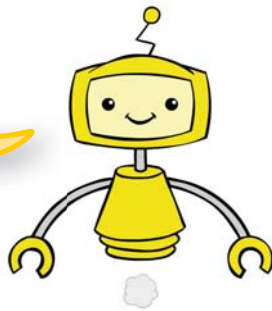


# The seating game

Weddings require a lot of planning and preparation: booking a venue, choosing the bridal party, deciding upon catering, choosing vows, a dress, rings, flowers, cake ... and then there's the seating plan. Oh, it may seem simple, but how will the mother of the bride feel if she is at the back of the room? Who gets the place of honour at the table closest to the bride and groom. Should it go to friends or family, or should it go to somebody important? And, most importantly, who gets stuck next to snoring, cantankerous Great-Uncle Alfred?



**LINKS TO:**  
 Stage 2, Module 16  
 Learning Object 2: Interesting facts

**PRIOR LEARNING:**  
**Stage 2**  
 Module 15 Work Sheet 4: *Please join us on our special day*  
 Module 16 Work Sheet 2: *I do!*

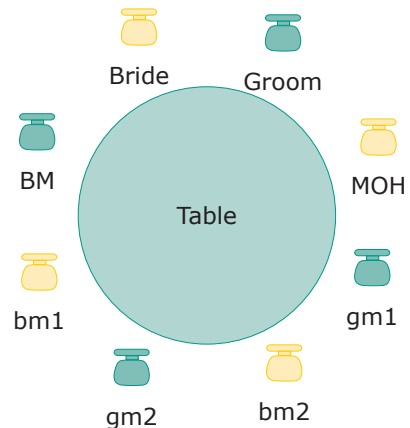


## Seating-plan etiquette in Australia

1

Almost all Australian weddings are followed by some sort of reception. Unless they are very informal, wedding receptions involve a sit-down meal with drinks, dessert, the cutting of the cake, speeches, music and often dancing. A formal seating plan allows the bride and groom to control who sits where, and removes the stress from the guests of having to decide where to sit and with whom. It also avoids awkward situations: such as guests causing offence by saving seats; a dash for the 'best seats'; the last guests to arrive having to sit in leftover single seats; and hearing-impaired guests being seated where they cannot hear the speeches.

While there are no hard and fast rules for seating plans the following guidelines are commonly observed at Australian weddings:



gm=groomsman, bm=bridesmaid,  
 BM=Best Man, MOH=Maid of Honour

### The bridal party

In Australia, the bridal party is usually seated prominently so the bride and groom are visible from all tables during speeches and toasts. This is often done by seating the bridal party at a table at the front of the room. The traditional seating arrangement is usually one of two options, depending on the table shape:



### The parents' tables

The tables closest to the bridal party are the best seats in the house. Many couples choose to honour family and friends by placing them closest to the bridal party, giving them the best view of the reception.

Traditionally, a table is allocated on either side of the bride and groom for their parents, grandparents, and other immediate family members. The families of the bride and groom do not necessarily need to sit together and may instead sit with their own family and friends. If the bridal party is very small, parents of the couple may sit on the main table with them.

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## Other guests

The remaining guests can be grouped together in a number of ways. General advice for creating a harmonious group when mixing friends and family, young and old, singles and couples, dictates that the following rules should be observed: each guest should know at least two to three others at their

table, people should be placed with others of a similar age and with similar interests, couples should not be separated and there should be a balance of male and female guests around each table. Consideration must also be made to accommodate guests with special needs, for example, those who are elderly, pregnant, hearing impaired or visually impaired.

2

## Wedding etiquette in Indonesia

In Indonesia, because of the diversity of ethnic groups, wedding customs also vary widely. Each ethnic group has different traditional wedding outfits as well as different marriage ceremonies and customs. Within ethnic groups, those of different religious backgrounds will have different practices as well.

