

Correspondence

Your Stationery Wardrobe

When most people hear the word “wardrobe,” they envision closets filled with clothes, shoes, purses, belts and other apparel. Ladies also know, however, that there is another type of wardrobe that is necessary for living a gracious life. It is called a “stationery wardrobe.”

This paper-based wardrobe consists of various pieces of stationery that further reflect your personal style and image when communicating with others. Like a wardrobe of apparel, this wardrobe consists of different pieces ranging from the most formal to casual, with each having a purpose.

Papers in your wardrobe include various sizes and types, with one distinct look customized for you. Your perfect wardrobe will include letter sheets, half sheets, note cards, fold over cards, informals, calling cards and matching envelopes.

And, it all begins with the paper and design. Review the following in determining your stationery wardrobe style. Base it on your lifestyle, so you won't find yourself with too much of one thing and not enough of another.

Getting Started

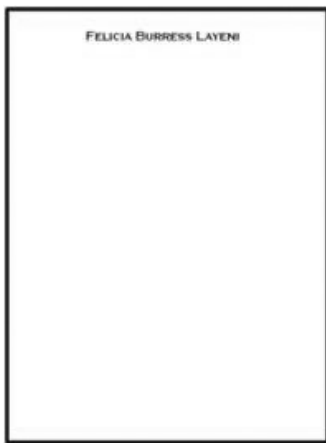
Consider ordering personalized stationery that reflects your personality. Your correspondence is a reflection of you, so try to invest in the highest quality paper you can find, preferably papers made from 100 percent cotton fiber. Some brands I prefer are Dempsey & Carroll, Crane & Company and William Arthur. Vera Wang also has a line of high-quality stationery now.

The most elegant colors are white or cream, though soft shades of pink or green are fine for your social life. If your stationery wardrobe is work-related, stick to the basic white or cream.

Members of your wardrobe



Letter sheets are the most formal. I love them for their elegance and simplicity. They come as one-sheeters or folded sheets, with your name or monogram at the top of the first page. The folded sheets are my favorite! They are folded from the left and open like a small, four-page booklet. When using the one-sheeter, never write on the back of the page. When using the folded sheets, write on the *first* and *third* pages. The second and fourth pages are left blank, since they are considered “back” pages. If you need more room after writing on the third page of a folded sheet, you can use the second page.



- Half sheets are exactly what they sound like: half the size of formal letter paper. This one-sheeter is designed the same as full letter sheet, but you may also add a colored border matching the ink with which you’ve printed your name. As with the full letter sheets, only the front side is written on. If you need more space, use an undesigned second sheet.



- Note cards and fold over cards are pretty versatile. They can be used for general correspondence, thank you notes and formal invitations. The flat note cards are of cardstock and are sometimes called panel cards. The fold over cards may be of cardstock or heavyweight paper. ***Fold over cards are reserved for women only***; and are not to be used by men. You are to write your message inside the card, below the fold.

- Informals, believe it or not, are formal. They look a lot like fold over cards, but are much smaller. You can use these to send invitations and brief messages. For this card, you will use your formal social name.



- Correspondence cards will be the most used in your stationery wardrobe. Less formal than a note card, these cards are the work horses of your stationery wardrobe. You can use them to send almost any type of correspondence — from short notes, thank-yous, to informal invitations. They are made of heavy card stock and may be trimmed in a color that matches the ink with which your name or monogram is printed. Only use the front of this card, and send it in its matching envelope.
- Calling cards are a great addition to your stationery wardrobe. In social settings, you should use them instead of a business card. At one time, a calling card was considered proper if it included your address. Today, for safety reasons, you may use whichever contact information you believe is safest for you, including your email address or cell phone number. You may also choose to have nothing on your card but your name only, since calling cards are also used as gift enclosures.
- Sticklers of etiquette say that a married woman’s calling card is to feature only her husband’s name preceded by her “Mrs.” title. As members of the 21st century, we know this is not how we address each other. It is fine to use your name only.
- If you are in a sorority or social organization, you can also present calling cards if you wish. They can include your chapter’s name, city and contact information. If you are an officer, you may want to use your title, although you will have to replace your cards immediately upon the end of your term. Before doing this, however, check with your organization to see if there is a standard policy or template regarding such cards.

- Two things you should keep in mind with sorority- or club-focused calling cards is that these are to be given only to other members.

Envelopes

- You should have matching envelopes for everything in your stationery wardrobe, except for calling cards. These envelopes should match your paper in color, stock and design.
- When sending **social** correspondence, your mailing address should be printed on the **back flap**, never on the front. It is fine to print your name, along with your address, but the preferred method is address only.
- Only print your address on the front of an envelope when using a #10 envelope or larger for business purposes.
- Ladies who insist on the full, traditional stationery wardrobe also invest in what is called house stationery. These pieces are designed the same as other social stationery, except only the address (with no name or monogram) is printed on the paper. It is to be used by guests who want to send letters to others while visiting. In this day and age, I don't consider this worth purchasing at all. However, I did want to mention it for those who believe "more" is "more!"

Once you have selected your paper and matching envelopes, it's time to design your stationery. Keep the design simple and classic. If your budget can accommodate it, consider engraving or fine embossing. This is the finest method of printing. Engraving brings a three dimensional feel to your card by raising the text above the paper. Embossing is the same, only the ink is invisible, leaving the letters of your name as a deep impression on the page. You will be able to run your fingers over the copy and feel the letters. If you like the look of engraving, but want a more affordable option, thermography is a great option. It also raises the image from the page, but the print will not be as fine as with engraving.

There are a couple of ways to tell the difference between an engraved card and one created by thermography. The ink will be shinier on a thermographically created card. With an engraved card, if you turn the card over, you will see and feel indentations on the back from where the press actually forced the ink onto the paper. On the front of the engraved card, you'll actually see what's called "bruising" around the copy. This smoothness around the letters comes from the engraving pushing down on the paper and smoothing it out the way an iron presses clothes. I shared all of that with you, so you'll know what your "special" friends will look for when receiving this type of card from you. You know which friends I'm talking about! They're the ones who flip your china over to see the back stamp! They know what to look for to determine whether your stationery is engraved or not.

When designing your cards, exercise restraint. You'll have so many options, embellishments and colors to choose from. Retailers don't focus on what is correct; they just want to sell. So, if you choose a busy design, they will not care. Keep yours simple. Use your name or a monogram printed in classic colors like black or navy. Green is also popular and classic. You can have the borders lined in a matching color and even add an embellishment (not too much) if you wish. ***Make sure the color of your paper and ink matches all across your wardrobe.*** You can switch up your design, however. For instance, you can use a monogram for your fold over cards and have your full name printed on another piece.

Monograms

*W*hen having a monogram engraved or embossed, remember the following rules:

- Middle names are not used on stationery or monograms for married ladies. Your monogram is always your first, maiden and married name.
- Unmarried ladies may use the initial of their middle name as the third letter.

- Monograms may consist of three letters of the same size, or three letters with the center letter being the largest.
- If you choose to have all three letters the same size, then print your initials in the order of your name as it is spelled out. For instance, Felicia Burress Layeni will be FBL.



- If your monogram features a large and prominent second letter flanked by smaller letters to the left and right, that large second letter will always be the initial of your married name. The first letter will be your first name and the third will be the initial of your maiden name. Since my maiden name is Burress, my monogram in this format will be FLB

The Art of Writing a “Thank You” Letter

Life is a gift in itself! We are here for each other, and we show it through regular acts of kindness, consideration and gifting. As a result, there are many times when you will say, “thank you.” Whether someone presents you a gift as a colleague hosts a shower for you, or even if it’s the case of someone just doing a kind deed for you, you will always want to show appreciation.

Enter the “thank you” letter! This is the official, recordable method for showing appreciation for all acts of kindness and generosity. When preparing your letter, I’m sure you will want to do so in a way that shows that you care enough to take the time to express your appreciation in a respectful, thoughtful way.

Writing a suitable thank-you letter now will not only help you show gratitude to those you are grateful for today, it will later help you stand out among peers when interviewing for careers, thanking colleagues for the extra help, even for getting in one last word with potential clients. The reasons for thanks will change. But the rules are the same.