Whether it is to a wedding, a dinner party, shower or gala event, an invitation comes with some important obligations. Here's a quick guide to keep you on the guest list.

1. RSVP

From the French, it means "Répondez, s'il vous plaît," or, "Please reply." This little code has been around for a long time and it's definitely telling you that your hosts want to know if you are attending. Reply promptly, within a day or two of receiving an invitation.

2. How do I respond? Reply in the manner indicated on the invitation.

- RSVP and no response card: a handwritten response to the host at the return address on the envelope.
- Response Card: fill in and reply by the date indicated and return in the enclosed envelope.
- RSVP with phone number: telephone and make sure to speak in person – answering machines can be unreliable.
- RSVP with email: you may accept or decline electronically.
- Regrets only: reply only if you cannot attend. If your host doesn't hear from you, he is expecting you!
- No reply requested? Unusual, but it is always polite to let someone know your intentions. A phone call would be sufficient.

3. Is that your final answer?

- Changing a 'yes' to a 'no' is only acceptable on account of: illness or injury, a death in the family or an unavoidable professional or business conflict. Call your hosts immediately.
- Canceling because you have a "better" offer is a sure fire way to get dropped from ALL the guest lists.
- Being a "no show" is unacceptable.

- Changing a ‘no’ to a ‘yes’ is OK only if it will not upset the hosts’ arrangements.

4. “May I bring…”

Don’t even ask! An invitation is extended to the people the hosts want to invite—and no one else.

- …a date. Some invitations indicate that you may invite a guest or date (Mr. John Evans and Guest) and when you reply, you should indicate whether you are bringing someone, and convey their name.
- …my children. If they were invited, the invitation would have said so.
- … my houseguest. It’s best to decline the invitation, stating the reason. This gives your host the option to extend the invitation to your guests, or not.

5. Say “Thank You.”

Make sure to thank your hosts before you leave, and then again by phone or note the next day.