



HOW TO CREATE AN INTIMATE GUEST LIST

“Invite what you can afford” sounds straightforward but, deciding WHO can be tough. Conflicting opinions from parents, family members, and even your future spouse can add to the challenge. **But we know you’re up for it, and we’re here to help.** Coming from two girls who had beautiful intimate weddings of their own, our guidelines below will help you narrow it (way) down. You will not only create but also afford the wedding of YOUR dreams, treating your guests to a higher quality experience. Remember, your loved ones have taken time off, gotten on a plane for you, found a sitter, etc. and like you, they deserve an event to remember. These tips will help you enjoy your wedding before it passes in a blur of faces you hardly know because, after months of planning the perfect day, the receiving line for 150-200 people is no place to be stuck.

Our couples reach across the table to share food and drink with the ones they love. They dance with their besties under the market lights and relax in the rockers to take it all in. They grab dessert from their favorite gelato truck and take the time to listen to advice from happily married grandparents. They understand this one-moment-in-time is for sharing with the chosen few, and they know their budget for the intimate gathering goes SO much further to make these moments more memorable. **But how you ask?**



HERE’S HOW THEY DO IT

1- BREAK THE NEWS TO PARENTS

Tackling the tough one first; hence, its place on the top of the list and its own section. See Page 3 for all things on *“How To Tell Your Parents You Want A Small Wedding” (without causing a tizzy)* by Maven, Martha Stewart. We’ve added some Parlour commentary for good measure.

2- CONSIDER THOSE “CLOSE” FRIENDS

It goes like this: Invite the people closest to your life. Follow that simple model, and you can’t lose. And let’s be clear- no one has 200 close friends no matter how popular they are. Start by asking: *“Can we see having dinner, drinks or even coffee with them in the next year after the wedding?”* If you haven’t seen them in a few years (i.e., that high school friend that surfaces every once in a blue moon on facebook), then your answer is likely no so off the list they go. If you are worried about the fallout when you post those gorgeous wedding pics, then be sure to say *“super small affair, would love to get together after the honeymoon!”*. A 3-4 year gap rule makes this pretty simple for eliminating both friends AND extended family (heck, some of us say ONE year). As you create your list, continually remind yourselves: It’s a guest list NOT an audience.

3- DON’T SHY AWAY FROM KID-FREE

Don’t worry, it’s both common and acceptable to exclude children from your guest list entirely. Whether you’re planning a formal or casual dinner, a kids-free policy can open up precious spots on your guest list. We highly suggest this if hosting a creative chef dinner that may require a more sophisticated guest. However, if you are considering inviting some kids and not others, choose a clear rule and stick to it. Settle on an age threshold (older kids require less parental oversight), or restrict it to immediate family. Most children who have wedding duties are close relatives, such as a niece or stepchild—though even they don’t need to stay for the reception. *Now don’t get us wrong here, we ADORE sweet little things at The Parlour. But if you are struggling with the numbers (both guest count and budget), consider inviting families to the post-big-day-picnic mentioned on Page 3.



Not sure how to best tell guests that they should leave the little ones with a sitter? Let your invitation do the talking here. If you are worried your mama friends won't get the message, reach out beforehand. It sounds something like this: 'Hi! We just sent out the invitations, and we're so excited to have you join us. We are keeping the event intimate and kid-free, so you can truly enjoy yourself. We wanted to give you advance notice, so you have time to find a sitter and get excited about a night out. We hope you can make it!' Remember- don't cave here and grant any exceptions; that would be rude to guests who abide by your request.

4- FOLLOW SIMPLE +1 RULES

Consider only offering a +1 to those friends and family members who are either engaged, married, already living together, or have been dating for more than six months to a year. While technically you should give +1s to your wedding party members, we think it's OK to use the same +1 rule applied above. If used across the board, this rule will help you avoid that random person in photos that has you both questioning "who is that?" for years to come after their break up.

