

Shmanners 9: Weddings: Attendance

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[theme music plays]

Travis:

You're cordially invited to attend this episode.

Teresa:

Respond with your preference, chicken or beef.

Travis:

It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis:

Hello internet, I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa:

And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis:

And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis:

...for ordinary occasions. If this is your first time joining us, first of all, welcome.

Teresa:

Welcome, welcome.

Travis:

Welcome to Shmanners. It's all about etiquette in the modern world, I barely know what I'm doing and Teresa is an expert, she's teaching me and thereby teaching you as well, and we're all just trying to make the world a little bit better. Does that sum it up well? Is that good?

Teresa:

Yeah, we're all in this together.

Travis:

We're all in this together has become a bit of a all encompassing lesson from...

Teresa:

Is that maybe a mantra?

Travis:

It's a pretty good mantra.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

I'm not going to lie. Um, so, Teresa Marie.

Teresa:

Uh-huh.

Travis:

We have got a lot to talk about in this episode, um, we decided to... We wanted to talk about weddings.

Teresa:

Right, because wedding season is fast approaching.

Travis:

And a lot of people have asked about it, but it's a huge topic. So, we're trying to break it down into a little bit more consumable, discussable pieces, so I'm sure in the future we'll do, like, throwing a wedding.

Teresa:

Well, okay, um, let's just call this part one of potentially an infinite amount of episodes, [laughs].

Travis:

Yeah, because that's the thing is, right... And even now, in this episode and when we discuss, like, planning a wedding, throwing a wedding, we're going to be talking primarily from our base of experience, which is, like, Western, semi-secular culture, and then there's a whole world of, like, wedding customs and wedding attendance customs that right now we can't really speak from, so I'm sure we will, at some point, do a series of what if it's a wedding in Russia? What if it's a wedding in China? What if it's... All of that.

Teresa:

All of that.

Travis:

So, right now we're just talking about wedding attendance in, like, the Western world, as far as our point of reference goes.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Now, we are married, is that correct?

Teresa:

We are. We are married.

Travis:

Confirm or deny, we are married?

Teresa:

Confirm, [laughs].

Travis:

And we had guests at our wedding, is that correct?

Teresa:

We did. We did have guests, um, but we had a very special circumstance, um, most of our guests, including ourselves, were and are actors. So, there's a very specific schedule that most actors keep, where they are busy on the weekends and Monday is their day off.

Um, so we had our wedding on a Sunday, so that most of our friends could have a good time and not have to worry about having a show the next day. Um, and that created, you know, difficulties for some people, and made it easier for other people.

Travis:

Now, would you say, uh, and we'll get into talking about wedding attendance in just one second, um, but factually, um, just, uh, and I mean, uh, this isn't an opinion, just factually, did we have the world's greatest wedding ever?

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

Okay, great.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

So, now tell me—

Teresa:

No, I'm going to say, we had the best wedding for us.

Travis:

We really nailed it, I thought we stuck the Travis and Teresa wedding, like, was this all about Travis and Teresa? Was this 100% perfect for them? T'was. All right, now, Teresa.

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

Do you have some history of wedding stuff for me?

Teresa:

According to a lot the questions we got, a lot of them were about gifts.

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

So, I would like to give a brief history of gift giving at weddings.

Travis:

Please do.

Teresa:

So, originally the notion of the bride receiving gifts was part of the dowry.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Right, so that's all the stuff that they would get, um, from their own parents, their own family, and you would take it with you into your new home with your new husband, um, sometimes it included, uh, land deeds, animals, um, flatware, silver stuff, you know, anything that was, like, historically important, and, you know, money, it included money, [laughs].

Travis:

Now, uh, my understanding of the dowry and I think how it's often portrayed in, um, in, you know, movies and media and stuff, is that it was equivalent

to, like, selling the daughter or... But it sounds like it was more of, like, a, "Hey, you need to start your life, and it's real tough out there, so here's, like, a chunk of our accumulated wealth to get you started."

Teresa:

Yeah, yeah. And there's certainly allusions in literature to the fact that there, you know, were people with large dowries. Um, so, like, in, um, in Elizabethan times, and even a little further back, I mean, the first recorded dowry was 3,000 BC.

So, there's a lot of literature talking about, you know, a poor bride, a wealthy bride, I have to go find a bride with a big dowry so that, you know, I can start and have my fortune and all this kind of stuff.

Travis:

So, love was not as much a factor. I mean, read some Austen, love was not as important as marrying well.

Teresa:

Right. And everybody hoped to marry well, everybody wanted to marry up, you know?

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Social climbing.

Travis:

I definitely married up.

Teresa:

Yes, you did.

Travis:

Yes, I did. My wife is great.

Teresa:

The concept of the dowry...

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

...was really expanded during the Renaissance, where it actually came in an ornate chest.

Travis:

Oh.

Teresa:

So, this was the beginning of the hope chest, right? So, you had this chest of things that you would collect from your family your entire adult life before you got married, I mean, at that point you weren't much of an adult before you got married, [laughs].

Travis:

Probably, like, 14 or 15 at that point.

Teresa:

Um, but it, you know, included linens and, um, furniture and, you know, um, basically anything that wouldn't spoil, if you could afford it, you put it in your chest and you went and took it with you.

Travis:

So, it was like over time you built up this collection of stuff?

Teresa:

Right, yeah, and...

Travis:

That's kind of fun. Listen, I'm not advocating for dowries or anything, but there's something about, like, cracking open a chest on your wedding day that sounds, like, super fun.

Teresa:

Well, you knew what was in there.

Travis:

Yeah, but, I mean, but the dude didn't, I mean, right? 'Cause this was all coming from the bride's side, right?

