



## Envelope Etiquette Guide

*tips for how to address your envelopes  
and the ins and outs of inner & outer envelopes*

As your guest list is compiled, it will be filled with many different people and families who come from many different backgrounds and living situations. The guide below was crafted to help aid you through various scenarios with examples of all kinds for both inner and outer envelopes.

For a complete guide to envelope etiquette I recommend:  
Emily Post's wedding etiquette at [www.emilypost.com](http://www.emilypost.com)  
and for high ranking individuals [www.formsofaddress.info](http://www.formsofaddress.info)

# What are Inner & Outer Envelopes?

*and why do i need both?*

You will always receive an outer/ mailing envelope with your order. Including inner envelopes is the traditional, more formal approach, but is completely optional. Inner envelopes carried through from tradition, but they are beneficial and here's why: The main benefit to using inner envelopes is clearing up exactly who is *or isn't* invited to the wedding—especially for those families with children. The outer envelope gets addressed to the head(s) of the household and the inner envelope would address *all* members of the family that are invited. If children aren't listed then parents know it's an adult only affair. The second benefit provides protection for your investment. If you choose to include envelope liners, they are adhered to the inside of your inner envelopes. Inner envelopes do not get glued shut (because they go inside the outer envelope which does get glued shut) so when your guest open them, the liners stay fully intact for a pristine presentation. If inner envelopes aren't included and an envelope liner is used, the liner gets adhered straight into the outer mailing envelope risking damage when the envelope is opened.

## Quick & Helpful Tips

*for address formatting*

1. Do not abbreviate except for courtesy titles: Mr. Mrs. Ms.
2. Titles such as 'Doctor' or 'Captain' should be spelled out
3. 'Miss' should be used for young girls under 18 and young (*typically 30 & under*) *never married* women
4. 'Ms.' should be used for older single women (30+), divorced women, or women whose marital status is unknown.
5. 'Master' is used for boys 12 and under and 'Mr.' is used for boys over 18.
6. Adult children 18 and older, still living at home, should receive their own invitation
7. Do not use symbols or initials
8. Spell out the word 'and'
9. Use figures only when writing house numbers, apartment numbers and zip codes
10. House numbers and apartment numbers under 10 should be spelled out
11. Write out the words 'Street,' 'Boulevard,' 'Road,' etc.
12. City and state names should also be spelled out
13. Adults who are not romantically involved, but live together should each receive their own invitation, such as roommates.

# How to Address Wedding Invitation Envelopes

Though proper etiquette is ever changing with the times, many of the more traditional rules applied to addressing envelopes have been followed for centuries—which can make them feel a bit antiquated, to some.

Remember, etiquette is meant to make your guests feel welcomed and respected. Do what will work best for you, your guests, and the tone of your wedding.

Tradition indicates the use of inner and outer envelopes which follow different etiquette rules. The outer envelope is formally addressed while the inner envelope is more informal. We will explore various scenarios and living situations with both a traditional and more modern approach to etiquette for the inner and outer envelopes.



## Single Males and Females *without* Guests

You should always use the person's preferred title. If you're not sure, you can forgoe a title altogether. Single females under 30 should be addressed with the title 'Miss.' For single females over 30, divorced females, or if marital status is unknown use the title 'Ms.'

### Single Female

#### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Miss Joy Johnson

*informal:* Joy Johnson

#### Inner Envelope

*formal:* Miss Johnson

*informal:* Joy

### Single Male

#### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mr. John Johnson

*informal:* John Johnson

#### Inner Envelope

*formal:* Mr. Johnson

*informal:* John

## Single Males and Females *with* Guests

If you are allowing single individuals to bring a plus one or a casual date, the recommended approach is to find out the guest's name to include it on the envelope. If the guest's name is unknown, including 'and guest' on the envelope will work just fine.

### Single Female *and* Guest

#### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Miss Joy Johnson and Guest

*informal:* Joy Johnson and Guest

#### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Miss Joy Johnson

*informal:* Miss Johnson

#### Inner Envelope

*formal:* Miss Johnson and Guest

*informal:* Joy and Guest

### Single Male *and* Guest

#### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mr. John Johnson and Guest

*informal:* John Johnson and Guest

#### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mr. John Johnson

*informal:* Mr. Johnson

#### Inner Envelope

*formal:* Mr. Johnson and Guest

*informal:* John and Guest

## Unmarried Couple, *Living Together*

For an unmarried, heterosexual couple, their names are addressed on two lines. This indicates they are not legally married. The word 'and' is not used as that would also signify marriage. Use your best judgement. Longtime couples deserve an 'and'! List the person you're closest with first or go by alphabetical order if you're close with both.