Almost all weddings, however, start with some kind of traditional ceremony according to the customs of their ethnic background, followed by a religious ceremony at the bride's home or at the place of worship. This is then followed by more ceremony and a reception. The reception can be held straight after the ceremony at the bride's home, or in a mosque or church hall. It can also be held in the evening of the same day or the following day in a reception hall, a restaurant or in a hotel ballroom.

Like weddings in many countries, Indonesian weddings are important events. Even those who are only slightly acquainted with the bride and groom and their family can be invited and it is considered rude not to attend. Where possible, invitations to close relatives or important guests are hand-delivered to give the invitation a personal touch. If this is not possible because of distance, a courtesy phone call is made in advance before posting the invitation.

It is customary for the bride and groom and their parents to greet the line-up of guests before the reception festivities begin. Given that there could be hundreds of guests attending, it is common to have a buffet (*prasmanan*) rather than a sit-down dinner. A table is provided for the bride and groom and their parents while the rest of the guests stand and mingle while eating. There are some seats provided for elderly relatives, but usually these are organised in rows, not at a table.

Ethnic Chinese weddings in Indonesia tend to use the facilities of function venues. These can seat several hundred people at circular tables of 10. The choice of dining can be either *prasmanan*, or a sit-down meal consisting of any number

of courses, according to the family's budget. *Prasmanan* is preferred for larger groups of several hundred guests, whereas for smaller groups of, for example, about 150 guests, the sit-down option may be more convenient. Function venues usually have a minimum of 10 tables, or 100 guests. Again, there are no seating arrangements apart from having the main family tables closest to the front of the venue — near the wedding cake and entertainment. With smaller wedding parties, there may be other functions sharing the same facilities and, invariably, the entertainment. Unlike Australian weddings, at Indonesian or ethnic Chinese weddings, there are no speeches or dancing. Guests may be invited by the entertainers to join them on the stage for a bit of comic relief.

When wedding celebrations take place in the bride's family home, it is quite acceptable to close the road in front of the bride's house to accommodate the guests. A marquee is sometimes erected and the house is decorated with symbols pertinent to the family's ethnic background. Traditional music is also played, mostly using a recording because a live performance can be impractical.

### Who's who at Indonesian weddings:

<i>tunangan</i>	fiancé or fiancée
<i>mempelai laki-laki</i> or <i>pria</i>	groom
<i>mempelai perempuan</i> or <i>wanita</i>	bride
<i>pendamping laki-laki</i> or <i>pria</i>	best man
<i>pendamping perempuan</i> or <i>wanita</i>	maid of honour
<i>pengapit</i>	bridesmaid or groomsman
<i>penghulu</i>	marriage official (Muslim)
<i>pendeta</i>	priest (Christian)

## 3

## Tell me what he's like ...

When making seating arrangements for a wedding reception, it is important to consider the personal character traits of individuals and plan accordingly, so that incompatible guests are not seated together.

Some common adjectives describing character traits include:

<i>baik hati</i>	good-natured
<i>cerewet</i>	talkative
<i>galak</i>	fierce or mean
<i>kasar</i>	uncouth
<i>lucu</i>	humorous
<i>pandai or pintar</i>	clever or intelligent
<i>pemalu</i>	shy
<i>pendiam</i>	quiet
<i>pemarah</i>	grumpy
<i>ramah</i>	friendly
<i>serius</i>	serious
<i>sombong</i>	arrogant or conceited

There are two structures we normally use to describe someone's personality traits in Indonesian. First, we can simply place the person's name before the relevant adjectives and, second, we can place the word *orangnya* before the relevant adjectives. Look at the two examples below:

*Ibu Smart baik hati dan ramah.*  
Mrs Smart is kind and friendly.

*Orangnya (Pak Smart) serius dan pandai.*  
He (Mr Smart) is a serious and intelligent person.

## Let's all get along

Describing one's suitability in terms of getting along with other people is also quite simple. Again, there are two common patterns available.

The first of these is:  
PERSON A *cocok dengan* PERSON (or PEOPLE) B.

➔ For example:

*Ibu Smart cocok dengan semua orang.*  
Mrs Smart is suited to / is able to get along with all people.

The second pattern is:  
PERSON A *pandai bergaul dengan* PERSON (or PEOPLE) B.

➔ For example:

*Pak Smart pandai bergaul dengan orang berpendidikan.*  
Mr Smart gets along well with educated people.

## Note:

In the second pattern the use of the individual's name is optional but it has to be clear from the context to whom you are referring.

## 4

## Exercises

## Exercise 1

You have been asked to take over the role of wedding planner and finish the seating arrangements for Fiona Simpson and Lachlan Wilkinson's wedding. As the bride and groom both work at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and all family members have flown in for the wedding, it will be a strictly Australian affair held in the auditorium of the embassy with an Australian flavour to the celebrations.

The bride and groom have marked where they want the bridal party to sit (on table A) and have also organised table B (friends) and table C (teenagers).

They have given the wedding planner the profiles of the remaining guests.

**Read carefully through the guest profiles on the following page.**

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**Oom Peter Jensen**  
(Kakak ibu pengantin perempuan)

Menderita tuli. Sangat suka sepeda motor dan telah bepergian ke mana-mana di Australia naik sepeda motornya. Akan bercerita sampai orang menjadi tuli mengenai pengalaman perjalanannya.

**Graham Simpson**  
(Kakek pengantin perempuan)

Pendiam dan tidak terlalu ramah. Biasanya cukup senang untuk membiarkan isterinya berbicara. Suka menonton kriket di televisi dan bermain lawn bowl. Ini kunjungan pertamanya ke Jakarta dan terus merasa kepanasan.

**Chloe Wilkinson**  
(Kakak perempuan pengantin laki-laki)

Belum menikah dan tidak terlalu ramah. Bisa berbicara Bahasa Indonesia sedikit, suka melukis dan memasak. Dulu pernah keluar malam dengan boss pengantin laki-laki yang menurutnya agak menyebalkan.

**Wendy Brown**  
(Janda, suaminya sudah meninggal dunia)

Dulu memiliki salon untuk anjing. Punya banyak binatang piaraan, kenal kedua keluarga — dulu teman nenek pengantin laki-laki yang sudah meninggal dunia. Kunjungan pertamanya ke Indonesia. Suka bermain kartu dan lawn bowl.

**Oom Alfred Rodgers**  
(87)  
(Adik kakek pengantin laki-laki)

Sering ketiduran pada acara-acara keluarga dan mengorok. Tidak sabaran terutama pada anak-anak muda dan agak pemarah. Berjalan dengan tongkat, harus duduk dekat kamar kecil.

**Stephen Rodgers**  
(Kakek pengantin laki-laki: Bapak ibu pengantin laki-laki)

Pensiunan pilot. Duda, istrinya sudah meninggal dunia. Punya banyak minat. Suka anjing-jalan dengan anjingnya, bermain kartu dan lawn bowl. Ini kunjungan pertamanya ke Jakarta tapi sudah beberapa kali ke Bali.

**William Morris**  
(Atasan pengantin laki-laki)

Kepala Bagian Imigrasi Kedutaan Besar Australia di Jakarta. Bercerai, suka menyombongkan diri, menganggap dirinya pemain golf yang hebat, punya sebuah Harley.

**Robert Simpson**  
(Bapak pengantin perempuan)

Kurang cocok dengan Tante Susan dan Oom Peter. Lebih suka kalau bisa duduk di samping isterinya. Harus memberikan pidato.

**Tante Josephine Jensen**  
(84)

Seorang artis (pelukis). Punya 11 ekor kucing. Kurang cocok dengan oom Alfred. Biasanya berjalan menggunakan tongkat tapi iklim tropis di Jakarta telah membantu mengurangi dampak penyakit encoknya.

**Julienne Simpson**  
(Ibu pengantin perempuan)

Pertama kali berkunjung ke Jakarta dan sedikit mengalami gegar budaya. Pasti sedikit sensitif dan akan tersinggung kalau tidak mendapat tempat duduk yang terbaik!

