

Party Planner Tool

Overview

BEFORE YOU START

This tool is most effective if it's used as part of your organization's FailSafe plan. You may find it helpful to complete the following tools before starting this one:

- **Leader Awareness and Planning Tool**
- **Group Feedback Tool**
- **Living Policies Tool**
- **Risk Mentor Tool**
- **Stepping In Tool**

It is also helpful to watch the **Module 5 video, Problem-Free Parties**, before starting this tool.

WHO IS THIS TOOL FOR?

This tool should be used by you and any member of your student organization who is planning a formal or informal event or party.

WHAT DOES THE TOOL HELP YOU DO?

This tool is a guide for planning a party or event, using strategies that have kept parties problem-free at campuses across the country.

WHY DO YOU NEED THIS TOOL?

Parties or events with alcohol can be the cause of a range of negative consequences, many of which can be avoided with a few simple practices. This tool shows you how to put these practices in place.

HOW DOES THE TOOL WORK?

This tool has three parts:

- **Problem Free Party Guide:** Outlines the five most common reasons that parties end in problems and the five things you can do to avoid problems.
- **Party Planning Resource Guide and Pre-Party Checklist:** Easy-to-use checklists for hosting successful parties that don't result in negative consequences.
- **Post-Party Debrief:** After a party or event, helps the hosts to identify what went well, what didn't, and how to improve things next time.

WHAT DO YOU NEED BEFORE YOU GET STARTED?

Download and save a copy of the Party Planning Resource Guide and Pre-Party Checklist so you can share it with members who are planning a party or event. You may want to spend 15 minutes at an upcoming leader team or membership meeting describing the resource guide and checklist so that everyone understands how to use it.

