

## **Top Reasons to Host a National Night Out Party**

1. Have fun!
2. Meet your neighbors. Neighbors knowing neighbors is the first step in creating a strong, vibrant community.
3. Increase the sense of belonging in your neighborhood. When you know people on your block, you can watch for each other, exchange skills and resources, and foster new friendships for people of all ages.
4. Share crime prevention and safety information.
5. Create a neighborhood contact list.
6. Meet residents who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time and know its history.
7. Start an annual neighborhood tradition of getting together at least once a year.

## **Tips for organizing a party**

As you begin to plan a National Night Out Party, here are some questions to consider.

### ***What kind of event you want to plan? How much time do you have to organize it?***

A block party can be as simple as serving ice cream bars in your front yard, or it can start with a street clean-up or special neighborhood project in the afternoon and end with a barbeque. You and your neighbors get to choose what will work best on your block.

### ***Can you enlist neighbors to help?***

The most successful events engage people throughout the process, and throughout the neighborhood. Start by asking the neighbors you know the best, and then reach out to others you may not have met yet.

### ***How can you create a welcoming event for everyone?***

- ◇ Get invitations out early, and to everyone on your block. These don't need to be elaborate: think simple flyers that can be hand-delivered. If you have an active email list, send messages. And if your neighborhood has a Facebook page, create an event. Get the word out in as many ways as you can, and be prepared to do some follow-up closer to the date.
- ◇ Plan activities that will encourage people to get to know each other (lots of suggestions in this packet). Think of what children will enjoy, and make sure that there are opportunities for people with differing abilities to participate.
- ◇ Provide name tags, and ask everyone to wear one. Set up a space for kids to create their own name tags.
- ◇ Make sure you have a sign-in sheet, and ask everyone if they are willing to share their contact information. If so, they can write their names, street address, email addresses and phone numbers. You can also ask for the names and ages of children in each home, and even pets. This information can be helpful in case of an emergency, or if a child or animal is outside without the knowledge of an adult. This list can be compiled and shared electronically with neighbors after the event. Be sensitive to neighbors who are not comfortable sharing personal information and ask if there are ways they would prefer to be contacted.

## Getting to know your neighbors who have limited English proficiency

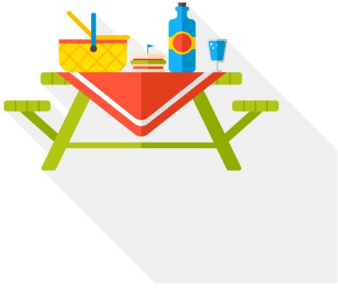
Many new residents/neighbors want to meet their neighbors and make friends. It is important to make everyone feel at ease and communication can be more challenging when there are language barriers.

Here are some suggestions that may help neighbors who speak limited English feel welcome.



- Use simple language and descriptive visuals on the event flyer. Pictures of food and activities can be helpful to explain “barbecue”, “face painting”, or “potluck”. If you have pictures of previous events, it may be helpful to use those to advertise.
  - If you have bi/multilingual neighbors, ask if they would feel comfortable translating the flyer and/or contacting neighbors with limited English proficiency who speak the same language.
  - It may take more than one invitation for a new neighbor to feel encouraged and comfortable enough to attend, so make a point of following up in the weeks leading up to the party.
  - If you are blocking off the street for the day, diagrams about street parking changes may be helpful to include on flyers.
  - Be welcoming and open with your expectations of neighbors coming from different cultural backgrounds.
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- Not all cultures shake hands upon meeting or answer questions about their jobs - try a smile first and follow their lead!
  - Neighbors with limited English skills may understand more than they can speak. Use accessible language when you welcome them, and show that you are glad to see them at the event.
  - Take the time to learn each other’s names. Use name tags to get to know your neighbors and learn the correct pronunciation as a sign of respect and friendship.
  - Make activities accessible to those with limited English language skills. Avoid activities that require a lot of reading and writing.
  - Many people do not drink alcohol, eat pork or other meat. Be aware of special cultural/religious diet or activity constraints and ensure there are options.
  - Safety is a big concern for many residents because of past experiences or fear caused by not knowing the language. Understand that they might not feel comfortable providing personal information like email addresses or phone numbers.

## Planning Ahead



Planning a party invites creativity, especially when the event is outdoors. Here are some basics to consider.

