



How to organise a big bash

If you're aiming to raise lots of money for the British Heart Foundation (BHF), you may want to think about organising a big bash. A big bash can be a charity ball or fundraising dinner with proceeds going towards the BHF.

It may seem a bit daunting at first, but organising a big bash is great fun and a really rewarding way to fundraise. Use this step-by-step guide to help you plan your event.

Step one – take time to make time

Organising a big bash can take time, so make sure you can fit it in around your existing commitments. You might want to ask your family or friends to help out, or perhaps even form a committee, dishing out the various responsibilities to help you get things done.

Step two – money, money, money

While some companies are happy to offer you their facilities free of charge, especially as you're raising money for charity, it's best to assume that you'll need to spend a bit of money to make your big bash brilliant. The first thing you should do is sit down and make a list of essentials, for example:

Venue

Whether you choose a hotel function room, your local pub or your company's board room, you'll need a venue that suits your event.

Food and drink

Are you serving champagne and canapés, or afternoon tea; a sit down meal or a buffet? Regardless, you may need to pay a price per head.

Staff

If you're renting a hotel function room, they may include staff with the booking, but check, otherwise you may end up paying waiter as well as host.

Entertainment

The more fun your guests have, the more money they are likely to donate at your big bash, so keeping them entertained is key. Whether you choose a live band, a slight-of-hand magician or a comedian, make sure you know exactly how much they will charge you for their act.

Publicity

Dependent on the size of your big bash, you may want to design invitations and posters for your guests to help publicise the event.

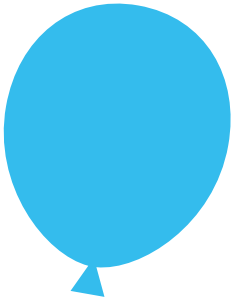
So, how are you going to pay for all this? You should definitely try to get as much free or as cheap as you can. Talk to each supplier about why you're raising money for the BHF and how important it is to you. They might do you a deal!

You could also seek sponsorship to cover the cost of your event. Perhaps your employer will sponsor an element of the event for you (for example, paying for the venue), or maybe the caterers will provide refreshments free of charge in exchange for their logo on your invitations and posters. Whoever you choose to approach, remember to explain why you're fundraising for the BHF and what they will get in exchange for sponsoring your event. It's best to start with companies who already know you, as they might be more inclined to lend their support.

The final way to pay for your event is to use some of the proceeds. If you decide to do this, you'll need to be transparent about the percentage of ticket money that will be used to pay for the event, and ensure that you include this information on any materials you produce.

Once you've worked out roughly how much your event will cost, you can decide how much you'll charge per ticket. Ideally the money you'll make back on ticket sales will at least equal your outgoings, so that any money raised on the night is donated straight to the BHF.

By working this out, you can calculate your "break-even point" – the point at which your event is paying for itself, as well as calculating how much you can raise once you surpass this target.



Step three – location is everything

Deciding where you hold your big bash is the first step to shaping your event. Wherever you choose, make sure you find out the following in the initial meeting, so you can decide whether the venue suits your needs:

- Is the venue accessible to all your guests? Make sure that everyone can reach the venue by checking whether there is parking or good transport links, as well as the venue's disability access.
- Is there a charge to hire the room? If there is a refundable deposit, what are the conditions for getting the whole amount back?

Top tip: If you tell them why you're fundraising for the BHF, they may give you a charity discount, or even let you use their facilities free of charge. If you don't ask; you don't get!

- Do you have to use the onsite caterers, and if so what are their costs?
- When can you gain access to the venue and when do you need to be offsite?
- Are there any restrictions on you hiring the space; for example, what is the room capacity? Are you allowed to bring in entertainment?

Step four – planning for the night

Now that you have your venue, you need to make some decisions about what will happen at your big bash, including:

- Do you have a theme for the event? This will influence a lot of aspects of the event such as dress code, food, music and any decorations.
- What food and drink will you serve? Will it be sit-down or a buffet? Will you need waiters and bar staff? What time will you serve the food?
- What entertainment are you going to offer? If you're playing music, does the venue hold a PRS for playing music (they normally do, but it's best to check because if not you may need to apply for one)? Does the entertainment need a stage and sound system?

- How are you going to fundraise on the evening? You might want to give a speech to explain who the BHF is and why you're supporting us and ask sponsors to give a donation. Alternatively you could hold a raffle* or auction to get people giving on the night.

Once you've decided on these things, you'll be able to find out whether you need a temporary event notice (licence) to organise your event. Your venue may be able to tell you if they hold a licence you can use or you can contact your local authority to check. Remember that you can't serve alcohol to under 18s.

*For more information on raffles, please see *How to organise a raffle*.

Step five – getting bums on seats

To make sure your event is a sell-out, you need to publicise it to everyone you know. Start by inviting all your contacts, with details about the event, as well as how much tickets cost and where they can buy them.

If you're expecting lots of colleagues to attend, or are a member of a club, ask if you can display some posters around the office or club house to encourage people to buy a ticket.

Top tip: Encourage each guest to bring a date – it's a really easy way to double your numbers!

Step six – setting up

Leave yourself plenty of time to set up on the day of your event. Remember to order any BHF-branded materials you need in advance of the day, for example, balloons and banners) and buy in anything else you need before the big day – you don't want to be rushing around bulk-buying paper plates when you should be glamming yourself up to play host!

Make sure you arrive first and check that the room is set up as you require it. Leave plenty of time to resolve any issues so that you can enjoy yourself once the party starts!

Step seven – party time!

Enjoy yourself and take loads of pictures to send in so that we can see you enjoying yourself.

Thank you so much for all your support.