Party Planner Tool

Problem Free Party Guide

The Five Most Common Reasons Parties End in Problems

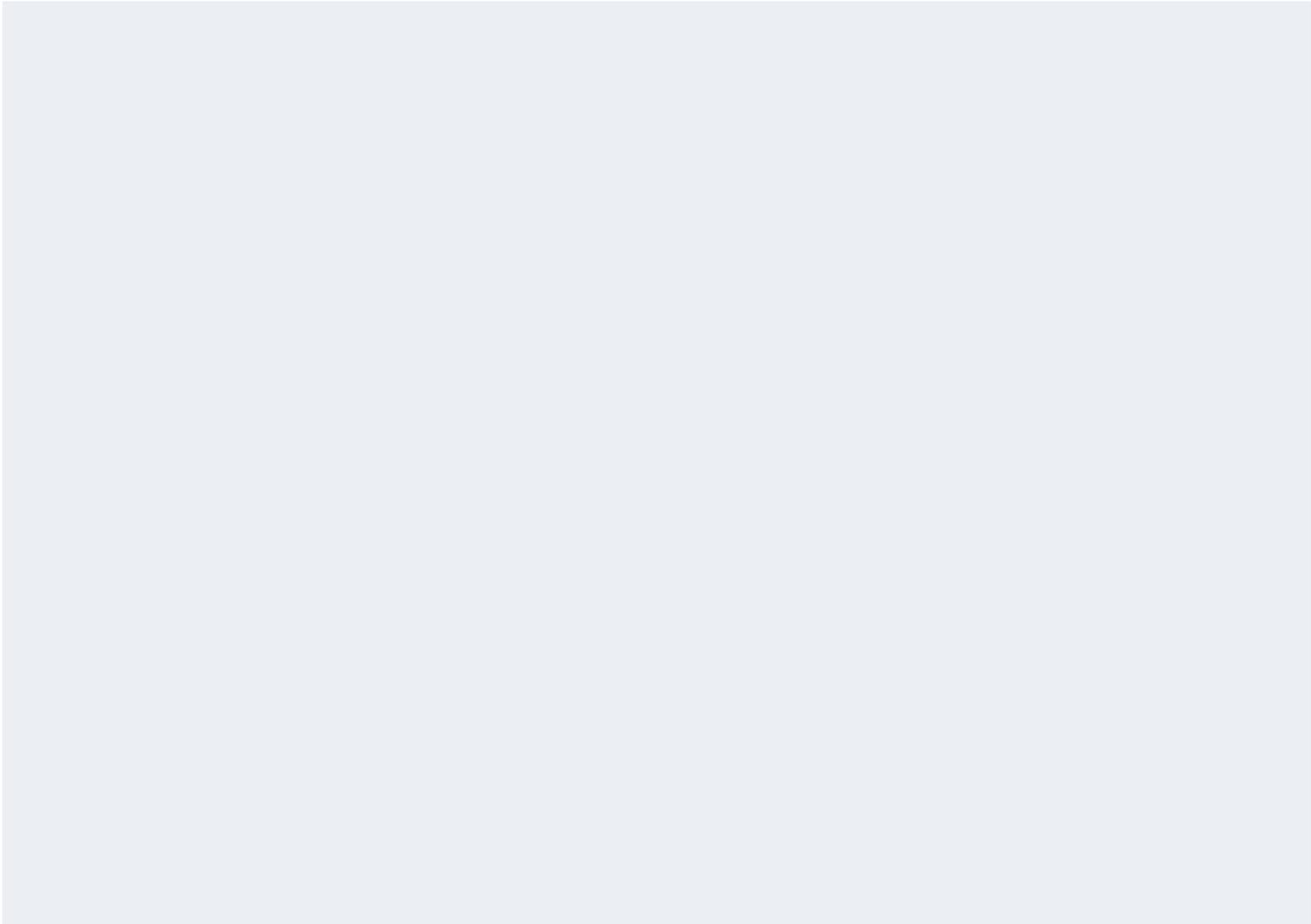
- 1. The party happens spontaneously without any planning.** Sounds pretty cool, doesn't it? A couple friends show up with a case or a few bottles, someone sends a tweet or a group text, and the next thing you know, a party is roaring at your place. But this kind of event tends to lead to problems because you end up with no control. When nothing is planned, anything can happen. And it often does, leaving you to deal with the consequences.
- 2. The doors are open for anyone.** Large, blow-out parties or events where anyone and everyone is welcome sound epic, but they're actually magnets for problems unless they are very well managed. Contrary to popular belief, open-door parties won't attract that amazing person you've been hoping to meet. Instead, they tend to draw people looking for free or illegal booze or an easy way to steal stuff, and people who don't care what happens to you, your stuff, or your future. It's fine to plan a big party with a lot of people—just make sure they're people you know.
- 3. The event revolves around alcohol and nothing else.** If drinking and getting drunk is the only point to the party, then be prepared to deal with a lot of very drunk people who are loud, disrespect your property, and act in ways that bring the police. A group of intoxicated people is not as much fun as it sounds. It usually ends with someone passing out or starting a fight, or people getting on each other without even realizing what they're doing (not the greatest sex to have). A group of people who come together only to black out? Huge risk for all kinds of problems for you, them, and everyone else. And being blacked out doesn't fly as an excuse in court.
- 4. Alcohol is out in the open for everyone to take as much as they want.** When you're hosting a party, supplying the alcohol may seem like the right thing to do. But if you supply the keg, garbage-can punch, or cases and bottles for everyone at the party to drink, you'll also be legally responsible for procuring alcohol for any person under 21 (against the law in all 50 states), serving alcohol to people who are already intoxicated (against the law in many states), and if someone gets drunk and becomes rowdy, noisy, or obnoxious, being the resident of a disorderly house (subject to a legal citation and possibly a violation of lease that can result in eviction). It's illegal to sell alcohol without a license, so that's not the answer either.
- 5. Nobody's willing to step in when things go too far.** Every party or event needs at least one person who stays sober and alert who has the authority to quiet people down, stop people from engaging in harmful behavior, cut off people from alcohol when they are intoxicated, stop highly intoxicated people from entering, and deal with the police or other authorities if they arrive. Not having someone in this role tells everyone at the party that anything goes.

The Five Things Everyone Should Do to Avoid Party Problems

1. **Make a plan, follow the plan, and let others know the plan.** Making a plan is the most important step, and it doesn't have to take long or happen far in advance. Creating a plan enables you to think through important things, starting with what you and your friends want to get out of the event and how you're going to get there. You'll need to make a few decisions (e.g., how many people you want at the party, what you want to do together, what you want to avoid, what would make the event a success in your mind). Once you've created the plan, it's important to stick to it. Be sure to let everyone know what type of event it will be so they know what to expect. And tell your neighbors, your landlord, the university (when appropriate), and the event facility manager about your plan. They may also be able to help you create the plan.
2. **Monitor the alcohol: bartend or make it BYOB.** There's a reason why bars have bartenders and not open spigots or bottles, and it's not just so they can make money. Having someone behind the bar, whether it's a third-party vendor/bartender or a member of your group who is at least 21, helps you control the amount of booze people drink and sets the tone for the role of alcohol in the party. More importantly, it keeps the very small percentage of students who don't know their limits from getting wasted on your alcohol. An alternative, especially for informal parties, is to have people bring—and drink—their own alcohol.
3. **Make the party about more than getting drunk.** There's got to be something more than just getting high or drunk at your party or event. That's fun for about an hour, then it becomes a huge mess. What else do you want to do together? Get to know new people? Have good conversations? Tell each other stories? Dance? Play a game or other activity? Watch a band, film, performance, or sporting event together? There are endless possibilities; you just need a little planning and some creativity. By switching the focus to something other than getting drunk, you enable people (who are of legal age) to use alcohol to enhance the event and get what they really want out of it. There are lots of ways to relax, let loose, and forget about the statistics exam for a few hours. By the way, making the party about something other than getting drunk is easier when you provide alternative beverages and some food. You'll want to add these to your plan.
4. **Have one or two sober party/event monitors, and empower them to take care of problems.** You may not need a stereotypical bouncer, but you can probably see why most clubs have them. Some people don't know what is appropriate in social situations, they don't know their limits, and they won't respect you, your guests, or your property. You need one or more group members who will step in to stop a disaster from happening, ask someone to leave, intervene in a tense situation, or deal calmly with the police or other authorities if they show up. The party/event monitors need to be empowered to keep the peace and to prevent things from going haywire.
5. **Be proactive with the police and other authorities.** Despite your best efforts, unwanted problems can pop up at events and parties where alcohol is present. The best approach is to be proactive with the police (e.g., talk with campus and community police officers about safe party strategies, call the police when unwanted guests arrive or get too rowdy, work with the police to resolve issues peacefully). Assuming the police are out to bust college students and ruin every college party is silly; they'd far rather be doing something other than showing up at your event. Get to know the police officers in your area, and if they show up uninvited, work with them. Being defensive or obstinate gives them more cause to investigate or cite you. They are most likely responding to a complaint from a neighbor or a venue manager, and need to be reassured that you have matters under control.

