

When you're told that you're an usher here are some pointers to remember

Being an usher in a friend's wedding is an experience that's an honor and usually a lot of fun, too.

But, according to *Bride's* magazine, some ushers do have one complaint: The bride and groom never tell them exactly what they'd like them to do. So they flounder, feel-

ing that they're somehow falling down on the job.

If you're getting married soon, you can smooth the way for your ushers by making clear plans now:

- Make arrangements for wedding formalwear as soon as possible — to avoid wrong sizes and forgotten ac-

cessories. Ushers who live in the area can easily drop by your selected formalwear shop for their fittings. Out-of-town ushers can be measured at a formalwear shop in their respective cities and then send you the measurements.

Ask one reliable resident usher to

be in charge of reminding the other attendants to get measured and to pick up the out-of-town ushers' tuxedos before the wedding.

- Arrange for accommodations for out-of-towners. Perhaps a resident usher could offer his home to groomsmen who are coming from far away? Your ushers might also help reserve rooms for out-of-town wedding guests, either in homes or hotels.

- Explain when and where the rehearsal dinner, as well as pre-wedding parties, and the ceremony itself will take place. Set the attendants' parties and other late-night celebrations for the weekend before the ceremony — to prevent morning-after hangovers and bloodshot eyes at the altar.

And save the night before your wedding for an early-evening rehearsal dinner — to ensure that out-of-town attendants, who may arrive only one day before the ceremony, will be

there.

- Your best man will be responsible for holding the bride's wedding ring. Recommend that he keep the ring in its box — not loose in his pocket (where it may get temporarily lost) — or on his finger (which might swell!).

- Tell your attendants exactly what you want them to do at the wedding: When and where they should dress; when and where they should greet guests; any special seating arrangements; how they can help round up stragglers for the wedding photographer.

- Ushers act as extensions of the host of the wedding. They should keep an eye on the guests — especially those who are elderly. They might drive or direct guests to the reception, get them drinks and food, help guests who have overimbibed, or serve as troubleshooters to quietly resolve a problem.

What's behind the traditions?

It happens in every wedding: The bride and groom exchange rings. They share cake. The bride throws her bouquet.

But do you know how these customs began? *THE BRIDE: A celebration* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), a book by Barbara Tober, Editor-in-Chief of *Bride's* magazine, reveals their sometimes surprising origins.

The bride throws her bouquet so an unmarried friend can "catch" some luck in romance, goes the modern explanation. But the custom actually started as a form of self-defence.

In times past, belief in the mystical value of a bride's adornments prompted friends and strangers alike to try to grab a piece of her outfit. Eventually, some clever bride found that by flinging her flowers away from

herself, the crowd would have something to fight over — and she would escape intact!

The wedding party originally served the serious purpose of protecting the bride and groom from the curses of evil-wishers. They dressed in clothes exactly like those of the bride and groom, so the identity of the happy couple was kept secret on the way to the church and until they were safely married.

The first piece of wedding cake is cut and eaten by the bride and groom as a carryover from the time when the sharing of food or wine often was the marriage. Teutons, for example, were considered wed after drinking mead together for 30 days. (The word *bridal* comes from *bride-ale*.)

The aisle runner protected the bride from evil spirits who, it was thought, lived below the ground.

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