Teresa:

Right, right.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Traditionally it all comes from the bride's side. Um, you would take this stuff, and this is the things you would use to set up your new home together.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

As husband and wife.

Travis:

This is your home starter kit.

Teresa:

Exactly. Um, and then 400 years later, in the American South especially, it was common for brides to be gifted a leather basket filled with keys.

Travis:

What?

Teresa:

I know— This was new to me, because—

Travis:

Just, like, loose keys?

Teresa:

'Cause I'm a Yankee, uh, but apparently this basket would be filled with keys that would unlock doors and chests and cupboards and all the kind of stuff in the new house that she was going to be in.

Travis:

Oh.

Teresa:

To symbolize her, you know, role as mistress of the house

Travis:

I thought you meant they just, like, went through all of their, like, junk drawers and got out all those keys that they didn't know what to do with.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

And were, like, "These are yours now."

Teresa:

No.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Functioning keys, dear.

Travis:

Well, that's kind of a fun game, isn't it? That's a good way to spend your first three days in your new house.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Is, like, no, no.

Teresa:

Not that one.

Travis:

No, oh, I did it! Oh, it's the broom closet, cool.

Teresa:

Here you are, dear, you're the official janitor of our home.

Travis:

[laughs] You're the keeper now, you're the groundskeeper of Hogwarts.

Teresa:

[laughs]. So, then—

Travis:

It would be a pretty good dowry to marry into Hogwarts. Anyways, go on.

Teresa:

Okay. The modern registry as we know it was actually invented in the 1920s.

Travis:

Really, that recently?

Teresa:

Yeah, I know, and Macy's department store is credited with creating the first wedding registry. Before that, guests at the wedding really weren't expected to bring anything, it was more, you know, the bride's family, the groom's family, people like that bringing gifts and giving things to the w- the husband and wife. Then suddenly in the 1920s, it became cool.

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

To have a registry filled with china and flatware and linens and... You know, all of the stuff that you would use to set up your new home.

Travis:

Okay. Very, very interesting. I guess I just thought it would be... I thought it would be older than that, but it makes complete sense because of stuff like catalogs and Macy's developing the, like, you know, the book of stuff that you could go through and be like, "Yes, that, that, that, that, that, that," that makes sense.

Teresa:

Exactly, yeah.

Travis:

Now, may I ask you some questions about the registry while we're at it?

Teresa:

Certainly.

Travis:

Um, one of the questions that was asked is, uh, by a couple of different people, is what about going off registry? Some people ask, like, if they think all the stuff that's left is boring that hasn't been bought yet, or if they thought of something that wasn't on the registry, is it okay to buy stuff for people that's not on the registry?

Teresa:

Well, I mean, it's a double edged sword in the way of if you go off the registry, you are chancing that they might already have it.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, or that they might not like it.

Travis:

Or that they might not need it.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

That's another thing, especially in this day and age when people are, like, getting married and then immediately moving.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Where it's just, like, okay, great, now we need to move this thing that's lovely but we don't have a place for it in our home.

Teresa:

Right. So, I would say that if you really... If you know the couple quite well and you understand their tastes, or it's something similar from their registry that's maybe a little less expensive than from the site that they've picked, go ahead and do it. Um, but don't be offended if it gets returned.

Travis:

Get that gift receipt, get... That's what it's for, and you can't be upset if they're, like, "We already have that blender, that's why we didn't register for it."

Teresa:

Right, yes. Gift receipts are a great thing, [laughs].

Travis:

In that circumstance, and we'll get back to talking a little bit more, uh, before we get to all the gift stuff, but in that circumstance, would it be okay to say, like, I really think they'd like this thing, so I got them a gift card for the amount to buy that thing with a note saying, "I thought you would like this, here's the gift card, go get it if you want it, if not, use it for whatever"?

Teresa:

Um, traditionally, unless the bride and groom or the groom and groom, the bride and bride, unless—

Travis:

The group.

Teresa:

The group?

Travis:

The marrying couple.

Teresa:

The couple, um, asks for gift cards, like, I know we said that that would be fine from our friends, um, typically gift cards are kind of frowned upon, it's kind of like, "Go spend this money some place I've already picked for you."

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

Um, I suppose if it was a debit card, like, gift card.

Travis:

Oh, one of those preloaded debit cards.

Teresa:

Yeah, I think that that would be... That's pretty much the same as cash, um, and cash has been widely accepted as a wedding gift since the 1800s.

Travis:

Oh, really?

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

I thought that it was more recently than that 'cause I heard when we were, like, doing our reg— We weren't going to do a registry, we were just going to do, like, a honey fund, help us pay for the wedding, help us pay for the honeymoon thing.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

And then we were told by numerous, countless people, like, "Well, if you don't have a registry, some of, like, the older generations will be uncomfortable giving money."

Teresa:

Um, that really just depends on, I think, your own experience with your own family and the people that you invite and we had the gift of experience from several, from, um, your older brother and older... and sister in law, um, where that was something that they experienced, and they passed that advice along, but I think now it's getting more and more that the couple can do whatever they feel is appropriate for them. So, uh, with that brief history of gifts...

Travis:

And we'll get— We have more gift questions later, but we'll get back to them in a second.

Teresa:

Let's go back to the beginning with the invitation, the RSVP.

Travis:

What does RSVP stand for?

Teresa:

RSVP is a abbreviation.

Travis:

That is, by the way, from Marianne, Marianne wanted to know what RSVP stood for and wanted everyone else to know too, thank you, Marianne.

Teresa:

Right, and it's not quite an acronym because I think an acronym you have to be able to say the word, like NATO or scuba, right?

Travis:

No, you can say, like, an acronym is anything that's, like, the first four letters or the first letter of the thing, like, ATM is an acronym.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Sure. Anyway, so it stands for, literally, the French word, "répondez s'il vous plaît."