Lessons You've Learned Hosting Events

Below write some of the lessons you've learned about avoiding party problems. Your lessons may be related to things like how you invite people to events, how you manage the event, and the party activities you have found the most successful.



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Party Planning Resource Guide and Pre-Party Checklist

For each of the following statements or questions, fill in the blank or check the answer or statement that best applies to the party or event you are planning. The purpose of this checklist is to help you get a clear picture of what you want for the event and how to get there. Completing the checklist should take no more than 10 minutes.

Step 1: Get the Event Clear in Your Mind

- This is an official social event of our organization.
 This is an informal gathering and an “unofficial” group event.
 This event has nothing to do with our organization, even if some of our members will be present.
- This is an invitation-only event.
 Invited guests can bring people they know to the event.
 This is an open event that anyone can attend.
- We want a really big event with at least ____ people attending.
 We want a medium-sized event with no more than ____ people attending.
 We want a small, intimate event with no more than ____ people attending.
- People are getting together for this party/event to. . . (Check as many as apply)**
 Get to know more people, or get to know people better.
 Relax at the end of a long week.
 Celebrate _____ together.
 Enjoy an activity together.
 Burn off steam/have some fun together.
 Showcase our organization, our members, or our accomplishments.
 Raise money for our organization or for a charity.
- What’s the central activity of the event (what’s the main thing you’ll do when you’re together)?**

6. What is your vision for the event? What would make it a success?

7. What do you *not* want to happen at the event? What do you want to avoid?

Step 2: Make Some Decisions about Alcohol at the Event

1. How much money are you going to spend on this event? _____

2. How much of this amount should be for alcohol? _____

3. Where are you going to hold the event? _____

4. How many people can the event venue legally hold? _____

5. How will alcohol be available at the event?

We will supply alcohol. Indicate below which types of alcohol and how much of each you will supply.

Beer: How much? _____

Wine: How much? _____

Spirits: How much? _____

We will use a third-party vendor to provide alcohol.

Guests will bring their own alcohol.

6. How will alcohol be served?

A member of our organization will be bartender at the event.

A third-party vendor will serve alcohol.

Guests will serve themselves from the supply of alcohol they bring.

7. What non-alcoholic beverages will you serve? _____

How much of each non-alcoholic beverage will you supply? _____

8. What types of food will you serve? _____

Step 3: Security: Plan to Avoid Problems

1. What do you need to make sure people who attend the party know before they show up?

- The kind of event this will be/what they should expect they'll be doing
- Whether they can invite others to the event or announce the event to others
- Whether alcohol will be available/whether they should bring their own if they wish to drink
- Our organization's policies about serving guests who are under the legal drinking age
- Our organization's policies about arriving at one of our events intoxicated or high

2. Who—other than the guests—needs to know that this event is happening?

- Neighbors or residents surrounding the event venue
- University staff/administrators
- Local or campus police
- Other (please describe): _____

3. How will you ensure that only invited guests enter the venue?

- We will have someone at the door with a list of invited guests.
- We will have someone at the door monitoring who is entering.
- We will give invited guests a tag, bracelet, or other identifier.
- Other (please describe): _____

4. How will you ensure that you're not supplying alcohol to anyone under the legal drinking age?

- Our third-party vendor will enforce this.
- We will card people at the door.
- The person bartending will ask each person to show an ID before they are served.