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal: (stack names)*

Mr. John Johnson

Ms. Joy Smith

*informal: (stack names)*

John Johnson

Joy Smith

### Inner Envelope

*formal: (stack names)*

Mr. Johnson

Ms. Smith

*informal: (stack names)*

John

Joy

## Married Couple, *Same Last Name*

We'll start by looking at married couples with the same last name. Married couples' names are listed on the same line joined with the word 'and'. It's okay to break into two lines for longer names or couples who don't have the same last name. Traditionally, married couples with the same last name should be addressed by the husband's title and name. Recently, it has become more common to list both the man's and woman's first names. In this case, always list the woman first because a man's first name should not be separated from his last.

### **Outer Mailing Envelope**

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mr. and Mrs. James Johnson

*informal:* Joy and James Johnson

### **Inner Envelope**

*formal:* Mr. and Mrs. Johnson

*informal:* Joy and James

## Married Couple, *Different Last Names*

If the married couple has different last names, both full names are listed with the word 'and' joining them together to indicate marriage. Traditionally, the woman's name precedes the man's, but nowadays, the order of the names does not matter.

### **Outer Mailing Envelope**

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Ms. Joy Smith and Mr. James Johnson

*informal:* Joy Smith and James Johnson

### **Inner Envelope**

*formal:* Ms. Smith and Mr. Johnson

*informal:* Joy and James

## Married Couple, *Children Invited*

How to address an envelope to an entire family will vary depending on if the double envelope system is used or not—and we'll explore all options below. Adult kids, 18 and older, still living at home, should receive their own invitation. Children under 18 will get added to the envelope with their parents. Children are listed in order of oldest to youngest. Girls under 18 receive the title 'Miss' and boys 12 and under receive the title 'Master.' Boys receive the title 'Mr.' once they're 18.

### **Outer Mailing Envelope**

*(without inner envelopes)*

*formal options:*

- The Johnson Family
- Mr. and Mrs. James Johnson and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. James Johnson Johnny, Jimmy, and Miss Janie

*informal options:*

- The Johnsons
- Joy and James Johnson and Family

### **Outer Mailing Envelope**

*(with inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mr. and Mrs. James Johnson

*informal:* Joy and James Johnson

### **Inner Envelope**

*formal options:*

- Mr. and Mrs. Johnson Johnny, Jimmy, and Miss Janie

- The Johnson Family

*informal:* Joy and James

Johnny, Jimmy, and Janie

## Special Titles & High Ranks

Doctors — *for academic doctors, it's okay to use 'Dr.'*

**Married, Both are Doctors**  
*Wife took husband's last name*

**Outer Mailing Envelope**  
*(with or without inner envelopes)*

Doctors Joy and James Johnson

**Inner Envelope**

The Doctors Johnson

**Married, Both are Doctors**  
*Wife kept her maiden name*

**Outer Mailing Envelope**  
*(with or without inner envelopes)*

Doctor Joy Brown and Doctor James Johnson

**Inner Envelope**

Doctor Brown and Doctor Johnson

## Doctors Continued

### **Married Couple, *Husband is a Doctor***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal options:*

- Doctor and Mrs. Jon Kelly  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Doctor Jon Kelly and Ms. Joy Brown

*informal:* Doctor Jon Kelly and Joy Kelly

#### **Inner Envelope**

*formal options:*

- Doctor and Mrs. Kelly  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Doctor Kelly and Ms. Brown

*informal:* Doctor Jon and Joy

### **Married Couple, *Wife is a Doctor***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal options:*

- Doctor Joy and Mr. Jon Kelly  
*(If wife kept maiden name)*
- Doctor Joy Brown and Mr. Jon Kelly

*informal:* Doctor Joy Brown and Jon Kelly

#### **Inner Envelope**

*formal options:*

- Doctor and Mr. Kelly  
*(If wife kept maiden name)*
- Doctor Brown and Mr. Kelly

*informal:* Doctor Joy and Jon

## Judges

### **Married Couple, *Husband is a Judge***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

- The Honorable James Kelly and Mrs. Kelly  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- The Honorable James Kelly and Ms. Joy Brown

### **Married Couple, *Wife is a Judge***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

- The honorable Joy Kelly and Mr. James Kelly  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- The Honorable Joy Brown and Mr. James Kelly

#### **Inner Envelope**

- Judge and Mrs. Kelly  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Judge Kelly and Ms. Brown

#### **Inner Envelope**

- Judge and Mr. Kelly  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Judge Brown and Mr. Kelly

## Military & Armed Forces

The member of the armed services is always listed first. Social correspondence, such as wedding invitations, does not include the person's branch of service nor does it indicate whether or not the officer is retired.

