The ring is sparkly, you've said "Yes!" and you're off on a whirlwind of planning for the big day. Chances are you've already spent some time thinking about who will be your wedding attendants - siblings, close friends, or other relatives near and dear to you. They'll be your support group, errand runners, and ambassadors-at-large at your reception. But being an attendant can come with a hefty price tag; besides clothing and gifts, attendants must also pay for their own transportation. It may also require using precious vacation time or unpaid work days to attend the wedding and pre-wedding events. While it is an attendant's job to assist the bride whenever possible, the considerate bride won't treat her team as her personal minions. Before you extend that all-important "Will you be in my wedding?" invitation, consider what you're asking. Here are a few important attendants' responsibilities:

1. {Tip}

Traditionally, there is a wedding gift, an attendants' gift and a shower gift...It can seem overwhelming. Let them know that you consider their participation itself to be their wedding gift to you.

2. {It's All In The Tux}

They will have to purchase or rent their wedding attire and accessories - shoes, hats, ties accessories - everything they'll wear except the flowers. Brides can make this more economical by choosing dresses that truly can be worn again and opting for hairstyles and makeup that don't require a salon. Give hair ornaments or jewelry as your gift to your bridesmaids; grooms can give ties to their ushers. Reusable accessories and clothing are always appreciated. Plus, they'll always remember your wedding when they wear them!

3. {Transportation}

They will need to pay for their own transportation. These days, almost every wedding is a destination wedding. Offer to pay any travel agent's fee so your attendants don't have to. A full-service travel agency can coordinate travel for the wedding party, will have access to

discount fares, and can handle re-bookings if flights are canceled. Don't forget that the bride and groom's families are responsible for providing accommodations for the attendants. Local friends and family may be able to provide guests with rooms; otherwise, book hotel rooms early.

4. {Party Time!}

Members of the wedding party must attend showers, the rehearsal dinner, and other pre-wedding parties when feasible. Unless your attendants all live nearby, someone will be traveling. Try scheduling more than one event over a single weekend when possible. For example, throw a bachelorette party or bridesmaid's luncheon on a Saturday and a shower the next day.

5. {Gift Giving}

Attendants will end up presenting several gifts to the bride and groom. Traditionally, there is a wedding gift, an attendants' gift, a shower gift... it can seem overwhelming. Let them know that you consider their participation to be their wedding gift to you. If more than one shower is proposed, ask the host to think about themes that don't require a cash outlay for a gift, such as a recipe shower. Events like that are a welcome change of pace and encourage attendants to be extra creative and thoughtful when putting together gifts.

6. {Wedding To-Do's}

Your team will be asked to assist you whenever possible and be attentive to guests at the reception. They will do their utmost to help you carry out your wedding plans, but that doesn't mean they need to cater to your every whim. Be respectful of their time and resources. Be clear about your expectations and whether you have particular assignments in mind. Set up "communication central" and be sure that all your attendants can access it. While keeping everyone in the loop is critical, bombarding them with daily posts is excessive.

7. {Bachelorette!}

If you're dreaming of a bachelorette weekend in Las Vegas, well, that's a group decision too. It's a modern myth that the attendants must host a shower or a bachelor or bachelorette party for the bride and/or groom. Given their financial commitments, no bridesmaid or usher should be forced to shell out for a party that is beyond their budget.

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