5. What is your plan for parking/getting people to and from the event?

- We have told guests where they may and may not park.
- We have arranged transportation for guests (e.g., private bus, designated drivers).
- Parking is not an issue; most people can get a cab/bus/train or walk to the event.

6. What is your plan for managing the trash generated by the event, especially outside?

- We will have trash bags or barrels out for people to use.
- We will have people picking up trash throughout the event.
- We will have people cleaning up trash after the event or early the next day.

7. In what kind of situations will your party/event monitor step in?

- A guest or group member is getting too loud.
- A guest or group member is starting a fight with someone.
- A guest or group member is over-intoxicated and needs to be taken home.

A guest or group member is making unwanted sexual advances on others.

A guest or group member is destroying property.

Other (please describe): _____

8. In what kind of situations will people be asked to leave?

A guest is unwilling to stop causing problems after being asked to stop.

Someone has complained about another guest or member.

Other (please describe): _____

9. In what kind of situations will you ask for police assistance?

There are many more guests at the event than we wanted and they won't leave.

One or more people are causing problems or threatening the health or safety of other guests.

Other (please describe): _____

Step 4: Get It Done

Identify the person responsible for each task below. If a task isn't relevant for this event, write "NA" for "Not Applicable."

Task	Person Responsible
Make arrangements with the event venue	
Create a guest list and send invitations	
Plan and implement the core activity for the event	
Purchase alcohol or make arrangements with a third-party vendor	
Purchase non-alcoholic beverages	
Purchase and/or prepare food	
Notify neighbors and others about the event	
Arrange for music or a DJ	
Set up the venue for the event	
Monitor the door so that only invited guests or people you know enter	
Monitor the event and step in if problems arise	
Clean up after the event	
Other (please describe):	
Other (please describe):	

Pre-Party Checklist

Check the items that you and others have accomplished before the event.

- A guest list has been created.
- Invitations have been sent.
- We have received responses from the people we invited; we know who is coming and who isn't.
- We have a plan for how alcohol will be served and monitored.
- Everyone coming understands the kind of event we're having and what to expect about alcohol being served there.
- We have a plan for making food and non-alcoholic beverages available.
- We have designated event monitors who know what to do if problems arise and are empowered to do it.
- We have sober door monitors who know who has been invited to the event and who should not be let in.
- We have notified neighbors/residents near the venue that we will be hosting an event. We have asked them to let us know if the event is disturbing them before they call the police.
- We have let the local police know we will be hosting an event.
- We have let university staff or offices know we will be hosting an event (if appropriate).
- If the event is happening in a place where one or more of our group members live, we have secured people's valuables so that they can't be stolen and we have limited access to places where we don't want guests hanging out.
- Everyone involved in hosting the event is prepared to deal with neighbors and the police in a productive and cooperative manner.
- We have a plan for cleaning up inside and outside after the event.
- We have a plan for following up with neighbors, the police, or university officials if needed after the event.
- We have scheduled a time to debrief about the event with our organization's leaders to talk about how we can manage risks even more effectively for the next event.

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Post-Party Debrief

Within a week of the event, have a brief conversation between the leaders of your organization and the group members who ran the event. This type of debrief can help your student organization improve its party-hosting practices. It can also provide an opportunity for your group's leaders to address any legal or civic consequences that arose from the event. Take notes during the debrief and review them as you prepare for the next event hosted by your organization.

The person facilitating the debrief should read aloud each of the following questions and check all of the responses that the group feels apply.

1. What was successful about the event/what worked well?

- The people attending
- The central activity of the event
- The amount of food, beverages, and/or alcohol present
- The ways that certain members or guests acted or contributed
- The venue or location for the event
- The pre-event planning

2. What was *not* successful about the event/what did *not* work well?

- The people attending
- The central activity of the event
- The amount of food, beverages, and/or alcohol present
- The ways that certain members or guests acted or contributed
- The venue or location for the event
- The pre-event planning

3. What problems, if any, occurred that you will need to address or deal with in the coming days or weeks?

- Someone got really drunk, passed out, and/or detracted from the event's success.
- Someone got sick or had to be taken home.
- Someone had to be taken to the hospital or someone called emergency medical services.
- Something was stolen.
- Violence occurred and/or someone was assaulted.
- Someone was sexually assaulted.
- The property of the host or a neighbor was damaged.
- Neighbors complained to us about the party.
- The police gave us a warning.

- The police broke up the event.
- The police gave citations to guests at the party.
- The police gave citations to the hosts of the party.

4. What could you have changed before the event to avoid this problem/these problems?

- The people attending
- The central activity of the event
- The amount of food, beverages, and/or alcohol present
- The venue or location for the event
- The event monitors
- The pre-event planning process

5. Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently the next time to make this type of event more successful or to reduce the likelihood of problems?

