



Free Homecoming Planning Checklist

FOR A SEAMLESS CELEBRATION

This guide provides a step-by-step process for planning Homecoming, outlining the tasks and people involved before, during and after the event. It's a big undertaking, but if you break it down into manageable steps, your Homecoming event will go off without a hitch.

Before Your Homecoming Event

Planning your Homecoming event ahead of time helps ensure that it is successful and the very best that it can be. Planning ahead of time ensures there is ample time before the event to secure necessary resources, book a venue and hire other services (like a photographer or DJ), and create the event that students want.

Keep reading for a list of steps and Homecoming planning ideas that are typically involved in a Homecoming plan. It's key to start planning as early as possible for the best results, so don't wait!

Research how to plan a Homecoming event.

If you're new to event planning or have never planned a high school event like Homecoming before, research can be very helpful in providing a basic framework for how to do it. Planning should begin well before the event, preferably several months to a year in advance. This is because planning a Homecoming involves numerous logistical elements and you'll need enough time to properly fundraise for the event.

The internet has a huge number of resources, with many fun and unique theme ideas, activities and tips for planning the perfect event. Researching online, browsing ideas on a [site like Pinterest](#) and looking at tutorials (such as for decorating) can all help provide inspiration and help planning go smoother.

Be sure to consult with anyone who has previously put on a Homecoming event or dance at your school. They'll likely have special insights on how to make these events work best for your school's unique layout and characteristics.

Choose a Homecoming theme.

Your event theme is a critical part of Homecoming planning, so make this decision early on. Once you select your theme, it will drive other elements of your event, like the refreshments, venue and decorations.

Consider allowing students to vote on their favorite Homecoming theme or to submit ideas themselves! Taking part in creating the event can help get students excited about Homecoming and boost attendance.

Some popular themes for Homecoming include:

- Classic Hollywood or vintage
- Rainbow
- Masquerade or costumes
- Glow-in-the-dark
- A specific era, such as the 60s or 80s
- The Wild West
- Golden Gala
- Under the Stars
- Your school's mascot and colors

Conduct a survey to gather Homecoming planning ideas from students.

Before Homecoming planning gets too far along, be sure to solicit feedback from students. Ask them about the theme and all the most important elements of the event. Conducting a survey beforehand helps ensure that you include the elements students want most. It also lets the planners know what went well in previous years and what didn't. Feedback helps you find practical solutions to these issues, helping you to craft a better Homecoming this and every year.

Some good questions to ask in your survey might be:

- Have you attended Homecoming before?
- What did you like about it? What did you not like about it?
- What theme or activities would you like to see?
- What part of Homecoming are you most excited about?
- Do you have any accessibility concerns or suggestions for us?
- Do you have any other questions, suggestions or concerns regarding Homecoming?

Start fundraising early and have a realistic budget in mind.

Your budget will likely depend on your event size, school size, resources and other pertinent logistical details. However, regardless of how big or small your budget is, it is still vital to have one in place when planning for Homecoming. Your budget ensures that you don't overspend for the event and that there are financial resources set aside for each element. Strive for transparency and good financial management each step of the way leading up to the event.

Fundraising can be one of the trickier and more time-consuming elements of planning for Homecoming, which is why it is so important to begin early. Aim to start fundraising a year or at least six months before the event, though this can vary depending on financial needs and logistics.

Some of the most popular fundraising ideas for Homecoming are:

- Concession sales at football games or other sporting events
- Car washes
- Bake sales
- Dance marathons
- Photo booths or photography contests
- Karaoke or fashion shows
- Art or talent shows
- Game nights
- Parents' night out events
- Raffle tickets
- Bake sales
- Crowdfunding and donations

□ Choose a date and develop a schedule or timeline of events and activities.

One of the elements that you should decide on as early as possible is the actual date of your event. Selecting this date well in advance gives people time to mark it on their calendars, and allows you to book services (such as a DJ or photographer) before their availability fills up.

As you work to plan your Homecoming event, it's also important to develop a schedule or timeline of all the activities. Some Homecoming events take place over an entire week, with a parade, spirit events, tailgating, a game and a dance. Whatever events you want to stage, plan them out early to help ensure they run smoothly.

□ Plan the decorations and other accessories.

Once you select your theme, you can move forward with planning the decor and other accessories that will tie your event together. Your theme can provide a lot of guidance for the decorations, helping create a cohesive look and feel for your Homecoming. It's a large part of what makes your event a success because it provides visual excitement and sets the right mood.

Coordinate your decorations and accessories so they match. For example, if your event is black-and-white themed, stick to decoration parameters to help communicate this theme properly. If your theme is something like classic Hollywood or a gala, consider using luxurious colors like gold and silver and swirly, vintage furniture at your photo booth.

