

Date, time, place. Your name, your sweetheart's name.

Ah, would that it were that easy. Inviting people to a wedding can be a complicated business — and let's leave out the address gathering part, or nailing down the date and time. It is easy (in the midst of all the pressure from Martha and her chums to use the invitation to set a theme for your Big Event, make an impression, reflect your aesthetic) to get lost in a world of calligraphy and rosebuds and superfluous envelopes. And, it's easy to break the bank in the process. Tuxedo black-and-white or sunny colors? Letterpress or laserprint? Hand-calligraphed or rubber-stamped?

For most of the people who will get them, a wedding invitation is a place to get some information — and most of them will throw it away after they've gotten what they need. Not to say it's not fun to have nice invitations, but it's definitely possible to put together wedding invitations that are simple, inexpensive, suit you and your sweetie, and might (just might) be fun to work on.

More and more people are choosing to make their own invitations. Rachel Witt, art supply buyer at the UO Bookstore and many a Eugene bride's go-to-girl for supplies, has noticed the trend. "There's only so far you can go with pre-made invitations," she said. "Pretty soon, they all start to look the same. But making your own, you can do anything — from a more natural look to the traditional polished ones."

First, take a look at your Big Event. How formal will your wedding be? If you've got visions of black-tie and ballroom dancing, think about a traditional white or ivory paper, and simple, dark lettering in an old-fashioned serif font like Garamond or Bodoni. If you've got wildflowers and sunshine in mind, a bluegrass band and a picnic menu, think about trying something more colorful — print cards on brilliant blue paper, or find a fun rubber stamp to use as decoration. If you're somewhere in between, think about what colors you might use, and what look will (yes, Martha) give your guests an idea of what to expect.

Paper is a good place to start. When you're making your own invitations, it's one easy place to inject some color into the process—printing in color can get expensive, but printing in black on colored paper can have a bold effect. At the UO Bookstore, there are walls full of gorgeous colored papers that you can buy in bulk — from gauzy flower prints to fibrous Japanese art papers to bright primary colors. Witt carries hundreds of laser-printable, photocopy-able papers and a variety of special touches, from sealing wax to dried leaves, ribbons, funky paperclips, you name it. From large sheets of swirling hand-painted Venetian papers to bright colored vellum, the options are vast.

Size makes a difference, from a purely logistical standpoint. Traditional, formal wedding invitations are often oversized (5 x 7, or "diploma" style), but the postage can get pricey. You can get four flat cards out of an 8.5 x 11 sheet, that will fit nicely into a 4 x 6 envelope with no paper waste at all.

Often, envelopes drive the size and shape of the invitation — if you want them to match, there are a number of bulk stationery papers to choose from, although you'll probably be limited by the standard sizes. But, maybe your invite is a self-mailing postcard, or a bookmark shape that would fit in a letterhead-quality standard #10 envelope.

Many people who make their own invitations run into trouble when it's time to print, so be sure you're comfortable with the computer end of things before you charge out and

buy paper. "But, if you have a good printer — even an inkjet," Witt said, "and you know how to print on weird paper sizes and make labels, you're set."

After you've got the basics of paper, envelopes and printing under control, there's time to think about fun ways to personalize your invitations. Maybe it's something as simple as including some dried flower petals in the envelope, or sealing your envelopes with a wax stamp. Or maybe you want to do something more complicated, like tie a little ribbon on the card or paint a watercolor flower on each one. The possibilities are numerous, but think pretty hard about whether you want to paint 200 flowers, or whether it might be easier to just add a layer of sheer vellum printed with flowers and a nice curlicue paperclip. Either way, pay attention to the numbers. If you're having a small

wedding, going nuts with little touches is much more feasible.

There are a few logistical points that can make your invitation-making life *lots* easier. Consider having a rubber stamp made with your return address — printing envelopes can be a little bit of nightmare, no matter how adept you are at a computer. And, once you've got a stamp, you can use it to address RSVP cards, return addresses on thank-you cards, whatever. Kinko's can have them made in a couple of days for about \$15. It's worth it. Square invitations cost more to send, as well, so keep that in your budget-mind. Also, take a look at some pre-designed versions to get an idea of the language to use, both on the invites themselves and on reply cards. (One home invite-designer I know, when designing the reply cards, put a spot for number of guests attending, but nowhere for their

names. The couple knew how *many* people were coming, but no clue as to *which* people.)

Designing and making your own invitations can be great, depending on how much time and inclination you have. If this is all too daunting, Aimee Allen, co-proprietress of Letterhead Fine Paper & Gifts, has books full of pre-designed invites that range from the most expensive and complex to simple and casual, and depending on what you're looking for, it might save you some heartache and papercuts to pass this part off to a pro.

But, if you've got a little time and some idea of what you want to do, it can be a fun project with an end result that is totally your own. "Just get a bevy of people together to glue and collate and stuff envelopes," Witt says, "and make it a party."

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