Travis:

Respond please.

Teresa:

Répondez s'il vous plaît. It has been so long, so long since I've taken French.

Travis:

Luckily this isn't a French pronunciation show.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Is that just, like, respond please?

Teresa:

It... I mean, the direct English equivalent would be respond if it pleases you.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

But it doesn't really mean that. It does mean respond please in the sense that we talked about "please" means these are the rules, follow them.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

So, it's not respond if you want to, it's we want you to respond.

Travis:

A response is needed.

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

Which is a very important rule as anyone who has sent out RSVPs will tell you, that not responding is not a negative response. I think that that's a huge misconception where people were like, "Well, I can't go," and then they never return the RSVP. If you can't go, you need to say no on the RSVP, because people need that number so they can plan accordingly.

Teresa:

Right, and people these days, um, you may not get in the mail a respond card. You may be directed to a website which allows you to respond instantly, which- which we used for some of ours, which was awesome.

Um, but responses do absolutely need to be in a written form, either sent by snail mail, on the wedding site or whatever you're using, or you can write a hand written note and send it to them. Um, I would even say, goodness, an email would be better than anything, would be better than nothing.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

But a vocal response does not count.

Travis:

No.

Teresa:

Because nobody got time for that, you can't hold onto that while you're doing all of that stuff.

Travis:

Especially when you start to get into, like, the hundreds of, like, we had 300 people invited to our... We didn't, but if someone had 300 people invited to their wedding and you saw them at work and were like, "Oh, by the way I can't make it," and then they're sitting down four weeks later to, like, do seating charts and they can't remember if you could make it or not, it's a very stressful time.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Do the littlest bit to help those people, please [laughs].

Teresa:

Yes, unfurl your brow, please.

Travis:

It's a very stressful time.

Teresa:

It's very stressful. Um, yeah, so vocal does not count, it needs to be written communication.

Travis:

Um, let me ask you some RSVP questions that we got from Facebook and Twitter. Um, every week we're going to put out the call that if you have any questions, to let us know, you can follow us on Facebook or on Twitter and let us know, we'll tell you more about that at the end of the show.

Um, this is from Steve on Facebook, "How do I know if it's okay to bring kids? Conversely, if you don't want kids at your wedding and people RSVP for them, what do you do?"

Teresa:

So, um, hopefully the— You can get a kind of clue from the invitation that you've been given, if it says the honor is, uh, the honor of your presence is requested and there's a mister line and a missus line, and there's no family or plus one or any other line for you to respond with, that generally means that whoever isn't on the invitation isn't invited.

Travis:

Well, and also sometimes it's as blatant as someone says, like, "We are unable to accommodate children," or, "We ask that, you know, no children attend the cer—"

Because that's the thing, um, I imagine that if you have kids and you're invited to a wedding that expressly states that kids are not invited to the wedding, it's probably very frustrating because you have to find a babysitter and all that, but the fact of the matter is unless accommodations have been made for the children, then it—

I don't know that they would have a place there anyways, you know? I don't know that a four year old gets much enjoyment out of attending a wedding where nothing's planned for them.

Teresa:

Exactly, and, you know, these days, if your children are invited, there's some really great stuff on the internet that you can find, ways to entertain these children, um, you know, I know a friend of ours made little gift bags that

had, like, bubbles and dinosaurs and, like, fun stuff in there to keep the children occupied.

The second half of that question, what if people RSVP with children that aren't supposed to be there? Um, I think that it is appropriate to contact those people who have said that their children are coming and explain to them very politely that, um, due to the fact that you're having a sit down dinner and plates are numbered and, you know, according to the catering count, all that kind of...

You know, use something like that, a very concrete reason, why you didn't ask the children to be there, um.

Travis:

But then it's also important to note that if you do that, you best be consistent, 'cause if that friend shows up without their kids and another friend is there with kids, there's going to be some beef. You've got to keep that consistent across the board, no kids means no kids.

Teresa:

At the end of the day, to use a turn of phrase from my husband.

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

I think that if people show up with their children, they're there.

Travis:

All you can do is all you can do.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

Do you know what I mean? Try to make it go as smooth... This is my lesson, uh, and we will talk about more about planning and throwing a wedding at a

future date, but if you are listening and you are attempting to throw or plan a wedding, then all you can do is all you can do. If you plan too much, it might not turn out all right, as the room says.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

But the fact of the matter is is, like, all you can do is all you can do, don't drive yourself crazy, which, side note, if you're attending a wedding, do everything you can, keep in mind that you are one of possibly 300 people that are being invited to this wedding and try to keep in mind that, while you're dealing with this one circumstance, the couple throwing the wedding is dealing with it 100 times over.

Teresa:

Exactly. We're all in this together.

Travis:

All in this together. This question's from Kurt. "Is it ever acceptable to bring a plus one to a wedding that is not your significant other? As in bring a close friend to dance with, share uncomfortable moments in silence with."

Teresa:

Um, unless it is stated on the RSVP that we would like, you know, Claude and Monique to arrive at the wedding, I think that your plus one means you can bring whoever you'd like, hopefully your significant other isn't upset that you've not chosen to bring them to a wedding.

Travis:

Well, I think the question is if you don't have a significant other.

Teresa:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

If you're offered a plus one and you don't have a, quote unquote, "date" to bring, can you just bring, like, your friend Steve with you.

Teresa:

Sure. I think that that's appropriate.

Travis:

You got a plus one.

Teresa:

They haven't delineated who they would like to have there, plus one means plus one, plus anyone.

Travis:

This question comes from Erin, which to build off of that last question, "If you're single and attending a friend's wedding with a plus one, is it in poor taste to bring a mutual friend of yours and the couple's who's not invited to the wedding?" If you don't mind, I think I could speak to this one real quick.

