

The Protocol School of Washington®

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HOW TO ADDRESS YOUR VIP WEDDING GUESTS? A New Resource Spells Out The Protocol Rules

Today there is no “one right way” to plan a wedding, but when it comes to introducing or addressing the invitation to a VIP guest there may be only one right way.

“Most weddings include a guest who requires special attention to make sure their name in an introduction, on their invitation, or on their place card is correct,” says Robert Hickey, Deputy Director of the Protocol School of Washington®, and author of the new book – *Honor & Respect: The Official Guide to Names, Titles, and Forms of Address*. *Library Journal* calls it “the most extensive guide to honorifics and titles available.” This new comprehensive book provides rules for *more officials in more organizations* that any other book ever available in English. The U.S. State Department, Canadian Parliament, British Embassy, The Waldorf-Astoria already use it. So do corporate party planners at The Smithsonian, The Boeing Company, and ExxonMobil.

In today’s casual world, the average person is less formal – and brides are no exception. However individuals holding high offices and ranks are very particular that their names be written in the formal way. Whether they are active-duty or retired military, a professor at a local university, or a current or former elected official, each will be happier to see their invitation arrive correctly addressed.

At the wedding itself, conversations will be, and should be, informal and fun. But on the invitations, programs, and place cards be wary of going casual. Hickey advises, “When it’s ink on paper, more formal is never incorrect.”

Hickey says the most frequent question he receives on his website (<http://www.formsofaddress.info>) is how to address a former elected official. If the current mayor is your guest, his or her envelope should be addressed as “*The Honorable (full name)*” and the mayor’s place card should read “*Mayor (last name)*.” But former officials continue to be addressed as *the Honorable* for life. So a *former* mayor’s envelope is also addressed “*The Honorable (full name)*” but the place card reads “*Mr. (or Ms.) (last name)*.” Hickey says “there

is only one mayor at a time and while it flatters a former mayor to be addressed as *Mayor (last name)* it isn't respectful to the current mayor.”

The second most often-asked question is: How do you address someone in uniform? If you aren't in the military or in a police department, you probably aren't aware of each service's different traditions. For example, in a receiving line U.S. Air Force *Technical Sergeant Taylor Wilson* would be addressed as *Sergeant Wilson*. The Air Force uses the “basic ratings” in conversation. However U.S. Marine Corps *Staff Sergeant Taylor Wilson* is addressed as *Staff Sergeant Wilson*. Hickey says “the tradition among the enlisted Marine personnel is to use the ‘full rating’ in every instance.”

The new book, *Honor & Respect* includes complete formulas for outside and inside invitation envelopes, place cards, introductions, and even what to call the VIP in conversation in the receiving line. The book's 576 pages include formats for:

- Private citizens, professionals, and academics
- Government officials both elected and appointed
- Tribal officials for Native American Tribes (never before in print)
- Military officers: including enlisted personnel, as well as officers
- Religious officials: Every major religious group (many for the first time in print)
- Royalty, nobility, diplomats, and international officials

Honor & Respect (ISBN 978-0-615-19806-4) is available at Amazon.com. For further information on the book or on any issue relating names, titles, and forms of address, visit <http://www.formsofaddress.info>.

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