

## The Above & Beyond Series: Customer Service Articles

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### R.S.V.P. – To Respond or Not to Respond?

R.S.V.P. stands for a French phrase, “repondez, s’il vous plaît,” which means “please reply.” The person sending the invitation would like you to tell him or her whether you accept or decline the invitation. That is, will you be coming to the event or not? Etiquette rules followed in most Western cultures require that if you receive a formal, written invitation, you should reply promptly, perhaps that same day. Same applies to those who receive invitations by e-mail. If a response is requested, e-mail or phone your reply as soon as possible. For hosts who are planning a dinner party or a reception, this is important from a practical point of view, because they need to know how many people to count on and how much food and drink to buy. More important, though, is the simple courtesy of responding to someone who was nice enough to invite you, even if it is to say that you regret that you will not be able to attend.

Now what if the invitation says “Regrets Only”? That means that the host will count on your being there unless you tell him or her otherwise.

Etiquette ritual that it is, the R.S.V.P. is still used for social, professional, and business occasions. Some people even use the “R.S.V.P.” as a verb, as in “Have you R.S.V.P.ed to that invitation?”

An R.S.V.P. really is the only organized, efficient way to plan events, seminars, meetings or parties. Any business-related event that involves food or beverages must provide the catering departments with a final head count days or hours prior to the event.

Now for some easy-to-remember tips on the R.S.V.P.:

- If you plan to attend a professional event, reserve a space by phone or mail. If you cannot attend, you cancel the reservation.
- If, at the last minute, you cannot attend and cannot reach the office, there’s a solution. Call the location of the event and leave a message for the appropriate person that you will not attend.
- There are certainly times when a response or R.S.V.P. is not necessary and it is not a breach of etiquette: mass-mail invitations addressed to “occupant,” invitations that ask for “Regrets Only” (and you plan to attend) and invitations that simply don’t ask for an R.S.V.P.

How we behave in work-related settings is a statement about who we are. We are building rapport and reputation when we R.S.V.P. Our message is: I am considerate.

References: “The RSVP Problem: Mingling in the Millennium” by Susan RoAne