Teresa:

Sure.

Travis:

Uh, my advice would be to ask the couple is it okay if I bring friend? Because it might be that there's some very, very good reason that they have that they don't want that friend there that they don't want made public, you know what I mean?

Now, I'm not saying so, it might just be that space was limited and they, like, were just outside of the group that... and they're like, "Yes, of course, that would be great," but I think that in a circumstance like that where you're like, huh, that's weird that they didn't invite Jim, I wonder if it's cool if I make him as my plus one, ask the couple.

Teresa:

That's very thoughtful, I agree with that.

Travis:

I did it. I'm a winner.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Um, well, it's— So, in that response, here's a question from Davin, "How do you handle not being invited to any of your friends' weddings? What is the proper course of action?"

Teresa:

Weddings are so expensive. I really would not take it personally if I wasn't invited to someone's wedding. You are absolutely welcome to offer your congratulations, either on the telephone or in a note, um, and if you feel inclined to send a gift, even if you're not invited, that is probably also lovely, that's, you know, the thought that you have for them, the love for them, um.

Travis:

There's so many factors that go into it.

Teresa:

Yes, ugh.

Travis:

Like, that's the thing is we sat down and, like, revised our list so many times, and the fact of the matter is is you want to be able to include everyone, and at the end of the day, sometimes you only have, like, 75 spots, and, like, that doesn't mean that your 76th friend isn't your friend, especially when you start to factor...

Oh, my God, factor in my cousins and, you know, their children and my extended family and I... Like, it starts to be- it really starts to fill up.

Teresa:

Right, so try to be understanding and don't have any hard feelings. They're still your friends, you can still be friends, and you can offer congratulations even if you weren't invited to the actual wedding.

Travis:

Well, that leads me to this question from Marinium on Twitter, "A relative is getting married but I wasn't invited because they're keeping it small, should I still give a gift?"

Teresa:

If you feel so inclined. Uh, if you did not receive an invitation, you are not, uh, obligated to send a gift in your stead, if you choose not to... I mean, we'll cover that too, but, um, only if you feel so inclined.

Travis:

Okay, one last question in the attendance one and then we'll move on to talking a little bit more about gifts. Um, Brian asked on Facebook, "Is there a polite way to decline an offer to be a groomsman slash bridesmaid? It is expensive and time consuming and I am finding out that I have a lot of friends," [laughs]. One, a good problem to have, Brian.

Teresa:

[laughs], well, Brian, hopefully you are close enough with these people that you can speak to them and let them know that you would love to be there, celebrating their love, but you just can't put in that kind of, um, that commitment for them.

Travis:

I will say though, there's something about it to me that's, like, I— When I was picking my groomsmen, it was very much, like, who are the people that if I had to, like, if I got into trouble, if I was faced with, you know, adversity, who would be the people I'd want standing up with me?

Um, and so it is a lot of work to be, sometimes, to be in the wedding party and there's a lot more extra stuff to do, but you might consider that there's a very good reason that that person wants you there, maybe it's very important to them that you are there, um, and that, you know, it would mean a lot to them if you were up there.

Teresa:

Right, but if you just can't, if you have work obligations, family obligations, you are financially unable, all of these things, good friends understand when you have to decline.

Travis:

Correct. Okay, so let's talk a little bit more about gifts.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, 'cause we got a lot of gift questions.

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

So, one of the main questions we got was this. Destination weddings, right, are getting more and more popular.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Um, and they're very exciting. For those of you who don't know, a destination wedding is rather than, say, you know, we live in Cincinnati, so we're having our wedding in Cincinnati, you say, we're going to have our wedding in Jamaica, everybody go to Jamaica and meet us there, right? That's... That was probably pretty self explanatory from the term destination wedding, but just in case you didn't know.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Um, and so it can get very expensive, so we were both asked, is it okay to decline an invitation to a destination wedding because it's hard to get to? And if you go to a destination wedding, do you still have to get a gift? If you've paid, you know, \$800 for a plane ticket and \$400 for a hotel room, is it okay to not also get a gift?

Teresa:

Ooh, boy. Got to tell you, there is a lot of conflicting opinions on this.

Travis:

Really?

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

I mean, I'm not surprised, but I think I'm supposed to say, "really?" In circumstances like that.

Teresa:

[laughs] Um, there are some etiquette experts that say the pleasure of your company is enough, there are some that say unless specified on the invitation, no gifts please, that you still need to send a gift.

Um, I think what it really comes down to is you going to the wedding is a gift of your time and your finances, you know, because you are usually expected to pay your own plane ticket and lodging while you're there.

I think that there should still be a small token of your appreciation. Um, what that is could be up to you, whether it's a handwritten note, uh, or a very small gift. Now, I think that where...

There's a question about this, about trying to, um, give a gift that represents the amount that has been spent on you at the wedding, I think that there's a

question in there like that, um, which is not true. You don't have to replace your own food fee or whatever it is, um.

Travis:

That question was from Erin, from her mother, uh, her mother had been told that the rule of thumb was the value of your wedding gift should be equal to the approximate per plate dinner cost.

Teresa:

No, [laughs].

Travis:

I have never heard that before.

Teresa:

That may have been a regional thing or a cultural thing of a subset of people maybe, but in general, no. So, if you're going to a destination wedding and you know that it costs a lot of money, don't spend a ton of money on a gift. A small gift is appropriate, especially if you are spending a lot of time with the groom and the bride or whoever.

Travis:

I, also... The couple.

Teresa:

The couple.

