Creative Invitations for Dates and Dances

The phenomenon of creative invitations is fairly geographically concentrated. Many from outside the Utah/Idaho/Arizona region have never even heard of the practice. Pockets of smaller locations also have a recently introduced tradition for creative dating, but in nearly all cases, those locations have a direct connection to Brigham Young University. Many new freshmen from out of state have been shocked by the ritualistic preparation for dates that goes on at BYU, but they are eventually sucked in.

Historically, creative invitations are also quite recent. The explosion of creative dating occurred in the 1970s at approximately the same time as the feminist movement was pushing for an equal rights amendment. Girl’s choice dances were added to the agenda at that time and with them brought an influx of creative invitations. Before that time, creative dates were somewhat common, but men just called women up and asked for their company. Several students have commented that the creative invitation was created so that women would feel more comfortable stepping into the man’s roll as the asker. Creative invitations allow for one to express an interest in going on a date with another without direct confrontation.

The amount of effort behind a creative invitation also provides some guarantee that the offer will be accepted. Unspoken rules protect the asker from rejection, as long as he or she can manage to ask first. Most areas that have a tradition of creative invitations utilize them for dances only, but at BYU invitations are occasionally used for regular dates as well.

Creative invitations fall into a few natural categories. These overlap quite a bit, but can still be separated. The largest category is *Wordplay*. This category is popular because it’s very easy to do, and in most likely to overlap into another category. The second largest group is that of *Find My Name* invitations. In those, the invitation is obvious, but the name is hidden or coded somehow. Often, this type of invitation is put in the form of a scavenger hunt. There are quite a few invitations that must be classified as *Pranks*. They are usually humiliating or at least very disconcerting. The last major category is those that don’t wait for a creative response. *Check Yes or No* invitations give the invitee a certain task to undertake to accept or reject the date. A more recent trend has been toward making the no option an impossible or at least improbably difficult task.

One of the interesting things about traditions of creativity is how often the so called ‘creative’ item is repeated over and over. Several clever wordplays show up in every single student project on the topic, and each one thinks it is an amazingly creative idea.
Check Yes or No

A ‘check yes or no’ invitation takes away the stress of replying creatively to a creative invitation. Instead of waiting up to three days for a clever response, a person who utilizes a ‘check yes or no’ invitation can expect near instantaneous answer.

Examples of ‘Check Yes or No’ Invitations From the Special Collections Archives

Preference Dates at BYU (FA 01 580)
A friend of the inviter dressed up as a Page, played a trumpet fanfare, and read a scroll to the invitee.

Dear [invitee],

In the year of our Lord, [year], Lady [inviter] requests the pleasure of your presence on a Preference Date. If you accept this invitation, return her lady’s kerchief.

The invitee returned the kerchief on a silk pillow while riding a borrowed horse.

Instructions told the invitee to put a sign up in the window if yes. Appropriate signs may read “[inviter] is a babe” or “[Inviter] is a 10” or any variation thereof that makes use of the inviter’s name in some complementary way.

Special Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 692)
The inviter presented the invitee with a bouquet of flowers. If yes, the invitee was to return a pink flower. If no, a white flower would be appreciated.

The inviter left a box full of ribbons on the invitee’s doorstep. If yes, the invitee was to tie a green ribbon on the inviter’s door. If no, a yellow ribbon would do.

Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 765)
The inviter left two cake mixes in different flavors on the invitee’s doorstep. The invitee was to bake one flavor if the answer was yes, the other flavor if the answer was no. The invitee baked a checkered cake instead.

Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 863)
The inviter wrote an invitation on a break apart ticket for the varsity theater. The invitee, who’d job was to collect tickets, was instructed to return the correct half of the ticket at the end of the movie.
The invitee was instructed to drink a glass of water if the answer was yes, dump the glass on a potted plant if maybe, or dump it over herself if no.

The invitee was given a puzzle invitation with the instruction to say yes by providing 12 dozen roses. This was done in shifts by all the invitee’s young cousins, bringing roses three at a time for an entire day.

