



Hosting a Successful House Party

- 1) **Decide whether you are planning a large or small house party.** For large parties, be sure to check out the “promoting your party” handout — there are lots of ways to spread the word! For smaller parties, remember that you need to invite about twice as many people as you expect to attend.
- 2) **Plan ahead and ask for help.** Opening your home for a party is a terrific way to support a campaign or cause. Don’t feel you need to do everything yourself! You can recruit co-hosts (they can help spread the word, arrive early to set-up, and stay late to clean up) or simply plan a potluck and ask each guest to bring a dish. And, remember: house parties don’t have to be fancy. People are coming to connect, to be empowered and to be inspired by the cause. It’s fine to put out a few bowls of chips and dip, or get creative and organize a cookie swap! The key is to keep your party affordable and manageable.
- 3) **Spread the word.** For bigger parties, more people means that you’ll build more awareness and/or raise more money. Cast a wide net — invite friends, family, co-workers, sporting buddies, church and union members, neighbors. Then, ask each person to help spread the word by forwarding your email or flyer to friends.
- 4) **Make the most of online tools provided.** Your organization should give you a way to send invitations, manage RSVPs, track contributions, and much more. Explore the online tools provided and use them to make your party a success. And, don’t worry — sending invitations is as easy as sending an email. (And, if you don’t have the time or skill to manage the party online, you can always ask a friend or co-host to manage this task.)
- 5) **Don’t panic if you don’t get RSVPs right away — and keep publicizing up through the day of the party.** Many house party hosts report that the bulk of their RSVPs come in the last week — and often the last 48 hours. Be sure to send reminders AND make a call to people you really want to come. Parties are personal... people are so overwhelmed by emails that it is easy to forget to RSVP. But, when you call and speak with them or leave a message, they are more likely to make your event a priority. (Working with an organization? Consider calling local members and asking them to attend. It’s a great way to meet new people and activate volunteers.) Be sure to send a reminder email the day before to everyone who said yes and anyone you haven’t heard from. Include directions.
- 6) **Worried about meeting your fundraising goal?** Many -time hosts are nervous about asking for money. Remember: everyone who comes to your party is there because they are interested in the candidate or cause. But, that doesn’t mean that they will automatically open their wallets. The most successful parties:

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- **Make it clear in advance that this is a fundraiser.** You can ask for a minimum contribution or suggest that people give what they can. But, either way, make it clear that the purpose of the party is to raise funds.
 - **Ask guests to contribute when they RSVP.** It's easier for you to manage if guests contribute online.
 - **Have a sign-up table near your front door.** Ask guests to sign in and also ask them for a contribution. (It's best to ask a co-host or friend to work this table so you are free to manage your party.) You can build excitement about meeting your goal by having a party thermometer that you add to as each guest contributes. And, motivate people to dig deeper by posting flyers that show how money will be used. It's also good to post suggested contributions — a sign saying "Our average online donation was over \$100!" will lead more people to write \$100 checks.
 - **Make two more fundraising appeals during the party.** People who gave online or at the door may want to up their contribution after they hear a conference call or watch a DVD or learn more about your cause.
 - **Make a personal "ask".** Personal fundraising is the most effective. Just take a few minutes to tell your guests why YOU support this cause or candidate. Talk about what first got you involved, or how their contributions will be used — whatever you feel most passionate about. Don't be shy. Your guests expect you to make an appeal.
 - **Consider asking a friend or guest speaker to also do an "ask".** (And while you're at it, consider inviting local elected officials or leaders in your cause to attend your party.)
- 7) **Work out technical issues before the party.** Watching a DVD? Test the DVD player and watch the DVD yourself. Connecting to a conference call? Set up your speakerphone in advance, test it, and make sure you have all the dial-in information you need. (Don't have a speaker phone? See if you can borrow one from a friend.) Planning to connect your phone to your stereo? Some people do it, but it is tougher than it sounds. Do it early and test it.
- 8) **Encourage party guests to throw the next party.** Most groups are actively looking for hosts for their next event. Ask your guests to volunteer to host the next party. Let them know how easy it was, have information available about the next event, and capture their contact information so that the organization knows they are interested in hosting a party.
- 9) **Send a thank you after your party.** Thank everyone who attended. And, don't hesitate to send a party report to non-attendees asking them to help you meet your goal — or reporting that you met your goal and need help reaching a new goal.
- 10) **Send any paperwork and contributions in the next day.** Don't put this off — if you hosted a fundraiser, your organization needs to get the money as soon as possible.

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