Travis:

I also assume that it depends on the couple.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

You know? Like, when we had our wedding, I knew that a lot of our friends were, like, young, poor actors, so, like, I didn't care if they got... I just liked that they were there.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

You know, they contributed the energy, the fun to the party, we had a great time.

Teresa:

We got a lot of beautiful cards and we also got a lot of offers to help with things.

Travis:

Yeah, that's the other thing, you can offer help setting up, breaking down, cleaning up, driving, you know, taking care of their dog while they go on honeymoon. There's lots of stuff you can offer that doesn't cost money.

Teresa:

Yes. So, do what feels right for you. Ugh, I know that you are looking for a more definitive answer and unfortunately I can't give it to you, because weddings are a very personal thing, and you are invited personally, so you have to do what feels right for you.

Travis:

But I'm willing to bet that most... If they're your friend enough that they invited you to a destination wedding and you're planning to attend, you can probably gauge on whether or not they expect you to get a gift or not.

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

So, this one's from Jerry, on the opposite side of this question, "I know on some wedding invites they state that no gifts are necessary, but this puts one in an awkward position because I've always been taught that it's bad form not to bring anything. Um, does one ignore or actually follow the instructions?"

Teresa:

If they have gone through the trouble to put on their invitation that they do not want gifts, don't bring a gift. If you feel like you need to bring something, bring a card.

Travis:

Just picture, you walk in, carrying a gift after they've said no gifts please, and they haven't set up a table for gifts, they weren't... You're the only one who brought a gift in, don't be that person, [laughs].

Teresa:

Okay, all right, let's not- let's not make this about, like, the group mentality, let's try and think about the couple. They have said no gifts, if you feel that it is rude to be empty handed, bring a card. A handwritten, you know, well wishing card is enough to make you feel better and still keep within their rule.

Travis:

Um, this question is from Melissa on Facebook, "If you're invited to a wedding and an engagement party, do you have to get a gift for both? I ain't made of money, y'all."

Teresa:

[laughs] Um, it really depends on you. No gifts are really expected, uh, at an engagement party, according to my research. Gifts are really expected from showers and from, uh, weddings.

Um, but if the general trend is people are bringing gifts to an engagement party, that can serve as your gift for the wedding. Um, or another example that I heard online, saw online, is that you can take the amount of money that you were planning to spend on the wedding gift and divide it between the two parties, if you feel, uh, awkward not showing up with something, but in general, you are expected to give just one gift for the wedding, yeah.

Travis:

Um, we're going to be right back to talk more about attending a wedding and what you should and should not do, but first here's a word from some other Max Fun shows.

[theme music plays]

Allegra:

I'm Allegra Ringo.

Renee:

And I'm Renee Colvert, and we host a podcast called Can I Pet Your Dog?

Allegra:

Renee, can I tell you about a dog I met this week?

Renee:

Ugh, I wish that you would. In turn though, can I tell you about a dog hero?

Allegra:

May I tell you about a dog breed in a segment I like to call Mutt Minute?

Renee:

[laughs] I would love that. Can we maybe talk about some dog tech?

Allegra:

Could we have some cool guests on, like Lin-Manuel Miranda, Nicole Byer, and Anne Wheaton?

Renee:

I mean, yeah, absolutely, I'm in.

Allegra:

You're on board?

Renee:

What do you say, we, uh, [laughs], we do all of this and put it into a podcast?

Allegra:

Yeah, okay.

Renee:

You think? [laughs], all right, uh, should we call it, like, I don't know, Can I Pet Your Dog?

Allegra:

Sure.

Renee:

All right. Uh, what do you say we put it on every Tuesday on Maximum Fun or on iTunes?

Allegra:

Sounds good to me, meeting's over, [laughs].

Travis:

Okay, we're back. Before we get back to talking about wedding attendance, I want to remind everybody that next week is the Max Fun Drive, we're so excited, this is our first year, it's our first year existing, but it's also our first Max Fun Drive.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

We're so excited to be a part of it. Um, in case you didn't know, Max Fun is a donor listener supported network, we literally would not exist if it weren't for listeners like you. Every year for two weeks we give you the opportunity to support the shows you love, and get rewarded for showing your support.

There's lots of different gifts, but no matter what level you donate at, you're going to get access to just a ton of bonus content that you can only get if you're a donor. We're so excited, it starts March 14th, we really want you to be part of the magic, so make sure, um, to pay attention to the Max Fun HQ Twitter account, uh, the Max Fun Facebook Group, and to maximumfun.org.

We're so, like, I can't— I keep saying we're so excited, we are literally so excited.

Teresa:

He can hardly contain himself.

Travis:

I can't, I can barely— I would say I'm 98% contained, I have a small containment leak.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Um, but we're going to have bonus episodes, not only in the donor's only feed, but over the next two weeks of Shmanners, we've already recorded our St. Patrick's Day episode, um, and we're working on other special stuff, so look out for it. It's coming. Max Fun Drive.

Teresa:

Max Fun Drive.

Travis:

Okay. So, we've talked about the RSVP, we've talked about the gifts, what can you tell me about dress code?

Teresa:

You should really be able to discern, um, the dress code from the invitation, whether or not they've said how to dress. So, think about where the wedding takes place, what time of day it's taking place at.

Travis:

What the weather's going to be like.

Teresa:

What the weather's going to be like, all that kind of stuff, so if it is a December wedding in the evening at a Cathedral, you should probably dress up, right?

Travis:

Mm-hmm, yes.

Teresa:

But if it is a July wedding at a backyard barbecue in the afternoon, pretty casual, right?

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Yeah. So, um, you really just need to try and deduce from what you know about the wedding from the invitation, um, and then dress appropriately.

Travis:

And chances are you probably know other people that are invited to this, there's never any harm in saying, like, "Hey, what are you guys wearing?" Or contact the couple and say, like, "What kind of dress code is appropriate? I want to make sure that I am appropriately dressed."

