

A host who invites another person at the last moment, moreover, because one of his guests has delayed replying, is often met with a refusal*.

In countries where polygamy is practised, it is customary for only one wife to be invited to official meals and receptions.

It is correct to answer an invitation by letter or correspondence card; however, if the invitation bears the telephone number of the host, it is permissible to reply by telephone. In some countries, the reply to an invitation is addressed only to the hostess. Invitations should include an indication as to dress.

Cards are always handwritten; this is something that is often forgotten. Envelopes should be addressed in the same way.

Invitation cards with the coat of arms of Canada engraved in gold are reserved for the exclusive use of ambassadors and high commissioners. All other officers use cards with the coat of arms engraved in black or in red.

An invitation should always indicate:

- the title and name of the host and hostess (or one of them);
- the type of social function;
- the date and time;
- the address;
- dress;

and should contain one of the following notations:

- (i) Reminder: when a telephoned invitation has been accepted;
- (ii) Regrets only: unnecessary to reply if accepting;
- (iii) RSVP: a reply is required.

The "occasion" of the reception or meal may be indicated, if appropriate. It is customary in some countries to send the guest list with the "reminder" card.

4 Menus and dietary restrictions

Dietary customs vary with each country, and it is advisable to be acquainted with them before entertaining at home. Certain dishes are taboo: for example, one does not serve shellfish or seafood to Jews, pork to Jews or Moslems, or beef to Hindus. It is not unlikely, moreover, that there will be guests with different dietary customs present at the same time. A buffet dinner presents no difficulty, given the variety of dishes, but in the case of a more formal type of meal the situation is more delicate. To provide against any contingency, it is important to be

* A guest may be prevented at the last minute from attending an official dinner. In this event, the head of mission may ask an officer and his spouse or either one of them to replace the person.