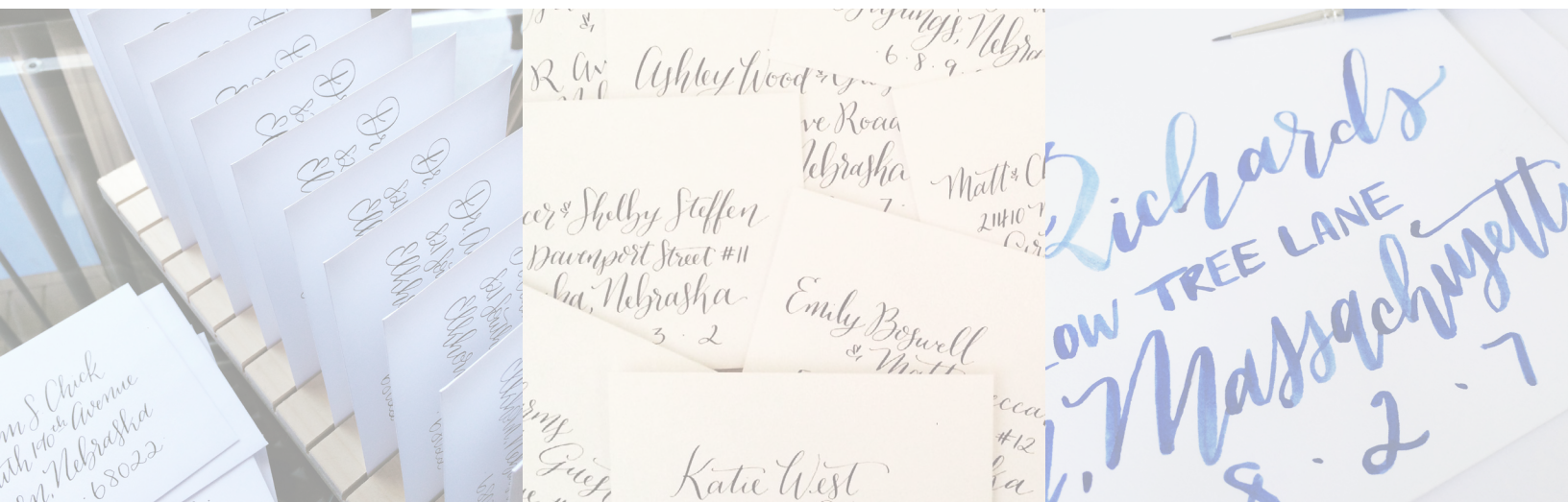


# ETIQUETTE GUIDE: ADDRESSING YOUR WEDDING INVITATION ENVELOPES

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Letter Lane

HAND LETTERING | CALLIGRAPHY | DESIGN

While the rules and etiquette for addressing envelopes for your wedding have changed and relaxed greatly over the years, understanding how to break those rules tactfully can be quite a difficult task. The format of the address that is written on the outside of your envelopes depends on several factors, including: marital status, family status, the guest's living arrangements, as well as how formal the event is going to be. Your guests will greatly appreciate the time and effort you take into the consideration of using correct titles, spelling of names and, of course, the address itself.

I am going to share with you my guidelines for addressing my client's wedding stationery envelopes, and I'll be including helpful tips as well as advice for navigating confusing address situations. Whether or not you choose to use a calligrapher, and while my tips may differ from other calligraphers, I hope this guide will be helpful and save you some time and headache as you prepare for your special event.

## TITLES

- Mr. & Mrs. are courtesy titles and can be abbreviated.
- Professional titles (EX: Doctor, Father, Reverend, Lieutenant, etc.) should be spelled out.
- Unmarried women who are over the 18 should be addressed as Ms.
- Women under the age of 18 are addressed as Miss.
- Do not include middle initials. It is best to either include the full middle name or just leave it out completely. It is appropriate to leave off a guest's first given name if he or she doesn't use it, or you can abbreviate it, such as R. Thomas Wright.
- For suffixes, a comma should be included before ones like Jr. and Sr. A comma is not necessary before Roman Numerals like I, II, III, etc.

## ADDRESSES

- If the invitations are formal, do not abbreviate the words Street, Avenue, Drive, Place, Apartment, Number, Post Office Box, etc. For informal invitations, feel free to use abbreviations.
- Do not abbreviate cities or states if the invitations are formal. If they are informal, again, feel free to use abbreviations.
- All street numbers below the number 10 should be spelled out.
- For the return address and inner envelope, follow all of the above guidelines.

