Salters Events Ultimate Party Planning Checklist

Party planning takes time, creativity, and the ability to stay organised. Unless it’s a small gathering for family and friends, planning a party should be a structured process with carefully defined steps. That goes for any type of party, be it a throwback Disco party or a Halloween party for kids.

Our party planning checklist should help keep you on track. Not every single step is relevant for every party, but keeping them in mind will make you a better party planner in no time. Follow this checklist to make sure you don’t skip some important steps, like getting enough food for everyone. Starving guests do not a fun party make.

Leave the stress behind with our comprehensive party planning checklist and get the party started!

*A month before, or even more*

* *Select a date and time*

Keep a date in mind, but don’t narrow yourself down to just one day. Be flexible and check whether the most important guests are available for your chosen date. If you have a favourite place where you want to organise your event, it’s also good to check with the venue beforehand to see if they are available for hire on your selected day. Try to schedule the party so that it doesn’t conflict with any major celebrations, holidays, or festivals. This way, you’ll have a better chance of people showing up.

* *Decide on a theme*

This one’s a biggie because you can’t really plan anything until you’ve chosen your party theme. But there are so many themes to choose from that you can feel a bit spoilt for choice! What’s the occasion for the party? Is it to mark a specific event or “just because”? Will people need to dress up in formal wear or costumes?

Most parties fall into one of the following four categories so we’d recommend browsing party themes by category to help you narrow down your choice. Choose from:

Kids’ birthdays

Adult birthdays and milestone ages

Special occasions

Seasonal events

* *Plan your guestlist*

Throwing your party at home and limiting the guest list to a reasonable number is one of the best ways to throw a party on a budget, but if you can afford to be a bit more extravagant then why not hire a venue?

Just make sure you let people know when it will be a couple of weeks in advance so that they can save the date.

Begin deciding whom you would like to invite, bearing in mind that expected turnout is usually around the 70-80% mark.

* *Determine your budget*

Next up, decide how much you want to spend. This is really important because the cost can really add up when you impulse buy. The best way to avoid over-spending is to set a budget and stick to it.

How much should you spend on a party? This is up to you but once you’ve set your budget, the real planning can start! Be realistic and concentrate on where you’d like to splurge and save. What costs can you expect for renting a place, buying food, paying for entertainment, staff, etc

* *Hire a venue or host it yourself*

Choose whether you’d like to host your party at a specific venue or at home. Will it be outside or inside? Bear in mind the number of guests you plan to invite and the activities you will organise. Hosting at home can save you a lot of money, but hiring a venue can also make your life easier and alleviate the pressure.

Make sure you book the restaurant, have a signed contract with the conference hall, or whatever is applicable in your case.

* *Book entertainment and extras*

Time to start preparing a more detailed outline of the party programme. Will there be party games? Other entertainment in the form of a live band, a DJ, some dancers, and so on? Try to put together a rough schedule of the day.

DJs, bands and photo booths are all popular options – just be sure to let the venue manager know what you’re planning in advance.

* *Organise home cooking or hire a caterer*

Whether you’re on a budget or not, plan out what party food you’ll need in advance to make sure you’ll have enough to feed everyone. If you’re sharing the role of caterer, planning things out in advance will help you organise who’s bringing what.

Consider everyone’s needs. Do your guests have allergies or special dietary requirements? If you’re taking charge of the cooking, devise a menu that’s easy to prepare and will also accommodate all your guests. If you’re using external caterers, be sure to let them know all the important details before they begin proposing a menu.

* *Invite your guests*

There’s no point planning a party if you don’t give people enough notice to save the date.

Personalised invitations can be a nice little touch if you’re celebrating a really special occasion like an engagement or a baby shower.

Your invitations should include the date and time, dress code, and party theme.

* *Line up some help*

Decide whether you’re flying solo or will have other people helping you plan and run this party. Gather a team and agree on who’s responsible for what aspect of the party planning.

If you’ve hired a venue, find out who your go-to staff at the venue will be. If you’re organising from home, try and enlist a few friends to lend a hand on the day.

*Three weeks before*

* *Plan the details*

Research Pinterest, blogs and magazines for decoration and party ideas that tie in with your theme.

* *Devise a programme*

Try and come up with a rough schedule for your party. As well as checking if you have enough activities for your event, it will also give you a general outline on how the party should progress.

* *Equipment*

Now that you have an idea of the programme, it’s time to take stock of what equipment you’ll need. Loudspeakers, projectors, stuff for the games, and more. Will your entertainers bring their own equipment or will you provide some of it? Start placing orders on larger equipment with long delivery times.

* *Place your orders*

Having placed your big orders, now’s the time to focus on the little things. A cake, DIY decorations, and party favours are all popular at parties.

If you’re making your own cake, it’s a good idea to do a trial run on new recipes to avoid any baking disasters!

* *Stock up on party supplies and decorations*

This is where the real fun starts! Decide whether you want to go simple or all out (why wouldn’t you?) and pick decorations that match your party theme.

Paper decorations like fans, pom poms and honeycomb decorations can look super stylish and it doesn’t take a creative genius to make them look good! Stick to a few main colours to guarantee your party decorations look perfectly colour-coordinated.

* *Create a seating plan, if needed*

This is well worth considering if you’re having more than 50 guests. Be sure to seat people evenly between those they know and those they don’t know, to try and encourage mixing.

*A week before*

* *Confirm guests*

Call or email guests who have not yet RSVP’d to make sure they do. Send reminders to those who have confirmed to get them pumped up for the party.

* *Finish DIY projects*

Making your own decorations or finalising your party plan? Inviting your helper friends over can make for a fun pre-party!

* *Make a party playlist*

Music will set the tone for the rest of your party. Aim to get the floor filled early, but don’t waste all your biggest tracks at the beginning! Build the atmosphere while keeping things upbeat.

* *Confirm all deliveries and pickups*

Check that you have ordered everything you need.

Make sure that all of the vendors have confirmed their deliveries and everything is on track. You don’t want any surprises like missing cake or decorations.

* *Speak to the neighbours*

If you’re hosting a party at home, check-in with the neighbours to let them know there will be a party taking place. Communicate with them to see if they have any specific boundaries or desires, or allow them to make plans to go out themselves. Of course, you can always invite them to the party as well!

*The day before*

* *Prepare the venue*

Arrange the furniture, make sure wireless Internet is working fine, and test the sound equipment. Put up balloons and other party decorations.

* *Pick up rentals and flowers*

Collect your orders and make sure all is ready for the big day.

* *Shop for last-minute items*

Forgotten something, or realised you need some extra items at the last moment? Now’s your chance to buy them! Stock up on last-minute perishables like fruit, ice, and so on.

* *Charge your camera*

Imagine not being able to capture the best moments of your party! Fully charging your camera the day before will make sure this won’t happen. Or how about getting retro disposable cameras for the guests to use and hand in at the end?

Have someone on your team (or a professional) documenting the party by taking photos and capturing memorable videos to share with the guests afterwards.

*Check your party programme and checklist to tie up any loose ends*

Party planning is a long process and some things can naturally be missed along the way. Double-check your list and complete any small tasks that might be left over.

*After the party is over*

* *Clean-up*

Have your team disassemble all the equipment, put the furniture back in its place, take down the decorations, and clean the venue.

* *Thank yous:*

Send out thank you messages to the venue providers, your vendors, and - of course - your party guests. Make sure to share the photos and videos of the event on social media and directly with your guests.

