

Event Setup & Breakdown Checklist

A practical day-of worksheet for birthdays, reunions, anniversaries, graduations, retirement parties, corporate events, and other celebrations.

Event: _____	Date: _____
Venue: _____	Guest Count: _____
Setup Begins: _____	Event Starts: _____

Before Leaving for the Venue

- Confirm the venue address, parking location, loading entrance, and contact person.
- Review the final event timeline and vendor arrival times.
- Pack decorations, signs, table items, favors, guest-book supplies, and special keepsakes.
- Pack extension cords, power strips, chargers, batteries, tape, scissors, zip ties, markers, and basic tools.
- Bring final guest lists, vendor contacts, seating information, and any printed schedules.
- Confirm that cake, food, gifts, photo displays, and other special items have assigned transportation.
- Charge phones, cameras, tablets, speakers, and other personal electronics.
- Bring water and a small emergency kit for the setup team.

Arrival & Load-In

- Check in with the venue contact before unloading.
- Verify which doors, elevators, hallways, and loading areas vendors should use.
- Confirm the event room is open, clean, and ready for setup.
- Check that tables, chairs, linens, and venue-provided items are present and arranged correctly.
- Keep loading areas, fire lanes, exits, and doorways clear.
- Move boxes and equipment to their final zones before opening everything.
- Protect walls, floors, doors, and furniture during load-in.
- Assign one person to direct setup so vendors and helpers are not working from conflicting instructions.

Room Setup

- Confirm guest-table layout and seating areas.
- Set up entrance, welcome sign, registration table, or name-tag station.
- Set up gift and card table in a secure, visible location.
- Set up cake, dessert, buffet, beverage, or food-service areas.
- Place centerpieces, table numbers, menus, favors, and other table decor.
- Set up memory tables, photo displays, slideshow screens, or special exhibits.
- Keep the dance floor, aisles, doorways, and emergency exits clear.
- Make sure decorations do not block speakers, vents, sprinklers, cameras, or sight lines.

Vendor Coordination

- Confirm the DJ/entertainer has the correct performance area and access to power.
- Confirm the caterer understands meal timing and service order.
- Show photographer or photo-booth staff where they will work.
- Confirm delivery locations for cake, flowers, rentals, or decor.
- Share the final timeline with all key vendors.
- Identify who will approve timing changes during the event.
- Make sure vendors know the venue's breakdown and load-out deadline.
- Provide a clear path for vendor equipment that avoids guest traffic.

Final Safety & Readiness Check

- Tape down or cover cords that cross walking areas.
- Check for loose rugs, unstable decor, wet floors, or trip hazards.
- Make sure candles, open flames, fog, special effects, or hanging decor comply with venue rules.
- Confirm restrooms are accessible and stocked.
- Check room temperature and ventilation.
- Verify adequate lighting at entrances, stairs, parking areas, and walkways.
- Make sure emergency exits and exit signs are visible.
- Confirm valuables, purses, payments, gifts, and cards are in a secure location.

30 Minutes Before Guests Arrive

- Remove empty boxes, carts, totes, ladders, and setup clutter from guest areas.
- Turn on decorative lighting and confirm the room looks finished.
- Test slideshow, microphones, video screens, or presentation equipment.
- Check table settings and straighten chairs.
- Confirm cake, food, beverages, napkins, plates, cups, and utensils are ready.
- Place guest book, pens, name tags, signs, and registration materials in position.
- Walk the room once from a guest's point of view.
- Confirm who will greet guests and who will handle last-minute problems.

During the Event

- Keep storage boxes and personal belongings out of guest areas.
- Watch high-traffic areas for spills, cords, moved chairs, or other hazards.
- Restock napkins, cups, water, or supplies as needed.
- Keep the gift and card area monitored.
- Coordinate schedule changes with the DJ/MC, venue, caterer, and event lead.
- Do not begin packing visible decorations while guests are still enjoying the event unless necessary.
- Take final group photos before significant numbers of guests leave.
- Confirm the planned ending time and vendor breakdown schedule.

Breakdown - First Steps

- Secure gifts, cards, cash boxes, guest books, photos, and personal keepsakes first.
- Pack fragile items separately.
- Remove food and cake only according to venue or caterer rules.
- Collect rented linens, decor, stands, or equipment in their designated areas.
- Use labeled totes or boxes so items are easier to sort later.
- Keep breakdown equipment away from remaining guests.
- Do not block exits or hallways with packed boxes.
- Check tables, under chairs, and around the room for personal belongings.

Final Load-Out

- Confirm all personal decor and supplies have been removed.
- Confirm all rented items are accounted for.
- Check the DJ, photo booth, catering, and other vendor areas for forgotten items.
- Remove tape, hooks, zip ties, signs, and approved fasteners.
- Pick up trash or loose decorations that are not part of venue cleanup.
- Check restrooms, coat areas, outdoor spaces, and parking areas for belongings.
- Make a final sweep for phones, chargers, purses, gifts, cards, coolers, and storage totes.
- Confirm with the venue contact that your group is cleared to leave.

Setup & Breakdown Assignment Sheet

Area / Task	Person Responsible	Completed
Entrance / Welcome Area	_____	_____
Guest Tables / Decor	_____	_____
Cake / Dessert / Gifts	_____	_____
Photo / Memory Area	_____	_____
Vendor Coordination	_____	_____
Safety / Final Walkthrough	_____	_____
Gift & Card Collection	_____	_____
Breakdown / Load-Out	_____	_____

Planning Tip: Label every box or tote by area before the event - for example, Entrance, Guest Tables, Cake Table, Photo Area, and Breakdown. That simple step can make both setup and load-out much faster and helps prevent important items from being misplaced.