

many dignitaries since they must be given special attention and it is not possible to look after one and all at the same time.

As a rule, a diplomatic agent does not invite to his/her receptions the head of a mission other than his/her own unless he/she knows another ambassador very well and thinks the event will give him/her pleasure. The etiquette of international protocol requires that an invitation be received at least two weeks in advance. Invitations are sent by mail unless the two week deadline cannot be observed, in which case they are delivered by messenger. An invitation may occasionally be extended first by telephone; if it is accepted, a written invitation is sent as a reminder.

The person who receives an invitation must reply immediately, either accepting, or declining if unable to attend. If one is uncertain about being able to attend, it is preferable to decline the invitation rather than put off replying until the last minute. When a reply is unduly delayed, the host/hostess is placed in the embarrassing position of being unable to decide on the preparation of the meal or the arrangement of the table and is prevented from taking advantage of the situation to invite someone else. Anyone who delays replying until the host/hostess has to ask for it, and particularly, anyone who fails to reply, is guilty of a serious impropriety.

A host/hostess who invites another person at the last moment, moreover, because one of his/her guests has delayed replying, is often met with a refusal⁵.

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/hostess, 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;

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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 spouse or either one of them to replace the person.