An invitation was written in the snow. The invitee had to set fire to the answer, yes or no.

*Creative Invitations and Responses (FA 01 1144)*
The inviter left two helium balloons, one red for yes and the other blue for no, and the invitee was to free the balloon with the correct designation.

The inviter made a large picture book chronicling a fake date adventure, with a ‘choose your own ending’ twist. The invitee was just required to choose the preferable ending and return the book.

*Hey, Baby! Do You Want to Dance: Cultural Insights through Teen Invitations to Dances in Mormondom (FA 01 1473)*
The inviter left a bucket of ice water on the invitee’s doorstep with a note instructing her to pour the water on herself if the answer was yes, or pour the water on him if the answer was no. The inviter and a friend hid in the bushes with a camera.

*Asking and Answering: Ideas for Creative Dates at BYU (FA 01 1553)*
A pizza was delivered to the invitee’s house with a note: “If yes, eat the pizza and return the box. If no, eat the box and return the pizza.”

*Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 1660)*
The invitee was required to do a somersault if the answer was yes, a complex gymnastic move if the answer was no.

*Utah Traditions of Creative Dating (FA 01 1963)*
The invitee was given ingredients for a dozen cookies and instructions to bake one batch of cookies for yes, two batches for no.
Find My Name

‘Find my name’ invitations create a sense of anticipation in the heart of the one who is being invited out. The anticipation is different from the sense of “I might get asked out” because the invitee knows he or she has been invited, but doesn’t yet know by whom.

Examples of ‘Find My Name’ Invitations in the Special Collections Archives

The Preference Ritual (FA 01 639)
The inviter made a great deal of cookies and frosted individual letters on each one. The invitee had to unscramble the letters to discover the identity of the inviter.

The inviter hid a piece of paper in one balloon among many filling up the invitee’s room. The invitee had to pop all the balloons in the room to discover the inviter’s identity.

The inviter knitted a pair of woolen socks for the invitee. The invitee had to notice the tiny embroidered name on the socks to discover the identity of the knitter.

The inviter created a puzzle with a picture that related to the date. The invitee had to put together the puzzle and find the name of the inviter on the puzzle.

The inviter hid the invitation in individual words in books in the library. The invitee had to search through the library with a series of clues about the titles of the books where the invitation and name of the inviter were hidden.

Special Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 692)
The inviter made the invitee a pillow with strips of Velcro sewed to it. Throughout the day, people who knew the invitee were solicited to bring Velcro backed letters to put on the pillow and spell out the inviter’s name.

Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 757)
The inviter hid the name inside a marshmallow in a bag of marshmallows that was given to the invitee.

The name was hidden in an ice block.
The individual letters of the name were separated into tiny pill capsules. A bottle of pills was then presented to the invitee.

Cupcakes were left for the invitee, but one of them had a laminated note with the inviter’s name on it.

A jar full of candy had pieces of the inviter’s name spread out among its contents.

*Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 765)*
The inviter set up a scavenger hunt that led the invitee to a fast food restaurant where a special bag of food awaited. The invitation was written on a napkin inside the bag, but the name was printed on a laminated slip of paper and inserted into the middle of the meal.

A person in a gorilla suit gave the invitee a banana with instructions for a scavenger hunt. The hunt led all over town, but ended in the invitee’s own house. The name of the inviter was hidden in a banana cream pie.

The name of the inviter was left in a glass bottle before gelatin was poured in and allowed to set. The invitee had to figure out how to get the name out of the bottle, eventually microwaving the whole thing to melt the gelatin and retrieve the note.

*Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 863)*
The inviter wrote up a sheet of math problems whose answers would spell out the invitation and the inviter’s name. The invitee’s professor agreed to assign the problems to the invitee.

*Creative Invitations and Responses (FA 01 1144)*
The inviter filled an entire room with balloons, each one containing a small paper. Only one of the papers contained the inviter’s name.

