

The rehearsal dinner has become a popular tradition of the wedding weekend.

It's a time to celebrate and savor the upcoming wedding in a relaxed atmosphere, without the pomp and ceremony reserved for the wedding day. Everyone arrives fresh and excited to start the wedding festivities, and since rehearsal dinners are almost always limited to the couple's closest friends and family, the atmosphere is more personal and private than the wedding reception.

When is the rehearsal dinner held? □



The rehearsal dinner generally takes place the evening before the wedding, regardless of when the wedding rehearsal is held. Then again, there's no rule that says the event has to be a dinner—it could be a brunch or luncheon following a rehearsal scheduled earlier in the day. □

Who hosts? □

It is customary, but not obligatory, □ for the groom's family to host the rehearsal party. If the groom's family chooses not to host, then it's fine for the bride's family, or the bride and groom to do so. It's also perfectly fine for the two families to host together.

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How can the bride and groom help? □ □

Since they are the common link between the two families, the couple can be instrumental in arranging a time for everyone to talk about the rehearsal dinner plans, in person or over the phone. The groom's family will need to know:

- **Recommendations for places to host the dinner, preferably close to the rehearsal site**
- **The time and location of the wedding rehearsal**
- **The style of the reception—colors, size, and formality**
- Names and addresses for the guest list

Who is invited?□

The guest list at a rehearsal dinner should include the members of the wedding party and their spouses, fiancé(e)s, or significant others; the officiant and his or her spouse or partner; the parents, stepparents, and grandparents of the bride and groom; and any siblings of the bride and groom who are not in the wedding party. If single members of the wedding party were invited to bring a guest to the wedding, then it's kind to include the guest at the rehearsal dinner, too. Any children of the bride and groom from a previous marriage are invited, unless they are too young. Parents of young attendants, such as a flower girl or ring bearer, are also included.

What type of invitation should be extended?□

Depending on the size and formality of the event, invitations may be printed, written on informal or fill-in cards, or may simply be handwritten, phoned or emailed. A physical invitation serves as a tangible reminder of the date, time, and address of the party. It's a good idea to include directions to the party and RSVP information, usually a phone number or email address. Send invitations three to six weeks in advance.

What happens during the dinner?□

The focus of the dinner is for the wedding party and the two families to relax, enjoy each other's company, and celebrate the bride and groom and the joining of two families. Sometimes, this will be the first time that the two families meet. It's important for the couple and their parents to make sure that everyone is introduced to each other. Traditionally, this dinner is highlighted by toasts, toasts, and more toasts!

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The attendant's toasts may be sentimental, but they're also a great opportunity to regale guests with tales, jokes, songs, and poems about the bride and groom—as long as they're light-hearted and in good taste. Sometimes the bride and groom stand and speak; even if they don't, they generally end the toasting by proposing a toast first to their respective parents and then to all their friends and relatives in attendance.

- The rehearsal dinner is the perfect occasion for the maid of honor and the best man to present the attendant's gifts to the couple, accompanied by a short speech or toast. The bride and groom may give their gifts to their attendants and thank them with a short speech as well.

