

16 Tips to Plan a Successful Outdoor Event

Outdoor events have a host of problems unique to themselves, from permits to being prepared for bad weather. With proper planning you can ensure your event succeeds satisfying not only your client but your attendees as well.

By **Mona Gonzalez** - Apr 3, 2012



Imagine RIT is an annual [spring](#) festival that showcases innovative and creative work of students, faculty, and staff. The campus-wide festival attracts over 30,000 people in one day. May 7, 2011.

As warm weather comes around, more outdoor events are planned. These can be lovely, but be forewarned — outdoor events are sometimes much more difficult to organize than indoor events.

Here are some tips on how to plan an [outdoor](#) event and to minimize stress:

1. Get a permit

Do this as soon as you've finalized where and when you'll have your [outdoor](#) event. Do this first. The fastest way to shut down an event is to hold it without a

permit.

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2. Check up on all ordinances

What are the noise ordinances? Every town has them. Is noise prohibited after a certain time? You should also look into fire and [safety](#) codes. The latter may have restrictions on overselling tickets, advertisements and seating. Talk to the state and local authorities, the local fire department and the police about these.

3. Some [outdoor](#) events need more work than others

Is your event being held in an already existing outdoor facility? Great! That cuts your work in half. Otherwise, are you targeting a raw, uncommon area? Then advance planning and coordination is critical. You can expect to be in charge of everything — power, toilets, communications, equipment and food, among others. Make arrangements to bring everything to the [venue](#), and taking everything out of the venue after the event is done.

4. Load in, load out

Think beyond the event schedule itself, and factor in “loading in” and “loading out” time for everything, including arrangements for power, security, sanitation and other elements of the outdoor event.

5. Logistics and layout

Take photos of the venue, include a sketch and use markers to denote where you want your vendors, et. al. to be set up. How will the equipment be loaded in? The crew and guests? Have a meeting at the venue in advance, with all of your suppliers, so that you can all coordinate the downloading of equipment, parking of [trucks](#), parking space for guests, and other possible needs.

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6. Power

Foodway stations, DJ, and areas that will need lights all will need power stations. If there are not enough, tell your vendors to bring [extension cords](#), and check the power load per plug. [Coffee makers](#) and crock pots should not share extension cords with [sound](#) equipment. Also, have a back-up power system on standby.

7. Ensure the comfort of guests

Have a steady supply of drinking water and drinking fountains. Make sure they're spread all around the venue. Some events, like concerts, provide hosing for crowds. Consider renting [portable air conditioners](#), too.

8. Sanitation

You don't want any mistakes made here. A lack of restroom facilities, or poor toilet facilities, can ruin your event. Make sure you have enough sanitation equipment not just for the guests but also for the crew.

9. Pest control

Have an exterminator spray the area. Take note of how long it will take after extermination for the food to be safely set up in the area. Keep cans of light scent (such as aloe) [repellant](#) handy, and incorporate decorative citronella candles. Decorative [plate](#) covers can keep the food protected and also make the table setting look attractive.

Keep a few electric fans running. It keeps the guests [comfortable](#), and blows the mosquitoes away. Another strategy: Place a plate full of sugar water around the perimeter area to keep the bugs busy and out of your party.

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10. Amenities

Keep hand wipes, light [blankets](#), sunblock, bug spray, wraps and any other things available that you think will make your guests more [comfortable](#).

11. Lighting

An evening event will require [lights](#) even for exit paths, walkways and parking areas for convenience and safety.

12. Health precautions

Have medical professionals on standby, especially if your event is in a [remote area](#). Or at least keep a first-aid kit handy. Prepare a list of the nearest hospitals with directions on how to get to there.

13. Communication

This is especially important for events at remote sites. If the land is hilly, make sure your walkie-talkies have enough power to get through.

14. Monitor the weather

The most common reason to cancel outdoor events is inclement weather. Buy weather [insurance](#), and start monitoring the weather as far in advance as possible. You can get forecasts at [weather.com](#). Also, keep the wind in mind. You don't want things to blow over, so make sure that everything is anchored securely.

15. Plan for the rain

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Have a “plan B” in case of rain. Bring a tent, and know in advance where the DJs can go, the [desks](#), and the food. Portable pavilions can double to provide shade for guests and protection in case of rain. Some of these pavilions even have lovely sidings that can be rolled down in case of rain, and intake [vents](#) to accommodate [portable air conditioners](#).

16. Clean up

The event may be over, but your work is not. Make sure that you have made arrangements with the local sanitation department for cleaning up afterwards. Otherwise, have a hauling firm on hand for clearing the area, once the event is over.

Do you have any additional tips to add? Share with your peers in the comment section, and get a link back to your blog.

Photo by [Viktor Nagorny](#)

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Mona Sabalones Gonzalez is a veteran writer, book and magazine editor, and columnist in her country, the Philippines. She has also contributed articles to regional and some international publications. She has ghostwritten several books and contributed to the book, Faces of the New Millennium. She edited case studies for the 2015 APEC Foundation and made six page summaries per case study. She and her husband Ed have done marketing and publicity for select clients, and media coverage for events. Mona has written for several online publications and she has a blog, The Philippine Consumerist, and another blog with her husband Ed, The Euthymic [Dog](#), which is about their shared passion for animals and the environment.



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