*Hey, Baby! Do You Want to Dance: Cultural Insights through Teen Invitations to Dances in Mormondom (FA 01 1473)*

**Find My Name**

The inviter turned a tree in the invitee’s yard into a hanger for many tiny Christmas stockings. Each was filled with candy, but only one was filled with the inviter’s name.

The inviter made a ‘chalk walk,’ dinosaur foot prints leading the invitee all over campus. Along the way, signs of encouragement informed the invitee that he was being asked out, but he had to make it
to the end of the chalk walk to find the name of his date. Many people besides the invitee walked the chalk walk, and by the end, the inviter could have taken any one of over twenty people who attempted to accept the invitation.

The inviter wrote the invitation and name on a random page of the phone book. The book was then covered in plastic wrap and duct tape and frosted like a cake. A note was left, informing the invitee that the cake needed to be eaten in order to find out the inviter’s name.

* Asking and Answering: Ideas for Creative Dates at BYU (FA 01 1553) *

The name was written on a single piece of paper. The paper was wadded up and joined hundreds of other papers as the inviter filled the invitee’s entire room with paper.

* Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 1660) *

The inviter used over four hundred tennis balls, each with a slit cut in it and a message inside. Most of the messages were encouragement for the invitee to keep looking, but a few of them were existential questions. Only one of the papers had the inviter’s name.

* Creative Date Invitations: Originality and Reasons Youth Participate (FA 01 1755) *

The inviter put the name inside a cow’s heart. The invitee had to rip it apart to find out who the inviter was.

The inviter left a balloon tied to a rock on a sixty foot string. The invitee pulled all the way to the end of the string to get the balloon, which said to look under the rock for the inviter’s name.

The inviter found a chemical that would prevent a mirror from fogging up. The message was written on the mirror of the invitee’s bathroom, so when she took a shower, she found the inviter’s name.

**Pranks**

‘Prank’ invitations allow the inviter to show how fun and young he or she is. Using a prank sets the tone for the date, making serious matters seem lighthearted and casual. Sometimes prank invitations go too far, and are mean instead of fun. There is a fine line between lighthearted and careless, that the aspiring prankster must not cross for there to be any hope of a successful date.

**Examples of ‘Prank’ Invitations in the Special Collections Archives**
Preference Dates at BYU (FA 01 580)
The roommate of the inviter dressed as a giant chicken. The giant chicken invaded the invitee’s house and laid an egg with the invitation inside it.

A mission file containing photos of the inviter circled in red with arrows asserted that the invitee needed to get close to the suspect because he or she may be a communist. The assignment was to go to the dance with the inviter.

The Preference Ritual (FA 01 639)
The inviter knew a cop. The cop was convinced to pull over the invitee; make an appearance of arrest, then told the invitee that the only way out of an arrest was to accept the inviter’s invitation to the dance.

Special Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 692)
The inviter made a large poster with the invitation to the dance on it and taped it to the underside of the hood of a car. Then, the inviter made up some car trouble so the invitee could be asked to look under the car’s hood.

During the week prior to the invitation, the inviter left a plethora of random elephant related items in the invitee’s house. The last item contained a note with a meeting place and time arranged. When the invitee showed up at the designated meeting place, the inviter was there in an elephant suit.

The invitation was written is such a way as to be a facsimile of a mission call. Instead of a destination it included information about the date.

The inviter and several friends dressed up as angels, their angel fanfare occurred at two in the morning, when the bleary eyed invitee was subjected to the suspect poetry writing ability of the inviter.

Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 765)
The inviter enlisted the help of over a hundred friends and neighbors to shout the invitation outside the invitee’s window late at night.

The inviter was wrapped in a large cardboard box. When the invitee started opening the box, the inviter jumped out and spoke the invitation.

Creative Dating: A BYU Tradition (FA 01 787)
The inviter stole a shoe from the invitee’s closet, reenacted a skit version of Cinderella and then fit the shoe to the invitee when that part came up in the skit.

*Creative Dating Invitations* (FA 01 863)
The inviter tied the invitation to a kite and flew it near the invitee’s house. When the invitee came out to ask what was going on, the inviter asked the invitee to hold the kite for a bit. The inviter didn’t come back, so eventually, the invitee let the kite down and got the invitation.

