

STYLE ME *Pretty*

Stationery Guide

Written by Caitlin O'Bryant
Edited by Danielle Halibey

IN THIS GUIDE

Wedding stationery is the first glimpse most of your guests will have of your wedding. Not only does it relay the important details, such as the wedding date, time, and venue, it also clues them in to what the day itself will be like. A good wedding invitation will communicate the formality of the event, and through materials, embellishments, and the design itself, you'll share SO much about you and your partner's love story, values, and vibe.

In this guide, we'll take you through the wedding stationery process from start to finish, providing insight on everything: from how to find the right stationer for your budget and aesthetic, to tips on how to mail those invitations. We'll also drill down on invitation and addressing etiquette, invitation timelines, and how to incorporate it ALL on your wedding day. With information sourced directly from experienced stationers and calligraphers, including some of our coveted/loved/esteemed Little Black Book vendors, consider this your one stop shop for all info regarding wedding stationery and calligraphy.

importance of wedding stationery

Wedding stationery goes way beyond its calling as “pretty paper”. It provides your guests with a great visual impression of your big day and it can serve as a lasting keepsake that they’ll remember the day by. From save the dates to day-of programs, paper goods will guide your loved ones to your wedding day and keep them inspired all the way through your vows to your final kiss as newlyweds.

Without words, stationery will inevitably fall flat. Save the dates aren’t very useful without a date or location and dinner menus can’t make guests’ mouths water if they fail to list what they’ll be eating. But visual and textural elements play a large part in how ideas are communicated to your guests as well. Well designed stationery uses a cache of elements to show guests what they can expect, from colors and paper choice all the way down to the postage on the envelope. (And yes, we’re all about statement postage!)



Photo by [Anya Kernes Photography](#), LBB | Stationery by [Olive Saint Lily](#)

custom, semi-custom and mass-market stationery

When it comes to choosing which route to take for your stationery, there are several options to explore. The differences largely lie in client experience, quality of design, quality of material, embellishment options, and price. Keep an open mind when you're exploring the options, as you'll want to find what works best for you and your partner.



CUSTOM STATIONERY

Custom stationery design is a high-end, boutique experience, where you work one-on-one with a stationer to create paper goods specifically for you and your event. With custom, every detail is tailored to you, and stationers will propose a suite and materials based on your aesthetic and budget. When you're working with an individual designer or small business on these kinds of invitations, you have the opportunity to collaborate, talk through your every design wish, and really work towards a unique, totally bespoke piece that embodies who you and your partner are. Custom stationery affords you so much creative power: you can ask for a venue sketch (something that is super trendy RN) or even tinker with a custom crest featuring the very specific variety of flowers you'll be using for the day. View this process as a blank canvas, where the designer creates pieces from scratch that tell you and your partner's story. These one-of-a-kind designs elevate the value of your stationery to a whole other level, creating suites that you'll be proud to share with loved ones and maybe even pass down as heirlooms some day.

Because of the extensive amount of time that goes into designing, sourcing, and finishing custom stationery, it is decidedly the most expensive option for wedding invitations, commonly ranging between \$2,000-\$10,000, depending on the designer and scope of the project. It is an investment in high quality material and design, with luxury paper and printing methods and limitless embellishment

Photo by [The Ganeys, LBB](#) | Stationery by [Emily Mayne Studio, LBB](#)

options. If you've dreamed of invitations engraved on acrylic, or letterpressed on handmade paper and delivered in linen folios, or of envelopes adorned with a curated set of vintage postage, custom is absolutely the way you'll want to go.

And yes, it's expensive, but along with the exceptional quality of work, you're also investing in a stationer's expertise. When you hire a designer for custom stationery, you should be able to trust that they're knowledgeable and understand what will work best for your event, aesthetic, and budget. Custom stationers are there for you every step of the way, with encouragement, experience, and the know-how to make things happen! When you order custom, you can truly relax, knowing that they've got your back and can take care of things.

Designers often need 10–15 weeks to complete custom stationery, from initial sketches to delivery. These stationers sometimes book months in advance, so research and inquire as early as you can. Read more about [working with a designer](#) on custom stationery below.

