions to their honeymoon expenses.”

Recently, “etiquette experts have given their approval to (online) ‘honeymoon registries’ where cash donations are made as a contribution to be used for the honeymoon trip,” said Ms. Bailey.

All three wedding experts agreed, however, that it is inappropriate to request cash gifts in a formal invitation.

A couple should never themselves ask for cash, but word of mouth by others is acceptable, said both Ms. Harris and Ms. Howard. “Feel free to let your family or wedding party know your preference for cash, and they can relay that information should your guests ask,” Ms. Howard said.

As far as how much cash guests should give, there is no set amount. Ms. Bailey explained, “The monetary gift should not be based on anything other than a heartfelt desire to give and is based on the giver’s generosity.”

Ms. Howard pointed out, “Guests do tend to give larger amounts to family over friends.”

“You can’t set a standard on giving cash to someone,” said Ms. Harris, “because each person’s situation is different.” She did say, however, it is typical to give at least \$50 to the couple.

Still, both she and Ms. Howard said the amount must be based on what the guest can afford.

While these monetary gifts may be brought to the wedding, Ms. Bailey said all other gifts should be sent through the mail and “may be given from the time the invitation is received until some months after the wedding.”

“Don’t bring your gift to the ceremony,” said Ms. Howard, “as transport is a hassle for both you and the couple.”

As a general rule, Ms. Harris said, “When it comes to the actual gift and the actual etiquette of it, if it makes you feel uncomfortable, then it’s probably not what you want to do.”