

# Father of the Bride

## Speech Notes

Traditionally, the father of the bride is the first speaker – apart from a brief introduction from the best man - so your speech is a scene-setter for what's to come. The idea behind this is doubtless linked with the fact that the father of the bride was always supposed to foot the bill for the wedding - so if you're paying, you should at least be allowed to get your oar in first! Even today, fathers of brides are often advised to begin, as a 'gesture of humility', by thanking anyone else who has contributed to the cost of the wedding.

In your speech, you'll probably want to talk about your daughter as, traditionally, you hand her over from your care into that of her new partner. Fathers and daughters are always thought to have very special relationships, but try and avoid the clichés and talk realistically and affectionately about your own specific relationship: its ups and downs, the funny tales, and the silly stories.

An interesting speech delivers new information that perhaps some of the guests may not know. This could include the first encounter that you had with the groom, your first encounter with his parents and anything you particularly remember as being a valuable moment in between.

You should always try to draft your speech. Give it a test run and then once you've made the final changes, save it for the day! The flow of a speech should be smooth and each point should be brought forward in a logical order. A warm opening, a good body, and a terrific ending.

Try to begin your speech with the more serious aspect then, build the body of your speech to a humorous crescendo including some personal humour, funny jokes, quotes, and stories. Once the laughter has subsided, finish your speech with a good sincere ending.

Points you may like to include:

- Opening remarks - perhaps mention the success of the wedding so far along with any amusing incidents.
- Thank everyone for attending, perhaps making special mention of those who've come a long way.
- Stories and remarks about your daughter, watching her grow up and change. Your hopes for her, the ways in which she has foiled or surpassed your expectations etc.
- Stories and remarks about her and the groom - how he was first introduced to you (and your partner), what you thought of him, how your relationship has developed, how you feel he complements your daughter.
- Say something about the groom that has surprised you or something that you've learnt from him.

## How Long?

Approximately three to five minutes is a good length of time for a wedding speech. This gives you the opportunity to cover the formalities, a little light humour, and perhaps a fitting quote.

In addition to his own speech, it is complimentary to call upon the Mother of the Bride to say a few words in support of the union. Make sure you prepare for this and not just call her up at a moments notice!

To conclude, the Father of the Bride will offer the official toast, "To the health and happiness of the Bride and Groom"

## Humour

Humour is the highlight of any good wedding speech. Ensure that the audience will understand any jokes that are included, and that all humour is in good taste!

"Most men are surprised when they see the marriage certificate, there's no expiry date"

"Marriage is a case of give and take. You give and she takes!"

## 20 top tips for super speeches

### 1. take note

As soon as you know that you will be making a speech at the wedding get into the habit of carrying a notebook round with you so you can jot down any thoughts that could be worked in to your speech. The best ideas often appear at the most inopportune moments...

### 2. structure your speech

Don't try writing it all in one go! Break down your words into the different areas you want to cover e.g. thanks to the guests, stories about the run-up to the wedding, stories about the groom, words for the bride, winding up etc. Take the jottings from your notebook and see where they fit in to the plan.

### 3. take a copy

Anxiety about losing the text of your speech can ruin a whole wedding morning. Have three or four copies done and give them to other guests to look after. It's impossible that they will all lose theirs – and it will put your mind at rest!

### 4. make eye contact

...but not with everyone at once! Speak as if you were talking to one person, and address them directly. Of course, you want to look around the room, but always focus on one person at a time.

### 5. everyone's rooting for you!

This is a wedding, and although the scale of the occasion might seem initially daunting, this is in many ways the easiest public speaking opportunity of all. Everyone is on your side; no one wants you to do badly.

## **6. practice**

Reading your speech out again and again - preferably to other people - is essential when practicing. Listening to a recording of yourself can be useful too. Listen out for any sections where you speak too fast, or where the point you're making is unclear, and revise accordingly.

## **7. speak to both sides**

Make sure your speech is accessible to everyone present. Many people will know only half of the wedding party (if that), and they may not even know you. In-jokes and favourite anecdotes should be told so that everyone can enjoy them - so explain any unobvious references as you go.

## **8. don't rely on memory**

You may have practiced your speech so hard that you're sure you know it by heart. Keep your text handy anyway - the stress of speaking can sometimes cause people to forget their lines.

## **9. be brief**

Brevity truly is the soul of wit. Some speakers plan optional sections that can be cut if the speech isn't doing too well. At any rate, you should time your speech and stick to it - five minutes is perfectly long enough.

## **10. but they didn't laugh....**

Keep jokes and anecdotes short, so that if one doesn't work, you can swiftly move on to the next. And don't laugh at your own jokes - you'll soon know whether you've scored a hit!

## **11. get your stories straight**

Often a bride and groom may have a story in their past that lends itself to a good anecdote. But if the story is at all well known, check with the other speakers just to make sure that your material doesn't duplicate anyone else's.

## **12. language barrier**

Although to you your speech is something written, to your guests it will come across as something spoken. Make sure your language isn't too stiff or formal. Change all the 'could not's' to 'couldn't's' and make free with the first person!

## **13. it's not a speech...**

In most people's mind, the word 'speech' is associated with great tension, formality and the need to perform well. Think of it instead as a conversation at a large dinner party, or simply as a few words to wish some friends well and the whole thing will seem less intimidating.

## **14. waiting game**

Sitting there waiting for your moment to come is probably more stressful than the

speaking itself. Once you're up and away, the momentum of the speech takes over and you'll start to relax once you hear a laugh or two. So while you're waiting, repeat your first line to yourself. It also helps if you can get involved in the other speeches - really make a point of listening and responding to them. Before you know it - it's your turn.

### **15. it's your call**

There are traditions and customs about who should speak and what they should say, but if it suits you feel free to ignore any or all of them. Do the speech on your own terms, and you'll achieve the best effect. So if you only want to give a brief toast, fine. If you're best man and you don't feel like humiliating the groom, fine too. It's up to you.

### **16. breathing space**

When people speak or read in public, they have a marked tendency to race on too quickly (and not to realise). So it's a good idea to insert the word 'PAUSE' or, if you're using cue cards, to insert blank cards that will automatically slow you down.

### **17. doing the introductions**

If you have a toastmaster, he or she should introduce each speaker. Otherwise, this is the best man's job. Make sure that each speaker is introduced by name and position before they start - this will stop guests talking among themselves as they try to work out who's speaking.

### **18. not now...**

Whenever you do the speeches (at the end of the meal is the norm in this country) make sure that nothing else is going on, that all the clearing up has stopped etc. Speakers need undivided attention!

### **19. preparing the speech**

When putting a speech together, always bear in mind at what point your speech comes in the order of play. Do you need to cover certain subjects? Are you speaking on behalf of anyone? Do you need to address certain themes? Will you need to reply to another speaker/toast? These considerations should help you plan your words.

### **20. full stop**

However silly or serious your speech, it's always a good idea to end on a toast. It's something for you to work towards and, for the guests; it's an immediately recognisable punctuation point.