

STATIONERY

Naming Rights

A MONOGRAM DESIGNED WITH THE BRIDE AND GROOM'S INITIALS IS A POWERFUL AND ELEGANT SYMBOL OF THE UNION AND BECOMES THEIR PERSONAL MARK FOREVER.



A DESIGN FROM THE VICTORIAN CRYSTAL PALACE EXHIBITION OF 1851 SHOWS A DOUBLE 'S' MONOGRAM AND CROWN ATOP A ROYAL SCEPTRE.

“EARLIER GENERATIONS OF WOMEN WORKED FOR YEARS, ALMOST FROM THE TIME A DAUGHTER WAS BORN, TO PREPARE THE LINEN AGAINST HER WEDDING DAY.”
Vogue’s Book of Etiquette, Millicent Fenwick 1948.

Monograms are a stylish motif, a piece of design that no-one else will have. There is a growing trend to develop monograms for the wedding and using it in everyday life. The wedding stationery is the launch of the symbol, there are many beautiful and unique options for couples wanting to have this exclusive design. A monogram is applied to all items of stationery and adds a sense of prestige and tradition.

Royalty has always developed monograms to celebrate marriages, intertwining the bride and grooms initials right to the present day. Over the last couple of hundred years well-to-do families have adopted the monogram as a form of decoration, the more elaborate the monogram, the more prominent the family. Eventually monograms filtered into the everyday life of ordinary people and young girls were encouraged to apply their monogram to the many pieces of linen that made up their trousseau. Each item was carefully embroidered using a technique known as white-work and then stored away until she married.

Now designers like Ralph Lauren use a monogram as a form of branding embroidered on clothing.

Working out the best graphic look for the couple is a pleasant decision process, each monogram has a personality and projects an image. Some are full of flourish and fun, others are structured and sophisticated. A couple should be careful to choose a style that reflects their personality, the tone of the wedding and their taste—a monogram is forever.

The names to be used will impact on the design. Will the bride change her name when she is married? If she is already well known professionally a bride may choose to retain her maiden name after her marriage. If this is the case, the monogram may include two initials, that of her first name and that of her husband’s first name, or four initials, her first and surname, and his first and surname.

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A COMPLEX AND INTRIGUING MONOGRAM INCORPORATING THE LETTERS 'F' AND 'E' TOGETHER WITH AN AMPERSAND (&). THE USE OF DIFFERENT COLOURS FOR EACH LETTER WOULD HELP TO DISTINGUISH THEM FROM ONE ANOTHER.



AS ALL LETTERS ARE PRESENTED IN THE SAME SIZE, IT WOULD BE ASSUMED THAT THIS IS THE MONOGRAM OF ONE PERSON WITH THE INITIALS OF THEIR FIRST, MIDDLE AND LAST NAMES BEING READ IN THAT ORDER.

There are no rules; if the couple really wants to go for it, they can incorporate their middle name initials; but six letters in a monogram runs the risk of looking complicated and confusing, especially if teamed with flourishes or an image.

The couple might choose to simply use their surname initial, unadorned. The surname initial may be coupled with the bride's first name initial and the groom's first name initial, making a three letter monogram. If this is the case, the surname initial is larger and sits in the centre flanked by the bride's initial on the left and the groom's initial on the right; ladies before gentlemen.

The monogram may incorporate an image, symbol or decorative flourish. This might be something that reminds the couple of the time they first met, a symbol of a common interest or of a jointly-held aspiration. Whatever the addition, it should reflect the personality of the couple and be complementary to the style of the lettering.

Very elaborate or finely detailed monograms can be difficult to reproduce using some printing techniques. Traditionally wedding stationery was always engraved—a process whereby the image is hand engraved into a metal plate and then inked for reproduction. This beautiful style of printing results in a very finely detailed raised image but unfortunately is uncommon today due to the considerable cost and skill involved. Letterpress printing and embossing works best with bolder, simple shapes whereas digital printing can achieve a reasonably well detailed finish. A very good result is achieved with offset printing where fine detail can be reproduced with clarity and cost effectively.

The choice of colours will also affect the monogram's appearance. A complex monogram can be visually simplified with a masterful palette. When each initial is printed in a different colour individual letters are easier to recognise and distinguish. Dark colours can be used to make letters recede into the background and light colours can make letters appear foremost. Whatever the final decision, the colours should be respectful to the tone of wedding that is to be held, the taste of the couple and style of monogram.

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MONOGRAMS: TURN TO PAGE 102 TO READ OUR STORY 'M IS FOR MARIE ANTOINETTE' WHERE WE SHOW MANY WAYS TO USE A MONOGRAM. THE WEDDING OF ATHENA AND ANDREW ON PAGE 138 ALSO FEATURES A MONOGRAM ON THEIR WEDDING STATIONERY—DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR THEM.

The choice of paper stock will also affect the quality of the finished monogram. Textured papers can sometimes mask very fine detail in contrast to smooth papers that accept the printed image easily and cleanly. Of course, the style of printing you choose, together with the skill and quality of the printer can greatly affect the final printed piece so it is best to discuss every detail with the designer or printer before deciding on a final design.

With the wonders of advanced technology, it is even possible to have a monogram watermarked into paper if ordering vast numbers of sheets—a fabulous idea for a wedding gift that could be used for a lifetime together.

Due to the complex nature of some monograms, it is best to work with a designer in choosing one that is just right. However, there are many quality books available that discuss the history and usage of monograms. There are even more that provide endless examples that are copyright free and available for use. The internet and local libraries are also a good place to start for access to these invaluable resources.

Once a monogram has been personalised for a couple, it can be used forever, embossed on notecards, embroidered onto napkins, engraved into heirloom silverware, ready to be entrusted to the next generation.

Just one last thing, it is customary that a bride should not use the monogram with her married initials until after the ceremony.

AN EXAMPLE OF A CONTEMPORARY-STYLED SET OF FIRST-NAME INITIALS—NOT TECHNICALLY ACKNOWLEDGED AS A MONOGRAM BECAUSE THE LETTERS ARE NOT INTERTWINED—BUT STILL A POPULAR CHOICE FOR THE MODERN COUPLE.



AN EXAMPLE OF A THREE LETTER MONOGRAM WITH THE CENTRAL ENLARGED LETTER 'S' REPRESENTING THE COUPLE'S SHARED SURNAME, FLANKED BY THE LETTER 'G' ON EITHER SIDE—FIRST NAME INITIALS FOR BOTH THE BRIDE AND GROOM. THIS STYLE OF MONOGRAM WOULD LOOK PARTICULARLY GOOD PRINTED IN A VIBRANT, CONTEMPORARY COLOUR.

Q&A IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION PLEASE SEND US AN EMAIL AT QUESTIONS@STYLEGUIDE.COM.AU AND WE MAY PUBLISH YOUR EMAIL IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE.