



Correspondence Bites

RSVP

What Does RSVP Mean?

If you've ever received an invitation in English, you've probably noticed four mysterious letters:

RSVP

Many people assume it's an English abbreviation.

It isn't.

RSVP comes from the French phrase:

Répondez s'il vous plaît

which literally means:

"Please respond."

In other words, the host is asking you to let them know whether you are attending the event.

Why is RSVP important?

When you receive an invitation with **RSVP**, the host needs an answer.

Your response helps them plan:

- how much food to prepare
- how many seats or tables are needed
- how many guests to expect
- whether they need to make reservations
- the overall organization of the event

Even if you cannot attend, you should still reply.

Not responding is generally considered impolite.

When should you include RSVP?

Include **RSVP** whenever the host needs to know how many people will attend.

For example:

- Weddings
- Birthday parties
- Graduation parties
- Baby showers



- Business dinners
- Holiday gatherings
- Charity events
- Conferences

You usually **don't** need RSVP for very casual invitations, such as:

Want to grab coffee tomorrow?

or

Let's have lunch next week.

In those situations, the invitation itself naturally expects a reply.

How do you write RSVP?

The abbreviation is usually followed by a date or contact information.

Examples:

RSVP by May 15

Please RSVP by August 1.

RSVP to: zara@email.com

Please RSVP by Friday.

Common mistake

Some learners think **RSVP** means "You're invited."

It doesn't.

It means:

"Please let me know whether you will attend."

Cultural Note

In many cultures, people simply show up if they can attend or decide at the last minute.

In most English-speaking cultures, if an invitation includes **RSVP**, the host expects a response—even if your answer is **no**.

Replying promptly shows respect for the host's time, effort, and planning.

Although **RSVP** is a French abbreviation, it has become so common in English that many native speakers don't even realize it comes from French. They simply recognize it as the standard way to ask guests to respond to an invitation.