The inviters wanted to go on a road trip to their home state, where the invitees also lived. They kidnapped the invitees and put them in interrogation rooms, asking all sorts of questions that related to the state they were planning on visiting, and culminating in the invitation.

The invitation was put in a balloon full of shaving cream.

*Creative Invitations and Responses* (FA 01 1144)
The invitation was pinned to the invitee’s dog’s collar.

The invitation was painted on the invitee’s window.

The inviter dressed up as a prince and borrowed a white horse to hand deliver the invitation.

*Dating: The Art Form- Creative Date Invitations at BYU* (FA 01 1401)
The inviter kidnapped the invitee at knifepoint, the invitee responded by having a mock trial concluding with the punishment for kidnapping being a term of community service as a dance partner.

The inviter wrote out a long invitation on helium balloons and strung them in order on a 400 foot string, so the invitee had to pull it for a really long time to get the whole message.

*Creative Ways to Ask Someone to a Dance: Artistic Communication within Teenage Groups* (FA 01 1424)
The inviter went to the home of the invitee with three live lobsters in her backpack. The inviter asked the invitee if she could use his restroom, and while she was in there, the inviter left the lobsters in the tub with the invitation tied to their claws. The invitee had to find a way to get the invitation off the lobsters without getting pinched, and couldn’t find the identity of the inviter. The next day, the inviter made a cake for the invitee with a piped lobster on top.
The inviter had a friend who was a cop, who agreed to pull over the invitee and pretend to book a ticket, but bring roses and an invitation back to the car instead.

*Creative Date Invitations: Originality and Reasons Youth Participate (FA 01 1755)*
The inviter wrote the invitation on the invitee's lawn in bleach.

The inviter kept coming up to the invitee during the week and saying “I have something important to tell you, but I can’t remember exactly what it is.” Later, the invitee was woken by an alarm at two in the morning with an attached note that read: “I just remembered what I wanted to tell you! Will you go to [the dance] with me?”

*Utah Traditions of Creative Dating (FA 01 1963)*
The inviter rewired the invitee’s car so the horn honks whenever the brake is depressed. When the invitee looked under the hood, there was a note with instruction on how to fix the car as well as an invitation to an event.

The inviter sent the invitation in a giant, person sized envelope.

**Wordplay**

‘Wordplay’ invitations showcase a sense of humor and mental dexterity that many people find attractive. Puns and other mental gymnastics can range from the groan-worthy to the very clever depending on the person who thinks them up. Usually wordplay is the easiest and least expensive way to make a creative invitation.

**Examples of ‘Wordplay’ Invitations in the Special Collections Archives**

*Special Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 692)*
The inviter left the invitee a box of doughnuts with a note that read “I ‘doughnut’ know what I’d do if you didn’t go to [the dance] with me!” The invitee responded with a bag of doughnut holes and a note that read “I would like to go with you a ‘hole’ bunch.”

*Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 765)*
The inviter left a bag of popcorn with the note “I’m ‘popping’ the question; will you go to [the dance] with me?”
A flower pot filled with ice cream, cookie dirt, and fake flowers hid a message that said “I’d ‘bloom’ if you’d go to [the dance] with me!”

A full breakfast, including a box of lucky charms, was left on the invitee’s doorstep with a note that read “I’d be ‘charmed’ if you’d go to [the dance] with me!”

A box of Nilla Wafer cookies was given to the invitee with a note; “Is there any ‘wafer’ you to go to [the dance] with me?”

A certain inviter taped hearts to every surface of the invitee’s living room and left a note that said “Your room just had a ‘heart attack,’ and so will I if you go to [the dance] with me!”

**Dating: The Art Form- Creative Date Invitations at BYU (FA 01 1401)**

The inviter ran into the invitee’s house, covered in fake blood and stabbed in the chest with a fake knife. The invitation read: “I’m dying to go out with you.”

