

# Etiquette tells guests what to wear on formal occasions

BY SHARON MOSLEY  
Copley News Service

Many guests invited to a wedding often are as concerned as the bride and her attendants are about what they will wear.

There are a couple of golden rules to remember. First, don't wear white — it upstages the bride. And second, don't wear black — you're not going to a funeral. So we all usually had the reliable pastel dress and matching pumps in our closet patiently waiting to be worn for the wedding du jour.

But what to do when it comes to a formal affair? Today, even though dress codes have become somewhat relaxed, there are still some guidelines that savvy brides and grooms might consider including on their invitations if their wedding is a formal event. Guests are usually grateful for this considerate gesture, especially in an age where often "anything goes."

Here's a helpful lexicon from "Town & Country Elegant Weddings" (Hearst Books, \$60):

## Black tie

This means that women are to wear evening dresses (short or long) and men should wear traditional tuxedos.

"Pantsuits are not proper," said etiquette expert Letitia Baldrige, the former White House social secretary to Jacqueline Kennedy, advice columnist and author of several books, including "Letitia Baldrige's New Manners for New Times: A

Complete Guide to Etiquette" (Scribner, \$35).

## Black tie, long gown

This is not a common edict, but found occasionally. Some couples find that this gives guests more clarification when the occasion is very dressy.

## Black tie optional

This is a bewildering dress directive for many guests and is considered by many etiquette experts to be very confusing.

Dallas socialite Lynn Wyatt "looks in horror" at an invitation that uses this phrase. As do most people who take the word optional to mean they don't have to wear black tie. Those few who do dress up often feel out of place, making for a very mixed-up (and mixed-dress) crowd.

## Creative tie

Another distressing dress code according to Baldrige. "An affair should either

be black tie or not," she said. "If it is not, you need say nothing at all."

However, one fashion designer, John Anthony, believes that an invitation stating creative tie signifies that the hosts want the guests to be more thoughtful and lavish in their attire. It might mean a patterned cummerbund for the man and a frock that's something other than the usual little black dress for a woman.

## Mr. and Mrs.

Many brides choose to change their last name to their husband's. Here are some tips to help ease the transition.

### Get proof

Have a certified marriage license. Be sure it has a raised seal, which proves it's authentic.

### Set Social Security straight

Contact the Social Security Administration. Your new card will be free.

### New driver's license

The Department of Motor Vehicles requires you to make changes in person. Be sure to bring a copy of your certified marriage license.

### Fill in the blanks

Once you have a Social Security card and driver's license in your married name, other changes should be easy. Some may only require a phone call; others may require a copy of your marriage certificate or Social Security card.

### Be sure to notify:

- Employers/payroll
- Post office
- Utility companies
- Banks and other financial institutions
- Credit card companies
- Schools and alumni associations
- Registrar of voters



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