**John Wilkinson**  
(Bapak pengantin laki-laki)

Dulu diplomat yang pernah ditempatkan di Jepang, Korea Selatan dan Singapura. Bercerai dengan isterinya. Suka membaca buku dan bepergian. Akan memberikan pidato.

**Jessica Simpson**  
(Nenek pengantin)

Mudah bergaul dengan siapa saja dan disukai oleh semua orang. Selalu punya cerita-cerita yang menarik. Pertama kali berkunjung ke Indonesia dan menikmati pengalaman ini.

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**Margaret Rodgers**  
(Ibu pengantin laki-laki)

Cocok dengan semua orang kecuali bekas suaminya. Mereka tidak duduk bersama-sama.

**Michael Smart**

Orang Australia yang tinggal di Jakarta. Bermain tenis dan golf dan mulai bermain bulutangkis dengan rekan sekantor.

**Susan Smart**

Orang Australia yang tinggal di Jakarta. Suka melukis, bepergian, melihat-lihat tempat baru dan memasak.

**Isteri Duta Besar Australia**

Mudah bergaul dengan siapa saja. Teman pribadi keluarga Smart.

**Tante Susan Jensen**

Lucu sekali, punya rasa humor yang tinggi. Sangat cerewet, selalu berbicara keras karena suaminya agak tuli. Tinggal di Cairns jadi sudah biasa dengan iklim tropis.

**Duta Besar Australia untuk Indonesia**

Mudah bergaul dengan siapa saja. Teman pribadi keluarga Smart dan membantu Michael Smart mendapat pekerjaan di Jakarta.

**1.1** Answer the following questions in English.

**1.1.1** Which individuals share common interests?

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**1.1.2** Which individuals share common personality traits?

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**1.1.3** Whom do you think Mr and Mrs Smart would enjoy sitting with? Explain why.

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**1.1.4 Whom should you not put next to Great-uncle Alfred? Why?**

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**1.1.5 With whom do you think the groom's sister would get along? Why?**

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**1.1.6 Whom would you not seat next to the groom's sister?**

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1.2 Create a seating plan for the guests described on pages 4 and 5.

There are 18 guests to be seated and there are three remaining tables that can be used. Using the plan of the room provided, decide who should sit where and write their names in the space provided.

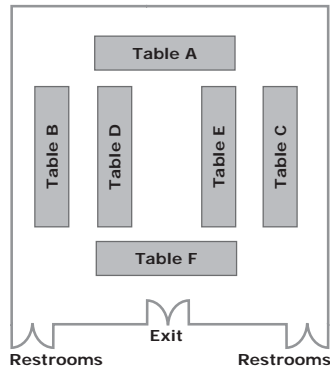


Diagram for Table D seating plan. A vertical rectangle labeled 'Table D' is centered between two columns of four circles each. Four horizontal lines extend from each circle to the left and right, providing space for names.

Diagram for Table E seating plan. A vertical rectangle labeled 'Table E' is centered between two columns of four circles each. Four horizontal lines extend from each circle to the left and right, providing space for names.

Diagram for Table F seating plan. A vertical rectangle labeled 'Table F' is centered between two columns of four circles each. Four horizontal lines extend from each circle to the left and right, providing space for names.

1.3 Based on your seating plan, answer the following questions in English:

1.3.1 How did you keep in mind the needs of the older people and those with special needs?

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**1.3.2 How did you separate the groom's parents without making one of them feel excluded?**

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**1.3.3 Whom did you place closest to the bride and groom's table? Why?**

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**1.3.4 Whom did you place next to the groom's supervisor? Why?**

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**1.3.5 Who was the most difficult person (or people) to place? Explain why.**

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## **Exercise 2**

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Answer the following questions comparing Australian and Indonesian wedding receptions and seating etiquette.

**2.1 Describe some of the similarities and differences between Indonesian and Australian wedding receptions and seating etiquette.**

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**2.3 What do these differences suggest about Australian and Indonesian values, attitudes and beliefs?**

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