Teresa:

Sure. Contact the couple, but not like, super close to the wedding.

Travis:

Yeah, not, like, day of.

Teresa:

If you rece—

Travis:

"Should I wear green socks?" "I'm getting married today, Steve, leave me alone."

Teresa:

[laughs]. When you receive the invitation, you are supposed to immediately RSVP yes or no and at that point you may contact them. Several months out is still a good time, but not close to the wedding.

Travis:

Um, Christina asked, "I'm curious about wearing black dresses to a wedding. I was always told that's a no-no, but I'm seeing it a lot more lately, and when I joked about it to some younger cousins, they had no idea."

Teresa:

The little black dress has really become standard cocktail and evening attire. Um, I recommend that if you are going to wear a black dress that you wear some other pop of color, just so that it doesn't look like a funeral.

Travis:

Yeah, that's what I kept reading in people's questions where they were like, "I was told not to wear white because that's the bride's color, and not to wear black because that is for a funeral."

Teresa:

So, I mean, but if it's a little glitzy and maybe you have red heels on or- or things like that, you can make it a little more festive and still wear your little black dress.

Travis:

How do you feel about the white as the color for the bride by the way? Is that outdated? Is that still... You know, because the idea, right, was supposed to be that white symbolized their purity and...

Teresa:

I think before Victorian times, everybody pretty much more white, and there's still—

Travis:

Well, that was the whole point of the bridesmaids, right? To confuse demons and devils so they would be confused as to which one was the bride.

Teresa:

Sure, and there are several, um, cultures that still everybody wears white, or maybe it's wears white to a funeral. We'll work on that. Um, but in general, you want to allow the bride to stand out and make it her day. If you wear white, that's, you know... I wouldn't say that it is, uh, it's not allowed, but it's a little bit in poor taste. You should—

Travis:

A little gauche.

Teresa:

You should wear something that allows the bride to be the center of attention. Now, if you have...

Travis:

Or the groom.

Teresa:

If it is a... Yes, or the groom.

Travis:

I like being the center of attention too, just want to make that clear.

Teresa:

[laughs] That's—

Travis:

I believe that it is the bride and groom or groom and groom or bride and bride or whoever's day, it's both of them, [laughs], not just the one, folks.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Grooms can be special too.

Teresa:

Yes, honey, grooms can be special too. Not to say that if you're wearing separates, that one of them can't be white. Just don't wear a floor length white gown.

Travis:

No, ew.

Teresa:

That might make people think that you are the bride.

Travis:

Gross, [laughs], that would be so weird.

Teresa:

A white shirt with a different colored pants or maybe a white suit with a bright, you know, a bright colored shirt underneath, those are fine, it's not that you can't wear that color at all, it's that you should not draw attention away from the bride.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

And grooms, brides, grooms.

Travis:

Thank you. The people.

Teresa:

The people.

Travis:

The peoples, don't distract from the peoples. This question comes from Jared about dress code, and it, um, it hits me very personally. "Is it acceptable for me to wear cowboy boots to, quote, 'fancy weddings'? I usually assume it's okay if they aren't covered in mud and the like, but seems like a good time to ask and be sure." Yes, Jared. Yes, you can.

Teresa:

All right. I think that unless the invitation says black tie, you can.

Travis:

Here's a good rule of thumb, I am a cowboy boot wearer, I wore dress cowboy boots for my wedding. I think that that's the key. Think of them like

any other shoe, right? You can have your tennis shoe and you have your dress shoes, so you should have your boots and you should have your dress boots.

Teresa:

Okay, so they were... Yes, you did wear those to our wedding, and they were very tasteful. They were black and they had a little bit of bling on them.

Travis:

Yeah, yeah, they had silver tips and silver accents around the heel.

Teresa:

So, they were very dressy. Um, I wouldn't wear cowboy boots to a, uh, to a religious ceremony, probably because they're quite loud.

Travis:

Oh, there's also that.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Leave your spurs at home. But I will say, like, if that's— If it looks like it's part of the, like, part of your outfit, and...

Teresa:

Your ensemble.

Travis:

Yeah, and not out of place, like, you don't want to wear a really nice suit, and then your scuffed, even if they don't have mud on them, scuffed brown boots. Like, dress accordingly, get yourself a nice pair of dress cowboy boots, then you can wear them basically everywhere and they're really great.

Teresa:

Right, so official answer, unless it's black tie, which requires, uh, regular dress shoes for your tuxedo.

Travis:

Correct. Now, I know somebody asked about it and I can't find it now, but what about taking your shoes off during the reception for, like, dancing and such?

Teresa:

Um, I have done this, because sometimes ladies' shoes, they hurt so much. Um, if keeping your shoes on keeps you from having fun and participating in the wedding, go ahead and take them off.

Um, because no one's going to really see it, and the only reason that I would ask someone to keep their shoes on would be if they were in danger of injuring themselves. So, if there isn't a dance floor provided or it's an outdoor wedding and it's not, you know, I keep saying wedding, I mean reception, keep your shoes on during the wedding, but a reception.

Travis:

Oh, yeah, oh, please.

Teresa:

Um, unless it's an outdoor venue and there's the case of bodily harm if you take your shoes off, I think that you can.

Travis:

Also, just once again, context, like, is everybody else, like, sitting down quietly and not dancing and... You know what I mean? I'm not saying that it's not okay to be the one who starts the dancing, but just kind of read the room a little bit and be like, is this going to be weird if I kick my shoes off and start, like, dancing around wooing on the dance floor? Is this this kind of party?

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

You know?

Teresa:

Yes, read the room.

