A COMPLETE PLANNING TIMELINE FOR ANY MINISTRY EVENT!

We all know a well-organized event can be a huge win for any ministry! And as a kids or youth pastor, you've got a lot of events to plan, right? Like ...

- Family fun nights!
- All-nighters!
- Fundraisers!
- Trunk-or-treat weekends!
- Game nights!
- And so much more!

But let's face it—planning an event is usually the *least* fun part of an event. There's so much to do from the schedule to decorations, volunteer recruitment, renting special equipment, and promoting your event! So, where do you begin?

Well, no matter what kind of event you're planning, we want to help! Since our team here at Stuff You Can Use has planned *lots* and lots of kids and youth ministry events over the years, **we thought we'd put together a little checklist to help you plan your next event!** Whether you've planned a zillion events in your ministry career or are tasked with your very first one, **use this timeline as a checklist** to make sure you've got everything covered.

This timeline assumes you'll start planning your event three months in advance—but we know ministry can be a little unpredictable. If you're already feeling a little behind, don't worry! For now, shrink this timeline to fit your working deadlines. Then, next time, see if you can start planning a bit earlier. It'll be a lot less stressful!

Okay, now let's get into it. No matter what kind of event you're planning, here's what you'll want to do ...

3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose your date, time, and location.
- Communicate the details of your event to staff and volunteers.
- Coordinate with other ministries to build your marketing plan.
- Create flyers and other marketing materials.
- If needed, start drafting what you'll teach.

2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Create and test your online registration system.
- Finalize all marketing materials like flyers, posters, social media posts, and any announcement materials.
- Print any physical marketing materials.
- Communicate the details to parents.
- Design and order any custom merchandise you'll need.
- Detail and communicate your plan for food and drinks, décor, and activities.
- Book specialty items or services like space at an offsite location, rented equipment, musicians or performers, and transportation.
- Start recruiting volunteers.
- If needed, finish the second draft of what you'll teach.

6 WEEKS BEFORE

- Open online registration.
- Announce your event through social media, your church website and bulletin, and through live, in-person announcements.
- Start making weekly announcements during your programming and through all communication channels.
- Create and communicate your plan for set-up and tear-down for the event.
- Create and communicate your tech needs for the event.
- Continue recruiting volunteers.

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4 WEEKS BEFORE

When you're about a month away from your event, the prep work can really pick up. This is the time when you'll want to sort out all of your most important details. Check out these helpful tips to help you along the way.

- Finalize your schedule.
- Finalize your activities, including instructions, point scoring systems, and supplies.
- Order or shop for all non-perishable supplies.
- Continue making weekly announcements in your programming and through all communication channels.
- Check on all rentals, reservations, and hired talent.
- Continue recruiting volunteers.
- If needed, finish the final draft of what you'll teach.

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Continue making weekly announcements in your programming and through all communication channels.
- Send the final schedule and information to volunteers.
- Order or shop for any non-perishable supplies you still need.
- Draft the list of volunteers and their assignments.
- Continue recruiting volunteers.
- Run background checks on any new volunteers.
- Finalize what you'll teach, including slides, handouts, and discussion questions if needed.

1 WEEK BEFORE

With your event a week away, keep track of details like food, prizes, and last-minute marketing. Need help getting through the home stretch? We have a list of important reminders to add to your timeline.

- Order or shop for all perishable supplies you still need.
- Check on all rentals, reservations, and hired talent.
- Make a fun playlist.
- Organize your supplies like registration forms, food and drinks, shirts and merch, printed materials, volunteer name tags, activity supplies, and prizes.
- Review all event logistics.
- Finalize your list of volunteers and their assignments and send it to your volunteer team.
- Make a list of any announcements, rules, or instructions that need to be shared during the event.
- Make final announcements in your programming and through all communication channels.
- Reach out to anyone whose registration form or waiver is missing or incomplete.

DAY OF THE EVENT

- Close online registration.
- Review all event logistics, including food and drink, set-up and tear-down, transportation, reservations and rentals, tech, security, first-aid, teaching, registration, and activities.

AFTER THE EVENT

You did it! Your event is finished, and there's a buzz of energy around what you've done. You might think your work is done, but there's just one more thing to do. The week after your event is just as important as the week leading up to your event. Take time to debrief with your team to see what you've learned, what stories are worth sharing, and how you can keep improving your events! Here are a few things to remember...

- Return any supplies you borrowed.
- Debrief with your volunteer team.
- Post a recap video and images on social media and encourage teenagers to tag themselves or their friends.
- Follow up with new visitors.
- Send thank-you cards to volunteers who served at the event, especially your first-time volunteers.
- Celebrate your wins with your staff and volunteer teams.

There's so much to remember as you plan your next event, but hopefully, this checklist makes it a little easier for you!

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And hey—has anyone told you lately that you're amazing? It's hard work making these events happen, and we know it can be pretty thankless. So, no matter where you are on your event planning timeline, **we hope you take a second today to remember how much of a difference you're making.** Because you're not just planning, shopping, sweating, recruiting, and organizing stuff. You're creating an opportunity for kids or teenagers to ...

- Spend time in a place where they feel safe.
- Connect with people who love them.
- Make memories that will last.
- Hear, see, and experience the love of Jesus firsthand.

Oh, and while you're thinking about your events, it might be a good time to think about the big picture too. If you work with kids, we're sharing our strategy for planning an entire year of children's ministry events. And if you work with teenagers, here's our strategy for planning an entire year of youth ministry events!

If you need a little more support with your events, we've got some stuff that can help. Inside every volume of Grow Curriculum, we include everything you need to plan all of your events every year, including event guides, event themes, décor guides, a timeline for how to plan each event, graphics, activities with full instructions, and more!



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