

OCEAN PARK FLOWERS

Announcing Your Engagement

Step 1. Family First

Traditional engagement etiquette suggests that the bride's parents should be the first to be informed of an engagement. If at all possible, tell them in person ... if only to facilitate all the hugging, kissing, handshaking and fussing that is sure to ensue. If, however, the Bride's parents live too far away, a phone call (not on a cell) is the next-best option. If her parents are divorced, Mom and Dad can be told separately; but do tell the second parent immediately after the first.

Next, tell the Groom's parents ... following the same protocols described above.

Again, tradition suggests that the mother of the Groom invite the Bride's parents to get together for dinner or drinks. If they are already well-acquainted this really isn't necessary, but why pass up another opportunity to celebrate! If your families live a considerable distance apart this can be difficult, and a congratulatory email or phone call is certainly acceptable. The objective is really just to get the two families together around the spirit of the occasion.

IMPORTANT: If you have children from a previous marriage, you should break the engagement news to them before anyone else, even before you tell your parents. Know that they will need time to get used to the idea that their family situation is going to change. Also, it's important to tell an ex-spouses of your upcoming nuptials, if only so he or she can help the kids adjust to the transition.

Step 2. Tell Your Friends and Colleagues

Naturally you may have a kind of descending priority of whom you would like to share the news with next. Understand that word will spread very quickly so time is of the essence you want anyone to hear it directly from you before they hear it through the grapevine. If the news does get out ahead of you, don't worry or be upset. Know that it is excitement and enthusiasm that is spreading the word. And that is something to feel good about.

Spreading the news to co-workers can be done very efficiently, if only somewhat impersonally, by a group email. Communicating your engagement in this fashion also means that everyone in your organization will learn of it at the same time ... so no one can feel like they were or told late or "left out".

Step 3. Time To Tell The World

You might also want to run an announcement of your engagement in a local newspaper. Papers typically publish these two to three months before the wedding, but an announcement can almost always be placed up to a year in advance of the big day. Each paper has its own policy and requirements, so call yours and ask these questions:

- Is there a standard form to fill out or must I write my own announcement?
- Can they publish a photo?
 - what format (ie. JPG, PDF, black-and-white, color, etc.)
- Is there a charge for running the announcement?

Typically it is the bride's parents who issue an Engagement Announcement. Here are some examples of proper wording:

The Traditional Way

"Mr. and Mrs. Martin Harris of Surrey, BC, announce the engagement of their daughter, Jennifer Elizabeth Brown, to Marshall James Lawrence, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Lawrence of Langley, BC. A July wedding is being planned."

If the Bride's Parents Are Divorced and Both Are Announcing

"Ms. Terri Jensen of Delta, BC and Mr. Martin Harris of Surrey, BC, announce the engagement of their daughter, Jennifer Elizabeth Brown, to Marshall James Lawrence, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Lawrence of Langley, BC. A July wedding is being planned."

If the Bride's Parents Are Divorced and One of Them Is Announcing

"Ms. Terri Jensen of Delta, BC, announces the engagement of her daughter, Jennifer Elizabeth Brown, to Marshall James Lawrence, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Lawrence of Langley, BC. A July wedding is being planned. Miss Jensen is also the daughter of Mr. Martin Harris of Surrey, BC." (Note: The parent who raised you should be the one to issue the announcement.)

If the Groom's Parents Are Divorced

"Mr. and Mrs. Martin Harris of Surrey, BC, announce the engagement of their daughter, Jennifer Elizabeth Brown, to Marshall James Lawrence, son of Ms. Evelyn Langer of Langley and Mr. David Lawrence of South Surrey, BC. A July wedding is being planned."

Step 4. Celebrate The News!

In days past, engagement parties were formal events with as many guests as the wedding itself. Today, they are optional, and often include only the immediate family, the bridal party and very close friends.

An engagement party is definitely something to have fun with ... so let it take any form you desire: a wine-and-cheese night, tapas bar, buffet dinner, or an outdoor barbecue. Whatever style of event you choose, here are a few things to consider:

- Who will host? Anyone can throw an engagement celebration so maybe consider an out-of-box option. Heck, maybe it's something you and your fiancé organize and host. After all, a great many things are going to be done for the two of you between now and your wedding day ... maybe this is an opportunity to pay some forward?
- Who is invited? This is typically a more intimate gathering so the guest list could be limited to family members, the bridal party and close friends. Just remember: Everyone who is invited to the engagement party should also be invited to the wedding (but not the other way round!).
- Gifts? We recommend specifically advising those you invite that "the pleasure of your company is the only gift we are hoping for as we celebrate our engagement". Some may still insist on bringing a gift, and in such instances be gracious and appreciative (as always), thank them most sincerely and then discretely place the gift out-of-sight of your other guests (so as not to make anyone else feel uncomfortable for having heeded your charming request to abstain from gift-giving). Wait until after the party to open the gift and, of course, immediately post a "thank you" card.

Step 5. Register

Traditional etiquette is to prepare your wedding registry before the formal engagement announcement, or immediately thereafter. Be sure it includes smaller-ticket items, like salt-n-pepper mills, cloth napkins, picture frames, and candles.

Step 6. The Question of Money

Ah yes, the money ... always a delicate subject. The best way to deal with money questions is directly. Sensitively, but directly. Will your families/parents be helping with expenses related to the Wedding? You'll want to determine who will be paying for what. And how much each is willing to contribute. Always be respectful and profoundly appreciative for whatever anyone is willing to contribute.

When it's time to discuss money matters with your families, keep these tips in mind:

- Approach each family or individual separately so no-one is made to feel self-conscious or that they are being put on-the-spot.
- Be prepared. Have reasonable estimates of costs established so things can be discussed realistically.
- Be patient. Give everyone plenty of time to ask questions and allow them to post-pone a firm decision. Do nothing that will create tension or anxiety for those closest to you.
- Be discreet. Keep the details of who is contributing what to yourselves. This is not any kind of competition and financial matters should always be held in strictest confidence.