5- THOUGHTFULLY CONSIDER YOUR BOSS AND COWORKERS

We all have that co-worker we love sharing the office gossip or lunch. But unless you're hanging out with them enough (outside of work) to call them a close friend, they'll understand if you tell them you had a very small guest list. They'll happily opt for a drink after work or extended lunch at your favorite place to celebrate. This rule applies to your boss, too! If your boss has been both mentor and close friend, include them but if it feels like an obligatory invite, trust your gut and skip it.

6- EVALUATE WHETHER OR NOT TO RECIPROCATE

Do I have to invite someone just because I was invited to or attended their wedding? Great question! Reciprocal entertaining makes for some pretty straightforward rules as long as you're careful. If your friends' wedding was recent, and you are still quite close (See 'close friends' above)—and if your big day is on a similar scale as theirs—they should already be on your guest list right? But maybe your friendship has faded some since their event, and you don't foresee the relationship going much further, well, then it is entirely appropriate to leave them off. *Exercise some caution if you have mutual friends who are attending. Be sure to forewarn those people of the limits of your guest list and the intimacy of your special day. You don't want them to go on and on about your wedding and create an awkward moment for everyone. Be careful with social media here too —don't go posting too much about you and your friends dancing the night away. Stick to posts of your new spouse and family.

Trust us when we tell you that if you follow each of these steps, you'll be able to cut your guest list down to the size you want and feel guilt-free while doing so. And if you stay the course with your intimate affair messaging, it should be sans drama. While you might still worry about offending somebody you didn't invite, know that it's better to explain to your third cousin why you have to keep it small than go into credit card debt for a guest list you can't afford OR miss out on the venue of your dreams.



MANAGING PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Large families or parents with a sizable social network can lead to significant assumptions about who should be on your YOUR guest list. See below for *How To Tell Your Parents You Want A Small Wedding (without causing a tizzy)* by Martha Stewart.

DELIVER THE NEWS GENTLY

Once you've decided you want to have a small wedding, it's best to break the news to your parents gently. Back up your decision by explaining to your parents that your budget, ideal location, and your personalities prompt a small affair. Whatever your reasoning, you should be candid about it, but be understanding of the fact that this news could be a disappointment for them. **Parlour note N° 1: We often suggest that parents join us here for a tour. Seeing the special intimacy of this venue usually makes the vision clear within minutes. Buy-in is key and before you know it, they are helping you edit the list!**

BE OPEN TO THEIR ADVICE, BUT STAND YOUR GROUND

If your parents feel strongly that they'd like you to have a large wedding so they can invite all of their extended family, they may offer to put more money into the budget. But this is your wedding, not theirs. If you're feeling pressured to say yes, it's probably not the right thing for you. You might recommend that they host another party they can invite all their friends to, but stick firmly to your decision about the wedding size. **Parlour note N° 2: We often suggest that hosting a casual picnic the day after can be the perfect guilt-free opportunity to extend an invitation to additional folks who may be on your parent's list or just want to wish you the best. Its the ideal honeymoon send-off, completely affordable and everyone is happy! In fact, cast your parents in the planning role here and show up to make your 'blissfully married' appearance.**

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT HOW MANY GUESTS THEY CAN INVITE

To plan a small wedding, you'll need to be specific about the number of guests each set of parents can invite, whether it's zero or 20. By spelling this information out early on, you can avoid some uncomfortable conversations later when they come to you with a list of fifty people who absolutely "must" be invited. **Parlour note N° 3: Many of our couples allow their parents to select up to four guests- whether it be their best couple friends, close neighbors or work associates. Four seems to be the perfect number for them to show you off.**

REMEMBER IT'S YOUR WEDDING, NOT THEIRS

It's not necessary to say these words out loud to your parents, but every decision you're making about your wedding (size included) is because it's what feels right to you. Whether your parents imagined you'd have a 200-guest bash or a 10-person dinner, they're still going to have a wonderful time celebrating your marriage when it comes to the event itself. And hey, the smaller the wedding, the more likely they are to see your smiling face throughout the whole event. **Parlour note N° 4 Trust us when we tell you, once your vision has respectfully been made clear and you are about to say 'I do', all expectations go out the window and parents beam their way through the event. They are the folks who seek us out later saying "Wasn't that just beautiful? They knew just what they wanted."**

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