# OUTER & INNER ENVELOPES

- The wife's name is traditionally written first when the husband and wife have different last names.
- Using "and" to link two names together typically implies marriage, but can be used for children of adult guests or unmarried couples living together.
- Children and guests do not need to be mentioned on the outer envelope unless you are using a single envelope. If you are using an inner envelope, include the children's names and guests' names there.
- If you know the name of the guest that your invitee will be bringing with them, include their name on the envelope rather than using "guest." If you do not know their name, feel free to use "guest."
- If adults who are not romantically involved but live in the same household, they should each receive their own invitation.
- Children who are over the age of 18 but still live at home should receive their own invitation.
- The wife's name is traditionally written first when the husband and wife have different last names.
- If you will not be using inner envelopes, you can use "and Guest" or "and Family" on the outer envelope. You can use them on the same line as the main invitee(s) or the name of the invitee's guest on the line below the main invitee(s).

## EXAMPLES

### MARRIED COUPLE (FORMAL)

#### OUTER ENVELOPE

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith

#### INNER ENVELOPE

Mr. and Mrs. Smith

### MARRIED COUPLE (INFORMAL)

#### OUTER ENVELOPE

John and Eliza Smith

#### INNER ENVELOPE

John and Eliza

MARRIED COUPLE WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 LIVING AT HOME (FORMAL)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE  
Mr. and Mrs. John Smith  
Miss Natalie Smith  
Mr. Joshua Smith

MARRIED COUPLE WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 LIVING AT HOME (INFORMAL)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

John and Eliza Smith

INNER ENVELOPE  
John and Eliza Smith  
Natalie, Josh

MARRIED COUPLE (WIFE KEPT MAIDEN NAME)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

Ms. Eliza Stuart and Mr. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE  
Ms. Stuart and Mr. Smith

MARRIED COUPLE (HUSBAND IS A DOCTOR)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

Doctor and Mrs. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE  
Dr. and Mrs. Smith

MARRIED COUPLE (WIFE IS A DOCTOR)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

Doctor Eliza Smith and Mr. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE  
Doctor Smith and Mr. Smith

MARRIED COUPLE (BOTH ARE DOCTORS, SAME LAST NAME)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

Doctors John and Eliza Smith OR Doctor Eliza Smith and Doctor John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE

The Doctors Smith

MARRIED COUPLE (BOTH ARE DOCTORS, DIFFERENT LAST NAME)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

Doctor Eliza Stuart and Doctor John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE

Doctor Stuart and Doctor Smith

MARRIED COUPLE (HUSBAND HOLDS A TITLE)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

The Honorable and Mrs. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE

Judge and Mrs. Smith

MARRIED COUPLE (WIFE HOLDS A TITLE)  
OUTER ENVELOPE

The Honorable Eliza Smith and Mr. John Smith

OR

The Honorable Eliza Stuart (using maiden name) and Mr. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE

Judge Smith and Mr. Smith

OR

Judge Stuart and Mr. Smith

UNMARRIED COUPLE WHO LIVES TOGETHER

OUTER ENVELOPE

Ms. Eliza Stuart

Mr. John Smith

OR

Ms. Eliza Stuart and Mr. John Smith

INNER ENVELOPE

Ms. Stuart

Mr. Smith

OR

Ms. Stuart and Mr. Smith

SAME SEX COUPLE (MARRIED OR UNMARRIED)

OUTER ENVELOPE

Mr. Derek Johnson and Mr. Frank Parr

OR

Mrs. Katherine Hall and Mrs. Julie Francis

INNER ENVELOPE

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Parr

OR

Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Francis

SINGLE MAN (WITH OR WITHOUT A GUEST)

OUTER ENVELOPE

Mr. Derek Johnson

Mr. Johnson

OR

Mr. Johnson and Guest

OR

Mr. Johnson

INNER ENVELOPE

Mr. Johnson

SINGLE WOMAN (WITH OR WITHOUT A GUEST)

OUTER ENVELOPE

Ms. Katherine Hall

Ms. Hall

OR

Ms. Hall and Guest

OR

Ms. Hall

INNER ENVELOPE

Ms. Hall

DIVORCED MAN OR WOMAN

OUTER ENVELOPE

Mr. Derek Johnson

OR

Mrs. Pamela Johnson

INNER ENVELOPE

Mr. Johnson

OR

Mrs. Johnson

WIDOW

OUTER ENVELOPE

Mrs. Robert Smith

INNER ENVELOPE

Mrs. Smith

## FINAL TIPS

- When you are finished with your guest list, go through and double-check all spelling of names, addresses, cities and states. It never hurts to go back and double-check the addresses themselves to make sure that the invitations are going to the correct address and don't arrive at a different address or end up being sent back to you due to an error.
- If you choose to work with a calligrapher to address your envelopes, please be sure to abide by their guidelines. Typically, a calligrapher will not correct spelling and etiquette errors for you, and will address an envelope exactly as you have it written.

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I hope that this guide is very helpful to you as you begin creating your guest list for your wedding. The way an envelope is addressed can make your guests feel very loved and they will likely appreciate the extra time you put into their invitation.

Please let me know in the comments if this guide was helpful! Also, feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about envelope addressing etiquette, or if you just want to chat :)

xoxo,  
Brittany

*Letter Lane*

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