

SEATING ASSIGNMENTS OR IS IT TABLE ASSIGNMENTS OR BOTH?

Does the idea of arranging the seating of your guests at your reception make you cringe? *It doesn't have to be that way.*

First things, first. If you are confused about the difference between seating assignments and table assignments, here's the difference. If you want to actually assign where every guest is going to sit at each table, this is called "seating assignments." You would have a place card at each place setting on the guest tables to let each guest know where to sit at the table. You would also need escort cards or some other way of letting guests know which table they are to be seated. If you are just going to assign guests to



a particular table but not indicate which seat to take at their table, then this is called "table assignments." For this choice, you would just need escort cards or some other way to let guests know which table they are to be seated. Side note: IMHO, it is more of a headache to do seating assignments as you have to figure out if John can sit next to Jane without generating gossip or if Uncle Bob can stand sitting next to your best friend's cousin's mother.

At any rate, if you are planning an elegant sit-down meal for the reception, you really should have table assignments for ease and to generate good conversation among your guests who have similar interests.

Assigning seats and/or tables, however, can be an organizing nightmare and cause a lot of stress. The reason being, the table assignments usually cannot be made until one or two weeks (sometimes days) before the wedding. Why? Because your RSVP date on your wedding invitation is usually two weeks before the wedding day. Also, guests who respond late or say they're coming, then call a few days before the wedding to say they can't come after all (after you have spent hours arranging the table assignments.) This could mean rearranging some of the tables at the last minute. **AGHHH!**

How do you avoid this? Simple. Don't have assigned seats or tables. Have buffet style or food stations instead and let guests sit where they choose. However, if you really have your heart set on a formal sit-down meal using seating and/or table assignments (my personal preference), then you'll need to allow enough time the last week before the wedding to make the seating and/or table assignments, including possibly having to make last minute changes. The key here is to be flexible.

THERE'S HOPE & HELP!

The next key is great software. *Enter stage right* - [SeatingArrangement](http://www.seatingarrangement.com/) (<http://www.seatingarrangement.com/>)

What can Seating Arrangement do for you?

- Design the floor plan
- Manage the guest list
- Assign seating
- Generate reports
- And it's TOTALLY FREE! Yes, folks that's right - TOTALLY FREE and TOTALLY FAB!

NOW, HOW TO MAKE IT EVEN EASIER? -

So you have your list and you have your software. To make this as easy as possible, we have developed seating tips for you to follow to make your seating assignments go as smoothly as possible. The most preferred seating is to have eight to ten guests at each table. This, however, depends upon your table size and space available.

ETIQUETTELY SPEAKING -

If you decide to have a head table, the wedding party would sit as follows: the bride sits to the right of the groom; the Best Man sits to the right of the bride; the Maid or Matron of Honor sits to the left of the groom. As much as possible, the other positions alternate between men and women. You may also wish for each attendant's spouse to sit with him or her. Today, however, most couples have done away with a head table and just have a **Sweetheart Table**. This way, their wedding party can sit with their spouses or significant others.

At the bride's parents' (or host) table, the guests should include both sets of parents (if not divorced), grandparents, the officiant and his/her spouse. For the most formal of weddings, if you decide to do place cards to actually pre-assign each seat at the tables, then the parents' table should be arranged in the following manner:

- Groom's father is on bride's mother's right
- Groom's mother is on bride's father's right
- Officiant sits on bride's mother's left
- The bride's mother determines other places at the table.

*** **Never** seat stepparents at the same table. For example, the bride's parents are divorced and remarried. Since the bride's mother is considered the hostess, her table will be the "official" parents table. Therefore, the bride's father and his wife would sit at another table. The officiant and spouse should sit at the "official" parents' table.

The other tables and seating assignments can be arranged however you would like using the following suggestions for grouping guests together:

WHERE TO START -

- Divide your list into groups. Separate into family, close friends, co-workers, etc. Design a floor plan of the reception site including total number of tables and how many guests will sit at each table.
- If you are going to have a dance floor, the best place is directly in front of the DJ in the center of the room or in the center of the room flush against the stage area. Tables can then be placed on both sides and/or in front of the dance floor - never behind the DJ or BAND.

ESTABLISH GOOD CONVERSATION -

- When assigning tables, if there is a group you have put together that is larger than one table can seat but too small for two tables, consider dividing the group in half and seat at tables that are next to each other. You can fill in the extra spaces with people that don't really fit into any particular group.
- If you have a lot of unmatched guests, place guests together whom you think would be compatible. Think of ages, interests and/or marital status when you are assigning tables to this particular group. For example, a widowed friend would probably not appreciate sitting next to four newlyweds.
- If after assigning all the tables and there are empty seats, divide the empty spaces among several different tables. It looks better to have two tables of eight rather than a table of ten and a table of six.

BE AWARE -

- Be sensitive and seat elderly and/or disabled guests away from the music or speakers, especially if it will be hard for them to get up and move around during the reception.