

If the dinner be very grand and formal, the guest well known, and there is little time for pre-arrangement, the honored person's name is engraved on the card of invitation, and sent out eight or ten days in advance. The replies should be immediate so that vacancies may be filled. If there is the slightest doubt about being able to be present, the invitation must be declined. If it be accepted, and an insurmountable obstacle comes in between the guest and the dinner, instant explanations must be made, as an empty chair at a feast is a depressing object, and usually leaves some lady without an escort, or some gentleman alone.

Invitations to a dinner are given in the name of both host and hostess. If it be an engraved card or note, the name of host and hostess occupies one line, extending across the card; the request follows, in smaller script, with the name of the invited person or persons written across in a blank space arranged by the engraver. Below this are the date and hour of the dinner.

Until very recently, the initials R. S. V. P. (*Répondez, s'il vous plaît*) have been engraved upon all formal cards, but they are less and less frequently seen. To thus ask, or even remind, a lady or gentleman that an invitation should be answered, is a faint reproach upon their breeding.

The only place where R. S. V. P. may be written with strict etiquette and propriety, is to an informal note which the receiver might otherwise place among the unconsidered trifles of social life, but which, for some adequate reason, the sender desires to have answered.

The word "company" is used in an invitation to dinner, but "presence" is preferred in a card that invites a guest to a wedding. The day of the week is written in letters, but the day of the month may be in numerals if preferred.