

So...You're the Best Man

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Congratulations!! You have been chosen to be the best man for a wedding. You have received an awesome compliment but, at the same time, an incredible responsibility. I have been a part of many, many weddings. It becomes readily apparent when a best man knows of the obligations bestowed upon him by his appointment as best man and those who do not. In fact, next to the bride, your wedding tasks are superseded only by the bride herself.

So that you are not left to guessing what you should do, I have briefly outlined and explained the duties of the best man below. The tasks are:

- **Clothing coordinator** - you should make sure that all rented clothing has been ordered. Most likely you will be responsible for picking up and returning the clothing to the shop for all of the male wedding party members. Make sure too that all accessories (i.e., ties, gloves, ascots, cufflinks, etc.) are received and how to use them so you can assist others.
- **Usher Coordination** - make sure you understand the duties and responsibilities of the ushers. You should be able to help them remember who to seat where and when.
- **Bachelor party** - traditionally the best man has coordinated this event. Dating back to Roman times, the party has been seen as the final fling of a man before he is "tied down" to one woman. Be cautious here. While the event should be memorable, you do not want the bride to despise you for the rest of your life because of a silly party. If you envision a raucous evening of drinking, plan the event a week in advance of the ceremony. You do not want the groom to be hung over on the special day. Rent a limousine or have a designated driver. The trend is moving away from these types of parties and towards entire affairs built around sporting themes. Use your imagination and be safe!
- **Gift giver** - collect money from the ushers and groomsmen to buy a gift from you all. Make sure to allow time for engraving or monogramming if necessitated by the gift. Usually you can make the presentation with all the men at hand prior to the ceremony. Think of what you will say in advance. Make the occasion memorable for your relationship with the groom is soon likely to change. Additionally, you will be a great hit if you personally have roses or champagne delivered to the couple's hotel room or cruise line cabin.
- **Personal assistant** - you are basically the valet or servant of the groom. You will help him in arranging the honeymoon, packing for the trip, making sure he has the wedding license and a passport if necessary, getting the luggage to the airport and checking it in, giving him the claim checks, etc. Whew!
- **Time keeper** - you should make sure the groom is always on time. Assist him in getting dressed, to the ceremony location, leaving the reception (with the bride), and to the dock or airport with time to spare.
- **Money keeper** - it is usually the responsibility of the best man to see that the officiant is paid. However, the fee is most often given to the best man by the groom. Make sure you are aware of the arrangement in advance of the wedding ceremony. Wedding officiants often do not want to embarrass anyone by having to ask for the fee.
- **Transportation guru** - you may need to drive the groom to the ceremony location. You may be asked to drive the couple from the ceremony to the reception if chauffeured limousines are not used. Airport runs are not uncommon either. If they are using their own "get-away car" the best man will often see that the vehicle is appropriately decorated. Use precautions so that paint is not damaged or that embarrassing sayings or phrases are not used.

- **Speechmaker** - you will toast the new couple at the reception. This responsibility takes time and preparation and for many is a gut wrenching experience (watch for upcoming issues of *Weddings Magazine* for Toasting Tips). Remember this: You do not have to be an accomplished orator to make a successful wedding toast.
- **Master of ceremonies** - be prepared to introduce the wedding party at the reception and to announce the dances that traditionally accompany the reception. Most often these duties are left to the bandleader or disc jockey. Find out about this task in advance.
- **Dancer** - you will usually have the fourth dance with the bride. She will dance with the groom, her father, her father-in-law, and then you. If you are blessed with two left feet you may want to find out what kind of dance is expected and take a lesson or two.

As you can see, there is a great deal more to being a best man than just holding the bride's ring during the ceremony. You are essentially the assistant or valet of the groom for a period of time. Take a few moments to map out and organize your responsibilities. You cannot be *overly* prepared to be a best man.

The most important piece of advice I can give you is summed up in one word: ASK!! Take the time to sit down with the bride and groom and ask them what they are expecting of you. By doing this you are leaving nothing to risk and will surely have a couple who appreciates your efforts and sincerity. Let them know of the duties that have been outlined here but allow them the flexibility to make additions or deletions. With all of this said, take pride and revel in the fact that you have been chosen to perform these duties. Take the responsibilities seriously. You might want to prepare checklists, leave yourself voice mail or e-mail reminders, as the wedding nears ask again if there is anything further you need to do. If you perform your services well the wedding will run smoother, the bride and groom will be less anxious, and you will have been the *greatest* best man.