SEMI-CUSTOM STATIONERY

If you love the idea of custom stationery, but the price is making you panic, semi-custom invitations may work best for you. Some custom stationery designers offer curated collections of semi-custom suites which they offer on their websites. These invitations are pre-designed, but highly customizable, and come with the knowledge and experience of a high-end designer. Materials and options for embellishments are the same or similar to that of custom suites, so you know you'll be receiving a boutique experience and high quality stationery, just at a more comfortable cost. Semi-custom invitations commonly range from \$600–\$5,000, depending on the scope of the project.

This route is also great for couples on shorter timelines. While custom stationery can take anywhere from 10–15 weeks to complete, semi-custom suites can have turnarounds anywhere from 5–12 weeks, with rush options available for even tighter timetables.

MASS-MARKET STATIONERY

Mass-market invitations work great for couples on tight budgets, and there are a number of retailers that sell these kinds of invitations online. The cost of mass-market stationery often ranges from \$75–\$500, depending on the size of your invitation suite and which retailer you choose. Their turnaround times are much faster than custom or semi-custom work, and you can receive your stationery in as little as three days. However, in exchange for lower prices, quality, customization, and client experience can be compromised.

The templates offered on these websites have been designed for mass production, so customization is often limited to names, dates, location, and sometimes fonts. Printing methods, paper choices, and embellishments are also limited. While the process behind custom and semi-custom stationery involves a conversation between you and the vendor, ordering mass-market invitations is similar to shopping online at any large retailer. A customer service representative may be able to help clarify price or timelines, and you can always search forums, but often there is no larger conversation or consultation experience built in to help you decide what will work best for you and your event. Granted, this is not always the case. Some e-commerce sites do provide multiple rounds of edits and updates, but, overall, your preferences for personalization probably won't be satisfied like they would be with a custom or semi-custom situation.

CHOOSING A STATIONER

Deciding between custom, semi-custom, and mass-market invitations often comes down to what you value and prioritize most. However, the formality of the event and level of investment in other areas should also inform your plan for stationery. If you're hosting a black tie destination wedding weekend on Lake Como, mass-market stationery will probably not be able to properly communicate what your guests should expect. These destination affairs typically have intense, weekend itineraries that require a lot more than traditional invitation suites can convey with simple accommodations, reception, and RSVP cards. Likewise, a backyard picnic wedding with casual attire doesn't necessarily call for custom, foil-printed invitations on handmade paper. Consider what works best for you and your partner in the grand scheme of things and plan accordingly.

Once you've decided which general direction best fits your needs, it's time to choose a specific stationer or retailer. Consider the atmosphere and feeling you want on your wedding day, and find a stationer that matches the tone you're looking to achieve. If you're dreaming of handmade paper, look for a vendor who is experienced in working with that material. Our [Real Weddings](#) and [LBB Directory](#), Instagram, Pinterest, and Google are all great places to find vendors that fit your style if you don't have a wedding planner to make recommendations. Just like we mentioned earlier, you can find something that truly gives you ALL those heart eyes just by taking a peek of our Instagram feed and following the tagged trail to the stationer of your dreams.

When you narrow down your choices to a few vendors, inquire with them to receive a quote. If you're ordering custom, the designer may want to schedule a phone call or ask you a few questions to get to know you better before putting options together. When you receive a quote and see what they can offer, consider if their process, pricing, and availability fits your needs, and feel free to ask them questions! Vendors appreciate when clients engage in some Q&A, it shows how seriously they take their services.

Custom and semi-custom stationery involves a vendor relationship, so become familiar with who they are and how they work. When you're confident that a vendor is the one that will bring your stationery dreams to life, book them!

“Ask yourself, what is the feeling you want your wedding day to have? If you want your wedding to be clean, modern and minimalist, don't choose a vendor whose style is feminine, elaborate and romantic. Not only do you want someone who matches your style and taste, but your vendor wants to work with someone who will allow them to showcase their best style of work.”

EMILY MAYNE
Emily Mayne Studio

Click [Here](#) to Continue Reading