



Holiday Party Planning Checklist

Take the stress out of throwing your next party by following this party planning checklist.

3 WEEKS BEFORE

- Create a guest list.
- Set your party's theme. Whether the theme is a catered black-tie holiday affair or an ugly sweater potluck, be sure to include it on your invitations.
- Send invitations. Regardless of whether you choose paper invitations or evites, be sure to give your guests plenty of notice.
- Choose your menu and book your caterer, if you're hiring one.
- Enlist the aid of family or friends for pre- and post-party tasks, as well as to help replenish food and drinks during the party.

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Clean your china and silverware and launder the table linens, if you plan to use them.
- Create your holiday music playlist.
- Buy non-perishable groceries and prepare dishes and desserts you plan to freeze.

1 WEEK BEFORE

- Clean your home or hire a cleaning service to do it for you.
- Move furniture around to improve flow for your guests. Set out tables to hold hors d'oeuvres and other snacks. Put away fragile or special items that may get broken, stained or otherwise ruined and clear any clutter. Set the mood with low-wattage lighting.
- Inventory your cookware and dishes to ensure you have enough. If not, head to a discount or thrift store to stock up. Create a list of the dishes and their intended purpose for the party, or label them with masking tape or a sticky note.
- Stock up on beverages. If you intend to make a signature drink, look online for recipes and make a sample ahead of time to taste test it.

A FEW DAYS BEFORE

- Tell your neighbors about the event, especially if guests will park in front of their houses or if you expect it to get loud.
- Start decorating. If you need help, ask family or friends.
- Stock up on cleaning items, such as salt, club soda and rags.
- Designate a place for coats. If it's a closet, make sure there are plenty of hangers.
- Finish shopping for the dishes you plan to prepare.

THE DAY BEFORE

- Set the table, if you're planning a sit-down meal, or set up plate and utensil stations.
- Buy/arrange flowers and centerpieces, if you plan to have them.
- Finish cooking, if possible. Do the prep work for the dishes you can't make ahead of time.
- Spot clean your home; that is, vacuum, sweep and dust high-traffic areas.

THE DAY OF THE PARTY

- Reheat the frozen or refrigerated dishes and desserts.
- Set up chairs and seating.
- Put out appetizers and snacks that won't spoil if they're left out for several hours, such as chips, baked items, etc.
- Enjoy your time with your guest.

Source: Real Simple