### **Married Couple, *Husband is a Military Officer***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

- Colonel John Brown and Mrs. Brown  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Colonel John Brown and Ms. Joy Smith

#### **Inner Envelope**

- Colonel and Mrs. Brown  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Colonel Brown and Ms. Smith

### **Married Couple, *Both are Military***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

- General John Brown and Major Joy Brown  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- General John Brown and Major Joy Smith

### **Married Couple, *Wife is a Military Officer***

#### **Outer Mailing Envelope** *(with or without inner envelopes)*

- Sergeant Joy Brown and Mr. James Brown  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Sergeant Joy Smith and Mr. James Brown

#### **Inner Envelope**

- Sergeant and Mr. Brown  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- Sergeant Smith and Mr. Brown

#### **Inner Envelope**

- General Brown and Major Brown  
*(wife kept maiden name)*
- General Brown and Major Smith

### *List of Army Ranks, In Order*

Private	Sergeant Major	Captain
Private Second Class	Command Sergeant	Major
Private First Class	Sergeant Major of the Army	Lieutenant Colonel
Specialist	Warrant Officer 1	Colonel
Corporal	Chief Warrant Officer 2	Brigadier General
Sergeant	Chief Warrant Officer 3	Major General
Staff Sergeant	Chief Warrant Officer 4	Lieutenant General
Sergeant First Class	Chief Warrant Officer 5	General
Master Sergeant	Second Lieutenant	General of the Army
First Sergeant	First Lieutenant	



# Widowed and Divorced

## Widowed

For widows, traditionally, she would keep the title 'Mrs.' and use her late husband's full name. It is also okay to use the title 'Mrs.' with her first and married last name. Some widows may prefer the title 'Ms.' It's always okay to ask your guests their preference.

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

#### *formal options:*

- Mrs. James Johnson
- Mrs. Joy Johnson
- Ms. Joy Johnson

*informal:* Joy Johnson

### Inner Envelope

#### *formal options:*

- Mrs. Johnson
- Ms. Johnson

*informal:* Joy

## Divorced

After a divorce, a woman might keep her married name. If this is the case, you can use 'Mrs.' or 'Ms.' with her first name and her married name. If she is using her maiden name, then use 'Ms.' along with her first name and maiden name. As always, it's best to learn your guest's preference.

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

#### *formal options:*

- Mrs. Joy Johnson
- Ms. Joy Johnson
- Ms. Joy Smith (*maiden name*)

#### *informal options:*

- Joy Johnson
- Joy Smith (*maiden name*)

### Inner Envelope

#### *formal options:*

- Mrs. Johnson
- Ms. Johnson
- Ms. Smith (*maiden name*)

*informal:* Joy

# Homosexual Couples

*List names in alphabetical order in all scenarios*

## Gay Couple, *Same Last Name*

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* The Messers James and John Smith

*informal:* James and John Smith

### Inner Envelope

*formal:* The Messers Smith

*informal:* James and John

## Gay Couple, *Different Last Names*

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mr. James Johnson and Mr. John Smith

*informal:* James Johnson and John Smith

### Inner Envelope

*formal:* Mr. Johnson and Mr. Smith

*informal:* James and John

## Lesbian Couple, *Same Last Name*

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* The Mesdames Jane and Joy Johnson

*informal:* Jane and Joy Johnson

### Inner Envelope

*formal:* The Mesdames Johnson

*informal:* Jane and Joy

## Lesbian Couple, *Different Last Names*

### Outer Mailing Envelope

*(with or without inner envelopes)*

*formal:* Mrs. Jane Johnson and Mrs. Joy Smith

*informal:* Jane Johnson and Joy Smith

### Inner Envelope

*formal:* Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Smith

*informal:* Jane and Joy