A candy gram read: “Hey ‘BIG HUNK’, be‘TWIX’ed you and me, I think you’re ‘BAR NONE’”

The inviter put glow-in-the-dark stars on the invitee’s bedroom ceiling with a poem that read: “Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have you as my [dance] date.

**Creative Ways to Ask Someone to a Dance: Artistic Communication within Teenage Groups (FA 01 1424)**

A bag of candy was left for the invitee with a poem that read: “Roses are red, violets are black, if you don’t go to [the dance] with me, I want this candy back!”

**Hey, Baby! Do You Want to Dance: Cultural Insights through Teen Invitations to Dances in Mormondom (FA 01 1473)**

A box of Honey Comb cereal accompanied the note: “Honey, comb your hair! Cause we’re going to [the dance]!”

A vat of Spaghetti-O’s and Barbie limbs was tastefully left with a note: “I’d give an arm and a leg to go to [the dance] with you”

A jar of pickles tied with pink balloons was left with a spoonerism: “I’d be pickled tink to go to [the dance] with you”
The inviter lit a bag of kitty litter on fire and left a note: “I’m burning to go out with you!”

*Asking and Answering: Ideas for Creative Dates at BYU (FA 01 1553)*

The invitee found a bag of flour on the porch with instructions to find the invitation ‘in the flour.’ After a mess had been made, the inviter turned up with a flower and said ‘I guess I spelled it wrong.’ The invitation was in the flower.

The invitation to go ice skating was frozen in a block of ice. The response was tied up in medical tape to let the inviter know that the invitee didn’t know how to skate, but would go anyway if the inviter would mend her injuries.

*Creative Dating Invitations (FA 01 1660)*

The inviter happened to have an old toilet in her garage. She cleaned and decorated it and left it for the invitee with a note that read: “If you’ve gotta go, go with me!”

The inviter filled the invitee’s tub with pebbles, sea weed, water, and other sea things. Inside a glass bottle, the invitation said that the inviter was shipwrecked, and the inviter needed to come to the rescue by taking her on a date.

*Creative Date Invitations: Originality and Reasons Youth Participate (FA 01 1755)*

A bag of peanuts was left with an invitation that started with: “I’m nuts about you”

A bag of flour was left with the invitation and a note that stated: “I felt bad that all your roommates were getting flowers, so I got you some flours.”

The inviter put little ties on bottles of Crush soda with a message: “I’d be ‘crushed’ if you were ‘tied up’ this Saturday.”

The inviter left a pair of boxer shorts in a pile of dirt: “I’d ‘soil’ my shorts if you won’t go out with me”

The inviter just walked up to the invitee, hander her a giant screw, and said, “Screw creativity, will you go to ‘the dance’ with me?”

The inviter provided the invitee with a bottle of bubbles: “Don’t burst my ‘bubble,’ please come on a date with me.”
The inviter left the invitee a bottle of mustard that said “Now that I’ve ‘mustard’ up the courage, will you go to [the dance] with me?”

The inviter left a bag of popcorn for the invitee: “I’d ‘pop’ with excitement if you’d go to [the dance] with me.”

The inviter gave the invitee several live mice with the letters of her name painted on their backs and a note that said: “It would be ‘mice’ to go to [the dance] with you.”

“It scared the pants off me to ask you, but you knocked my socks off!” was left on a note next to a pair of pants and socks left on the invitee’s doorstep.

For a week, the inviter left a cube of butter on the invitee’s doorstep every day with a note that said “more about the dance later.” At the end of the week, he left popcorn that said “now that I’ve ‘buttered’ you up, I’d like to ‘pop’ the question!”

The inviter left a bouquet of tulips and a note that said “With my ‘two-lips,’ I’m asking you to [the dance].”

The inviter made a pillowcase with his face on it that said: “Date? Yes or no, sleep on it and let me know!”

A note left on the invitee’s couch read: “Don’t be a couch potato, come to the dance with me!”

The inviter made a video with many many people asking the invitee out. The invitation was split up into individual words spoken by a different person each.