Travis:

All right, so what about... That's a little bit about the reception and we'll hit that again here in a second, but, like, what about the ceremony? What do I do there? Because, like, for example, I've been to ceremonies where it was, you know, some... There was a lot of, like, religious practices going on, there was a lot of ceremony in the ceremony that maybe wasn't something I was familiar with.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Or maybe it went super long, or that there were, you know, that it was super short and it was very, like, our friend performed the ceremony and that kind of thing.

Teresa:

Well, if you are not a practitioner of the religious ceremony you are attending, you are not expected to participate, um.

Travis:

So, for example, Catholic mass, communion, don't do it.

Teresa:

Right, you're not expected to participate if you don't know what to do, you don't have to kneel if you don't want to, any of that stuff, at a Catholic mass, um, but you are expected to be respectful. So, if the congregation stands, you should stand, if they sit, you should sit. And, you know, stay quiet and respectful.

Travis:

And sometimes ceremonies are just long.

Teresa:

Yeah, they are, sorry.

Travis:

It happens, folks, and in this day and age, I know an hour and a half, it's like two episodes of a TV show, I get it.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

But sometimes ceremonies are long. Sometimes they're blissfully short, ours was, like, 20 minutes, [laughs], it was great, uh, we did a combina— In case you were wondering, we did a combination of a lot of different, um, you know, religious kind of practices, but we did it at a theater, our friend Jeremy performed it beautifully, we did, like, a wine ceremony, we stomped on a glass.

Teresa:

We had some musical acts.

Travis:

We had musical acts, we had readings. We had funny speeches, it was great.

Teresa:

Yes, it was.

Travis:

Wait, here's a great question, and this kind of combines RSVPs, ceremonies, and the reception. What if you can only make it to the ceremony? What if you can only make it to the reception?

Teresa:

I think that if you can only make it to the reception, that's kind of cheating.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

But, like, isn't that the part you most need the RSVP for because that's usually where you're figuring out how much food you need?

Teresa:

Yes, so you should definitely RSVP. Um, if it's something where a last minute thing happens and you can't make it to the ceremony but you can make it to the reception, just let somebody know so they can pass along your regrets that you didn't make it, um.

Travis:

And it happens, because sometimes you have a kid who couldn't make it through the ceremony but they'll be perfectly fine at the reception.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Or, like, just scheduling wise, you couldn't get out of work or something like that, but let them know.

Teresa:

Uh, make sure that if you can only make the reception, that you take a minute to seek out the couple and apologize for not being there and give them your congratulations, because odds are they did a receiving line or they saw people or, you know, whatever that is, that you want to definitely make sure. But if you can only attend the ceremony and you can't attend the reception, do indicate that on your RSVP.

Travis:

Because that really changes the, like, the reception is where you need to know the most.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Because usually that's where the most limited, you know, the limitations are.

Teresa:

Exactly.

Travis:

Um, so let's talk some more about the reception.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, so that's probably the big one, because when you're at the ceremony, most ceremonies, there's not a lot of, like, audience participation. I'm sure that there are probably a lot of awesome ceremonies where people do that, but, like, standard, you've got mostly one job and that's to sit there and go, "Oh, that's nice."

Teresa:

At our experience with Judeo-Christian weddings and secular weddings.

Travis:

And even... Yeah.

Teresa:

Yes, not saying that there aren't, but in my experience there hasn't been a lot of audience participation, [laughs].

Travis:

But if anybody wants do to that, where you're like, "I need a suggestion, a place that could have a wedding, all right, I heard pet shop, did I hear pet shop?"

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Um, but so, at the reception, though.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

This is, I think the time where being a wedding guest really becomes a little bit more of a minefield, so I'm going to ask, like, the number one reception question we were asked.

Teresa:

Okay, hit me.

Travis:

Drinking and getting drunk and how... Like, I have a general rule on it myself, which is never be the most drunk person there.

Teresa:

I think that's a great rule. Um, uh, my suggestion is feel free to drink but wait until you've had some food, because that's when you'll be able to properly gauge how much you are drinking, the hardest part is, you know, at a cocktail hour when there's no food and you're just guzzling those drinks, that's the danger zone.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

You should not be drunk at a wedding, it is...

Travis:

Start slow.

Teresa:

Yeah. It just... When you become intoxicated at a wedding, you are not making a good impression on the couple, the bride and groom, bride and groom, groom and groom. It's not appropriate. Um, enjoy yourself. But know your limits.

Travis:

Well, let me ask you this, so continuing on with that theme, if it's an open bar, tipping? You still tip the people working, right? Especially if there's, like, a tip jar out.

Teresa:

If there's a tip jar out and you want to tip, you should tip. I don't think that you should be— You are not obligated to tip, um, because a lot of that gratuity is covered by the wedding. Um, so if you bring in your own bartender and it's a, you know, it's an open bar, that's already been covered.

The bartender has been paid appropriately. If you feel so inclined to tip, you may, but you don't have to. If it's a cash bar you should tip the same that you normally do at any bar, because that means that the coverage for the bartender and the alcohol has not been covered by the bride and groom.

Travis:

There's also, I would say, I don't think there's anything wrong, if you had asked me a couple years ago I probably would have answered differently, but a lot of people commented on, like, dry weddings, in which there is no alcohol provided. I think that that is entirely, as we have stated before, you know, it's the couple's event, as much as I... Man, when we were planning ours, so many people said, like, "It's not about you guys." I was like, it is.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Um, but I think that at the end of the day, if the couple wants to have a dry wedding, that's their prerogative, but I would also say that they probably understand that, like, that's not everyone's cup of tea.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

And so, like, people may not want to attend a dry reception.

Teresa:

Yeah. And you going to a wedding is your decision to go, if they've told you it's going to be a dry reception then that's what you have to deal with if you want to go.

