

Organizing perfect thank-you notes

"Thank you" is something you'll say often when you're getting married. But you'll also need to write it often as etiquette requires that you send a personal, handwritten thank-you note for each wedding gift.

This sounds like a tedious chore — and it can be — but not if you follow some tips from *Bride's* magazine.

Get organized. As you open each gift, record it right away, including a description of the gift, the name and address of the donor, the store it came from, the date it arrived and the date your thank-you note is mailed.

You can record this information on the backs of the cards attached to gifts, but for more assurance you may prefer to use a wedding planning book you can buy from a stationer, bridal salon or wedding gift registry. You also can set up a system using 3-by-5 index cards, a plain notebook or even a computer.

HAVE STATIONERY ready. Traditionally, thank-you notes are written in blue or black ink on white or off-white 4-by-5½-inch folded paper. You can order this when you order invitations. Decorated or imported notes may be sent instead. The thank-you is what counts.

Divide and conquer. It is customary for the bride only to write thank-you notes. But today's groom can do the honors as well, particularly for gifts that are given at parties he has attended that arrive with his name on them as well as the bride's, or those from people he knows best.

Be prompt. Start writing thank-you notes as soon as you receive the first wedding gifts. You'll find it easier to write a

sincere and spontaneous note if you tackle just a few at a time.

In general, try to acknowledge gifts that arrive before the wedding within two weeks of their arrival. Those coming after should be acknowledged within a month after the honeymoon. If you expect to receive more gifts than you possibly could acknowledge within this time, send out printed cards to let friends and relatives know their gifts arrived safely and that you'll write them a personal note soon.

Polish your style. Traditionally, the note is addressed to the woman if it's a married couple, "Dear Mrs. Nelsons." If it's a joint gift from more than four people, address the group as a whole, "Dear friends."

IN THE first sentence say thanks and name the gift. "Thank you so much for the sporty plaid blanket you and Mr. Nelson sent." If you aren't sure what the gift is, simply describe it: "The lovely etched crystal piece."

Then mention how you'll use the gift: "Since we'll be moving to Vermont, the blanket is sure to keep Bob and me warm through those long winters ahead." If it's money, tell what you'll put it toward.

Add another thought, maybe a comment about the wedding plans or a visit that will involve the gift giver: "So glad you'll be at the wedding — you two always get everyone dancing!" If you haven't met the gift givers yet, mention a time when you might. Then say thanks again.

Finally, sign off. Use your maiden name before the wedding, your married one after. Sign your first and last names if you don't know the giver well.

Pearls are traditional

A joyous time of celebration, the wedding day is preceded by months of planning and happy anticipation. Every detail, every contingency is carefully considered as decisions are being made about the "big day."

From planning the ceremony itself to choosing the ideal setting for the reception, to finding the perfect gown for the

bride, attention is given to every aspect of the wedding, right down to the flowers for the centerpieces and the bride's accessories.

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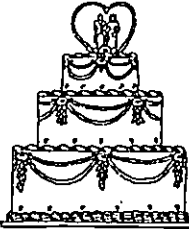
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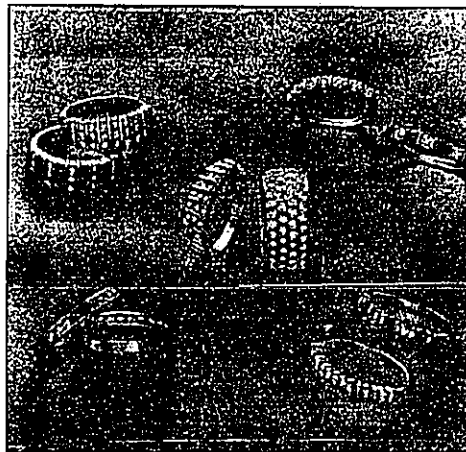
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