



House Party Toolkit

**A HELPFUL GUIDE TO THROWING
THE BEST HOUSE PARTY EVER!**

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What is a House Party?

A House Party, also known as an in home gathering, brings together current and prospective donors in an intimate home setting to talk about a non profit organization, its future goals, and to ask for support.

A house party includes inviting 5-10 couples, or 10-20 close and personal friends (these are just estimates, but you want to maintain an intimate setting) of the host to their home to share the mission and vision of the organization and to ask for support. Guests are invited with invitations (often designed by organization but sent from the host).

The host pays for the event (all food and beverage costs) and handles all RSVPs. The ask can be soft or hard, but the invitation includes a statement about asking for attendees financial support. You would never want someone to come to an event and not realize they would be asked to contribute financially. The organization and the host follow up for a donation after the event if it was not given that night.

This is an opportunity to share the organizations case statement, annual needs, and ask for a gift or pledge.

QUICK OVERVIEW:

- Held in a home
- Quick to organize, 4-6 weeks to plan and implement
- Volunteer driven
- 2 hours or less
- Set a goal (every event needs a fundraising goal)
- Matching gifts help (maybe the host would match donations to a certain amount)

Who Does What?

This list will assist you in organizing the steps it takes to execute a smashing house party. If you think of additional items future hosts may find valuable, please let us know!

ORGANIZATION TO DO:

- Assist with invitation design and wording-if necessary
- Supply brochures, materials, and other promotional information on the organization, as well as pledge and gift cards for donations
- Attend the event & speak on behalf of the organization and specific cause/fundraiser/project

HOST TO DO:

- Decide means of invitations (print, email, Facebook, etc.) Everyone loves a paper invite and takes them more seriously.
- Work with the organization to create invitations
- Send invitations
- Plan your introduction of the organization and consider telling your story of how you are related to the organization or the project. Consider sharing your gift amount
- Oversee all food and beverage selection and costs
- Collect any additional attendee information that could be beneficial to future mailings, e-newsletters and communications
- Follow up with guests and send thank you note.

ORGANIZATION & HOST TO DO:

- Schedule pre-event meeting to discuss date, time, location & theme
- Determine invite list
- Pick a mutually agreeable date
- Discuss presentation style (quick 15 min talk, casual question & answer period, formal presentation etc.)
- Create a House Party hour by hour agenda. (does not have to be exact just keeps everyone on the same page)
- Schedule post-event meeting to discuss how it went and who will complete follow up asks

Key Elements for a Successful House Party

- Enthusiastic host who has made a gift.
- Give yourself plenty of time for planning, scripting, phone calls and logistics.
- Set specific goals-dollars to be raised, number of people to attend, number of invites mailed.
- Make it fun for people-lots of good food and drink, music or some sort of entertainment is always nice.
- The event should last roughly 2 hours, with the formal presentation or talk lasting between 15 - 30 minutes. Mostly, we want your friends mingling and having fun.
- Make it clear on your invitation that the event is to benefit the organization and that there will be an ask. Include language like "donations gratefully accepted" or "learn how your support can advance the organization" so that no one is surprised by an ask.
- Make follow-up phone calls for RSVP's.
- Thank people as they leave.
- Follow up-this is a key part of whether or not a guest may give. Follow up with donors who did not give a gift, and request a meeting to discuss further. Open the door for the organization to follow up.

Planning Worksheet

Host: _____

Event Date: _____ Time: _____

Number of Guests: _____

Invitation Designed by: _____

Address of House Party: _____

Directions: _____

Parking: _____

Who to receive RSVP's?: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Who will make phone calls for those who haven't RSVP'd?

Food/Drinks: _____

Project Topics: _____

Speakers: _____

Call to action for guests: _____

Other notes: _____

PROPOSED TIMELINE:

Invitation designed by date: _____

Invite list finalized by date: _____

Invite mailed by date: _____

RSVP date: _____

Follow up phone calls by: _____

Event date: _____

Follow up date: _____

Invitations

Here is some sample text for an invitation to your event.
This copy could work as an e-mail or as a printed invitation.

"You're invited!

You've probably heard talk around the lake about the organization's campaign and proposed upgrades to both camp and our cottager community.

Join us on [date & time] to learn why our community is so excited about some much needed additions to camp, new opportunities for our cottagers, and **how you can make a difference.**

We will have light appetizers and drinks.
RSVP to [name & number] by [date].

You are cordially invited to an informal gathering hosted by [name].

Please join us at our home [address] to hear more about the organization as some of our board members share the vision for the future at Lake Louise.

Learn more about the recent campaign and how you can make a difference to our organization and our campaign.

Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served.
RSVP to [name & number] by [date].

DATE:

TIME:

ADDRESS:

Thank You's

Follow-up after a house party is an important step in helping people go from interested attendees to generous supporters!

Group Thank You From Host:

After your gathering, send a simple group message via email or Facebook. This message keeps the organization's name on your guest's mind a bit longer and reminds them of your enthusiasm for the project. You could also include a photo and a link to the organization's Facebook or website.

Sample Thank You Verbiage: (Always know that handwritten notes are more preferred when possible)

Thank you so much for joining me for my get together last night! I enjoyed our time together sharing some good food and laughs! I also appreciated the chance to explain to you why I'm so passionate about [organization name/project]. Please let me know if I can answer any more questions for you. Please consider a gift to support this project.

Individual Follow Up

It's important to follow up with each attendee within two weeks of the event. The organization should send a letter-co signed with the host, thanking the attendee for coming, restating the needs of the organization, and asking for their support. Remember to include a gift card or pledge form and return envelope with the letter.

Sample Thank You Verbiage:

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for attending our event last week! We so appreciated having the chance to have lively discussions regarding [organization/project name] and to share our need for support. (Insert details.)

It is our hope that you will consider a gift/pledge to support this project. Enclosed you will find a gift card and envelope for your convenience. Please do not hesitate to call the ED or host (name) with any questions. Thank you again!

Once a donation or pledge is received, the organization should send a gift receipt letter (per standard process) and ensure to inform the host of the gift so that they can follow up with a personal thank you.


Staying Engaged

Some of your guests will need more encounters than just a house party to feel ready to make a substantial gift to the organization. For your guests who seem interested but are not quite ready to make a gift, you can help facilitate some informal encounters in the months following your gathering. Here are some ideas to help stay connected:

The organization can:

- Invite them to 'like' you on Facebook and other social media
- Add them to your newsletter or mailing lists (email and snail mail)
- Invite them to another event
- Add them to your annual report mailing list

The host can:

- Send them a link to an interesting organizational article
 - Share your love for the organization online to jog their memory
 - Follow up in person with a thank you for attending and ask if they have any additional questions
 - Bring them to an organizational event as a guest
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