- In case of inclement weather, have a covered alternative in mind. Move the party under a carport, or have pop up tents ready to go.
  - You'll need tables for food and activities (see if you can borrow from neighbors).
  - Ask neighbors to bring their own chairs if possible. Have extras.
  - Table cloths of plain butcher or craft paper can be cut to size and are compostable.
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- Compostable cups, plates, napkins, are available online, and in larger, affordable quantities at Cash and Carry and other local stores.
  - If having a potluck, ask neighbors to bring their own serving platters or bowls, and utensils.
  - For trash disposal, roll out recycling, compost and garbage carts. If you expect a large turnout, ask neighbors to share theirs as well.

### Common Sense Precautions

- ⇒ Think safety for all activities. For example, keep barbecues away from activities for children. Keep pets indoors for everyone's safety and comfort.
- ⇒ Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on city streets or in parks.
- ⇒ Encourage residents to use their own bathrooms, and to keep their doors locked even if they are close to home.
- ⇒ In hot weather food spoils quickly. All perishables such as mayonnaise, salads or meats should be stored in coolers and be kept at the proper temperature.



### Party ideas – getting to know each other

1. Show off special skills. Ask those who RSVP to your party if they have any talents they'd be willing to share, such as playing an instrument or teaching line dancing. This will not only provide entertainment for your party, but help everyone learn something new about their neighbors.
2. Host a kids' talent show. Allow the children to show off their stuff. Kids can sing, perform a skit, tell a joke, whatever they like. They'll enjoy being the "stars" of the party, and it will help them feel involved.
3. Hang up a world map. People can place stickers on where they were originally from. It's a fun way to discover all the different hometowns of the neighbors, and can spark some good conversation.
4. Put out a notebook. People can write how they came to live where they are, what they like best about their neighborhood, a favorite neighborhood memory, etc. Throughout the party, people can read and write entries. It'll help everyone to get to know a bit about each other and can be interesting to read.
5. Hang a banner for pictures. Make a "National Night Out 2022" banner and put it on a wall or fence. It will serve for a perfect backdrop for photos of neighbors together.



## And even more ideas

### Simple refreshments

- Potluck
- Bring your favorite snack
- Coffee, tea, and dessert
- Cookie exchange
- Fruit and cheese plates
- Hot dogs and brats (include non-meat alternatives)
- Ice cream cones/make your own sundaes
- Lemonade and cookies
- Mini-donut stand
- Popcorn
- Pretzels and pop
- Root beer floats
- Watermelon



### Group conversations/ mixers

- Have a fun icebreaker
- Welcome new residents
- Update block contact list
- Talk about area crime concerns and keeping an eye on each other's houses
- Block history stories
- Find block leader volunteers
- Neighbor trivia game w/prizes for right answers
- Photos from past block parties and activities



### Activities for youth

- Bicycle parade/rodeo
- Chalk art
- Coloring station
- Face painting
- Games
- Make a banner or mural
- Piñata
- Riding bikes in streets
- Scavenger hunt
- Skits
- Talent Show
- Hula Hoops
- Bubbles
- Maze with plastic tape
- Tug-of-War
- Dance
- Ring toss contest
- Live music

## Still more ideas!

### All-ages activities

- Share garden produce
- Book swap
- Cake walk
- Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc.
- Organize a book club
- Paint an old car with water-based paint
- Parade
- Plant exchange
- Door prizes
- Pie-eating contests
- Recognize kids' accomplishments
- Nature scavenger hunt
- Sing-along/karaoke
- Soccer
- Storytelling (truth or fiction)
- Street dance
- Talent show
- Tour the gardens on the block
- Volleyball
- Water balloon fights
- Water balloon toss contest
- White elephant exchange



### Contribute to your community

- Beautify a common area
- Collect for a food bank
- Nominate a block club or an individual for a crime prevention award
- Plan a fall clean-up or bulb planting
- Presentation by an arborist (remove invasives, plant natives)
- Sign all ages up for library cards
- Voter registration drive

### Online resources for more inspiration

To learn more about the background of National Night Out, go to: [natw.org](http://natw.org)

For more planning ideas, Pinterest has pages of ideas. Pin some, and add your own!  
[pinterest.com](http://pinterest.com)

Search online for “National Night Out Planning Guide.” Links to other cities’ events will pop up so you can see what people do across the country.