

The Art of the Invitation

Written by L.A. Plume

Tuesday, 10 March 2015 10:03 - Last Updated Wednesday, 11 March 2015 07:15



Dear L. A. Plume,

How and when is it acceptable to ask a host if you may bring a guest with you to a party? My mother was in town and when I asked if I might bring her to a brunch, I was told no. My mother couldn't understand not being included as an out of town guest.

Peeved

Dear Peeved,

People invite who they want to have to a party. There might be restrictions such as the size of the house or space, the number of chairs that will fit around the table, the number of plates and forks available, and oh my goodness – the budget for the party. The only way you can “ask” to bring someone to a party is to tell the host that so-and-so is in town and you’re sorry that you won’t be able to attend because you have a guest; then the host, if he so desires, may say, “Of course you may bring old Aunt Olive! I love her!” And if you’ve said you can’t attend because you have old Aunt Olive, and you are not invited to bring her, then you have absented yourself from the guest list also.

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Depending on the nature of the party, asking to bring an extra guest puts the host in an awkward position and that is simply not acceptable. One of the very few possible exceptions to this would be if it is an outdoor party and everyone is bringing the food and drinks and helping to clean up afterwards. Few people, especially those who don't entertain, take into consideration all that goes into hosting a party, the expense of it aside, and have an "Oh, what's one or two more?" attitude. Entertaining is a fine art and it isn't reasonable to be cavalier about the plans the host has made.

L. A. Plume

Dearest Ms. Plume,

I host an annual party which is held to repay all of my dear friends who have entertained me throughout the course of the year. As a single woman, I find it difficult to entertain on a frequent basis so this is my one soiree; and I must admit, it does have some cache as I go all out to make it compensate for all the wonderful invitations I have received. I take note of who has entertained me, new friends whom I might like to know better, and save my money so that I can throw the best party possible with my resources. But to my horror, friends of friends will actually stop me in the grocery store, or at another party, and inquire as to how they may be invited to my soiree! How do I graciously tell them that their very audacity will probably keep them forever off the guest list?

Astounded

Dearest Astounded,

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Let's get real here, you could probably be persuaded to invite a stranger or two, I suspect. What if you dropped the hint that a nice new shiny BMW in the driveway might, possibly, help them find a way onto the list? I'm not suggesting that you have to invite them if you get the BMW; it is just a possible way for them to get on your A list another year. Oh for heaven's sake, did I forget my manners and make an audacious suggestion? Let me think. Was it any more audacious than asking to be invited to your party? I understand that I am a tad stuffy and perhaps a bit old fashioned when it comes to etiquette, but I will refer you to my favorite reference book, *Etiquette : The Blue Book of Social Usage*

by Emily Post. On the subject of "Asking For An Invitation" Ms. Post answers, "One may never ask for an invitation for oneself anywhere!"

Need I say more?

L. A. Plume