Travis:

Now, both Kate and Kyle asked about this, one on Facebook, one on Twitter, dancing. More or less it boils down to do I have to dance to be polite? Um, I try to do other useful or fun things, but I don't like dancing.

Teresa:

I think that if there comes a time when it is requested that all dance, you should go up and dance, but unless it's requested, you don't need to, you can stay in your seat.

Travis:

I think what it is, to put it in context for people who are like, "I don't like dancing, leave me alone," dancing is a very, um, visual, concrete way, like, that people can see someone dancing and be, like, they're having a good time. Whether that's true or not, when someone sees you not dancing, they have no idea if you're having a good time or not, you know what I mean?

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Like, I think that's why people are always trying to push people to dance, like, "Come on, dance with us," because they connect dancing and having a good time in their head. And I think it's perfectly appropriate to be like, no, thank you, and then not do it.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

And, other side of that, if you try to get someone to dance and you're like, "Hey, come dance with me," and they say, "I'd rather not," take them at their word, because just 'cause you enjoy doing it, doesn't mean they do.

Teresa:

Right. Um, so, uh, again, to put it in context of my own experience at our wedding, um, you had a, quote, "family dance", in place of...

Travis:

It was awesome, it was great.

Teresa:

It was awesome, in place of the mother-son dance, um, because you wanted to include all of the people who had mothered you in your lifetime.

Travis:

And I got everyone at the wedding to dance, even people who later I was told by their significant others had never seen them dance before in their entire lives, it was awesome, you guys, I really nailed it.

Teresa:

Right, and so in the spirit of inclusion-

Travis:

Because the song was Play That Funky Music White Boy, I just want to make that clear.

Teresa:

So, in the spirit of inclusion, I think that if it is asked of the entire reception, you should go and do it, just—

Travis:

If you can.

Teresa:

Just to put on a brave face if you can. Um, if you have physical limitations, that's a completely different thing. Um, but after that, you're not expected to go do that.

Travis:

And that's the other thing is, like, it's supposed to be for you to have fun.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

It's not, like, if you don't want to do it, or it wouldn't be fun for you, don't do it. This question is from Liz, "When is it an appropriate time to peace out and should you tell the couple?"

Teresa:

Hopefully you have seen the couple before you leave, so that you can offer your congratulations, but if you haven't, you need to do it before you leave, you need to say a thank you for having me and good luck on your life together, all that stuff, and then you can go. Traditionally, you need to wait until the cake has been cut.

Travis:

Oh, okay, that's a good rule of thumb.

Teresa:

Yeah. Because that's normally in kind of, like, the middle end-ish, um, because, you know, there will still be drinks service and food service while the cake is being cut, and then after that you can peace out.

Travis:

And take the favors home with you.

Teresa:

[laughs], please don't leave us with all these favors.

Travis:

Please take the favors home with you, if they got, like, 200 succulents, take a damn succulent home with you, the couple has no use for 200 succulents, [laughs].

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Please take it, even if you throw it out on your way out the door, [laughs]. Well, that's going to do it for us this week, thank you so much for joining us again, and thank you for joining us next week for the Max Fun Drive. Um, you can follow us on Twitter @shmannerscast, S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S-C-A-S-T.

Teresa:

And you can follow us on Facebook, you can search Shmanners the Podcast, and that's our group.

Travis:

And that's where we'll post, like, do you have any questions about the... So, like, it's a super fun place to be, y'all.

Teresa:

Also you can follow me on Twitter @teresamcelroy.

Travis:

Do that, she's almost at 2,000, maybe she'll be at 2,000 by the time this airs. You can follow me too, I'm @travismcelroy, and I would also recommend that you follow @maxfunhq, you can get, uh, updates when other shows post, you can get updates about fun Max Fun stuff that's going on.

Speaking of which, on the 22nd, we're going to be attending a Max Fun meetup here in Los Angeles at Club Tee Gee, but we're trying to get Max Fun meetups all across the globe if we could, um, as part of the Max Fun Drive, so we're trying to get them on March 22nd at 7:00 PM, whatever the local time is.

Um, so, yeah, if you're interested, you can find more about that on maximumfun.org, or host your own if there's not one going on near you. Um, so, yeah, come out and see us at Club Tee Gee if you're in the Los Angeles area, or find one near you and go to that.

Teresa:

It's a great place to meet other people who like the same stuff you do.

Travis:

Yeah, it's going to be great, um, so do that, follow us on Twitter, follow us on Facebook. Oh, um, if you get a second, we're so, so new, and we could really use your help, go to iTunes and rate, review, subscribe, if you're an iTunes user, and even if you're not an iTunes user, tell a friend to listen, say, like, "Hey, I heard this show," like, "Hey, I know you're going to that wedding next week."

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

"Check out this wedding episode," like, it helps out a lot.

Teresa:

Yeah, if you like it, recommend it to your friends.

Travis:

Or just click retweet on the Tweet that we put out.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

So, it all helps. Do we have any thank you notes this week?

Teresa:

So, I'd like, as always, I want to thank my girl, Emily Post.

Travis:

I also want to thank Brent "Brentalfloss" Black, he wrote our theme song, which is now available as a ringtone, if you have an Apple device and you would like to get the ringtone, you can go to iTunes and search for Shmammers in the ringtones. It's really, really good, you guys, and we've already sold a bunch of them and everybody loves it and it's really great.

Teresa:

[laughs].

Travis:

Go do it. Um, and we want to say thank you to Kayla M. Wasil, who designed our logo, um, follow her on Twitter and have her do some awesome stuff for you, she's really, really good. Thank you for listening and join us again next week.

Teresa:

No RSVP required.

Travis:

You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

Manners Shmanners, get it?

[theme music plays]

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