□ Plan the refreshments and snacks.

Your snacks and refreshments can also further enhance your theme. Fresh fruit, bite-sized appetizers, sweets and punch are classic Homecoming treats, but they can be tailored or modified to suit the aesthetic of your event.

If you have students who have allergies or food sensitivities, consider creating a dedicated snack table for them with safe snacks and beverages. Clearly label ingredients, have dedicated serving utensils and plates available, and educate staff and volunteers assisting with the event on food safety and cross-contamination.

Choose a good Homecoming venue.

Typically, the dance part of Homecoming is staged in your high school's gym. Gyms or even cafeteria spaces can often work well for these events, because they are large spaces where students can stretch out and enjoy the festivities. However, smaller high schools may not always have the space or proper amenities for putting on the dance. In these situations, leasing a venue can be a wise option and helps ensure there is enough space for everyone who wants to attend.

Some alternative event spaces for the Homecoming dance might include:

- A local restaurant
- A local gallery
- An art museum
- An office building
- An arcade
- A local event or community center

Don't forget about music and a DJ.

Music is perhaps the most important part of your event! After all, Homecoming is a dance. While not everyone enjoys getting down on the dance floor, music can help to provide a pleasant and festive atmosphere for all attendees.

Most Homecoming dances feature a DJ or designated person in charge of the music. In other situations, a live band or group may provide some or all of the music. Hiring a DJ is usually more affordable than live music. Homecoming season can be quite busy, with multiple high schools often competing for event-planning services, so hire your musical entertainment early on to ensure availability.

Ensure you adhere to your budget along the way.

During Homecoming planning — or while you're planning any event — you should be regularly [checking your budget](#) and ensuring you're staying within the limits you set. Prioritize the elements that need to be booked (like your venue) and book them early on. Once you secure all the necessary services, you can see if there's extra wiggle room in the budget.

If you find that your budget is getting tight, consider cutting more expensive elements of the event that aren't necessary or inquiring about discounts. You can also consider additional fundraising efforts, but be aware that these require extra time, planning and resources.

Promote your Homecoming event.

Now that your Homecoming event is starting to take shape, it's time to promote it! Get the word out around school with signs, announcements and booths. Don't forget to post signs around the local community, advertise on social media and make announcements on the school website or via email.

Decide how you will sell tickets.

Once you start promoting your event and getting people excited about it, it's time to sell tickets! Decide on a ticket price and consider offering discounted sales or free tickets to students who may not be able to afford them otherwise. You can sell tickets either online for a fully virtual experience or make physical tickets available for purchase at a booth or your school's administrative office.

The Week of Your Homecoming Event

As Homecoming draws near and the week of the event arrives, you'll need to ensure that all of the important logistical elements are in place, and deal with any last-minute challenges.

Coordinate with volunteers.

The closer it gets to your event, the more crucial it is to coordinate with volunteers and other helpers. Schedule a meeting with everyone at the beginning of Homecoming week where you can discuss concerns, ideas and ensure overall cohesiveness. Good communication is the cornerstone of any successful event, so remain in contact with people throughout the entire process.

Have a setup schedule for Homecoming day.

On the day of Homecoming, provide all volunteers and workers with a schedule for setting up the event. For example, you may need people to run the concession stand at the football game while others work on setting up decorations at the dance venue. Having a plan or checklist for the day helps keep people organized and on-task.

Provide support during the event.

It's important to provide ongoing support during the actual Homecoming event, not just before it. Have chaperones and volunteers available to assist with food and to help ensure each student is having a good time. If an issue arises, there will be people available to help quickly resolve it.

Have a cleanup plan when Homecoming is over.

Don't forget about cleanup! Develop a timeline for breaking down the event and consider doing light cleanup during the actual event if possible. For example, clear empty dishes or service trays or remove props and furniture that are no longer needed.

After Your Homecoming Event

You did it! Now that the event is over, you can finally take a break and congratulate yourself and your team.

□ Gather feedback after the event is over.

Once the event has concluded, consider soliciting feedback from everyone one last time. A quick post-Homecoming survey can generate helpful new Homecoming planning ideas and suggestions for next year, and let you know what parts people enjoyed most.

□ Thank your volunteers and others who helped put Homecoming together.

It takes an army to plan and run Homecoming, so be sure to give a big thank-you to all your volunteers and helpers who made it possible. Let them know how much their work is appreciated and invite them to help with future school events!

□ Start planning for the next Homecoming!

Now that you've pulled off a great Homecoming, you can start planning for your next event. Incorporate elements and feedback from the previous event to keep building on your event-planning success.