

BLOCK PARTY

PACKET

An Easy How-To Guide
To Organize A Neighborhood Block Party



A neighborhood block party is the opportunity for neighbors to get together, meet each other, have some fun, and possibly work together on a common goal or activity.

Top 10 Reasons To Have A Neighborhood Block Party

1. To have fun! You do not need a special reason to celebrate.
2. To create an opportunity to know your neighbors and where they live.
3. To establish new friendships.
4. To increase the sense of belonging in your community.
5. To share resources or interests. Think carpools, babysitters, gardening, lawn care, book clubs, etc.
6. To promote a safe and caring neighborhood where people look out for each other.
7. To ensure you are there for each other in case of an emergency.
8. To learn who might need a little extra help from time to time.
9. To meet some of the long-standing neighbors who can share history about the community.
10. To BLESS the neighborhood.

BLOCK PARTY

THINGS TO CONSIDER



GETTING STARTED

Start and continue in prayer. The idea of a Neighborhood Block Party is to bring neighbors together, so one of the first steps is to talk with your neighbors. If this is the first time, consider sending out a questionnaire to explain what you want to do, share the benefits, gather opinions and interest, and suggest dates and times. Enlist as many neighbors as you can to help out. Allowing people to play a role gets them involved and excited about the event. Also, consider getting help from your own kids or other relationships (church, etc.)

TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

Which type of block party will work best in your neighborhood? Try not to go over-board, it can make people feel the event is too much work. Keep it simple!

Barbecue – Organizers purchase everything needed and neighbors share the cost, and bring their own food to grill.

Potluck – Everyone brings one dish to share.

Picnic – Everyone brings their own meal.

Catered – Everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased.

HOW BIG TO MAKE IT

Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. It can always grow in the future, but it is harder to shrink it. In selecting who to invite, use natural neighborhood boundaries where possible (i.e. End of a block), and invite everyone within that area. Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if this will be a neighborhood block party restricted to those on a street/block or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes, how many).

LOCATION

- ▶ A neighbor's backyard or front yard
- ▶ House
- ▶ Garage (rainout)
- ▶ Common room in a townhouse, apartment or condo complex
- ▶ Alley*
- ▶ Street*
- ▶ Park*

**Because these locations are on public lands, an application or permit may be required from the city. Safety needs to be an important factor in planning!*

CITY APPLICATIONS AND PERMITS

If you want to close down a street or re-direct traffic, your city may have application requirements. Permits may also be required if the event involves a public park, fire pits, sound equipment, etc. Look online at your city's website to obtain up-to-date information about the requirements where you live, as well as policies and resources. Remember that at the end of the function, public sites should be cleaned and left in good condition.

THINGS TO CONSIDER cont'd

TIMING TO GET THE EVENT PLANNED

- ▶ For a first-time block party, distribute the questionnaire and request feedback 6-8 weeks before the party.
- ▶ Adjustments may need to be made if a neighbor already has an event of their own planned.
- ▶ A weekend date or holiday between Mid-May to end of August is a good time for a block party. Also, consider National Night Out.
- ▶ Have an alternate rainout day or location planned, just in case.
- ▶ Keep in mind who lives in the neighborhood when setting the hours for the party.
- ▶ If young children or seniors are living near the party, plan to finish by 9:00pm or earlier.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

- ▶ A questionnaire can be used for neighbors to make their suggestions, and ask them to place it in your mailbox or email inbox.
- ▶ Information can be gathered from your neighbors by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch, and people often offer to help. If you have kids, include them in the process. Consider the best time to go door-to-door when neighbors would most likely be home. And, if you are nervous, practice beforehand.
- ▶ A casual approach can be used to inform neighbors as you see them out in their yards.
- ▶ Some neighbors can also be reached through online social networks, like **Nextdoor.com**.
- ▶ To reach neighbors in townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager, if there is one, and ask about the best way to get in touch with the residents.
- ▶ Make an extra effort to get new neighbors out to the block party.
- ▶ If you have not met the neighbor before, share a little about yourself and your family. Even if a neighbor does not attend, you at least got to meet them!
- ▶ Be confident: People are more likely to come to a party that seems like it will be fun, with a host or hostess who is truly excited about the upcoming event.
- ▶ Send or drop off an invitation at least one month before the party.
- ▶ Send or drop off a reminder card about one week before the party.
- ▶ Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighborhood as often as possible prior to the party.
- ▶ Do not be surprised if people say no at first, or do not show up. But also do not be surprised if quite a few people do!

ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS

- ▶ Make decisions about the set up.
- ▶ Act as a greeters at the event. Briefly welcome everyone toward the beginning.
- ▶ During the party, mingle and help as many people feel welcome as possible. Don't just spend time with those you know.
- ▶ Introduce new neighbors and help them make connections.
- ▶ Listen with care to people and their needs.
- ▶ Make sure clean up is done after the event. Encourage kids to help by offering prizes.

THINGS TO CONSIDER cont'd

SET UP

- ▶ For parties, involving street closures, you may wish to post signs the day before reminding everyone to remove their cars at the designated time.
- ▶ Set up a sign-in sheet as a record for next time, and it can also develop a contact list for the neighborhood.
- ▶ Name tags can be a great help. Decide what you want neighbors to write on their name tags (E.g. First and last names, house numbers).
- ▶ Wear your favorite sports jersey or other as a conversation starter.
- ▶ Line up tables for the food and have a few garbage cans available.
- ▶ Decide whether you will coordinate or everyone will bring their own tables, chairs, plates, utensils, cups, and beverages.
- ▶ If using barbecues, decide who will bring them and who will use them.
- ▶ Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.
- ▶ Neighbors should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- ▶ Possibly, institute a bathroom policy, such as “everyone to use his or her own,” so that home security is maintained.
- ▶ Decide if pets are allowed.
- ▶ Be ready to oversee the clean up after the event.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

- ▶ Visit, and enjoy sharing a meal together.
- ▶ Listen to some good music, or maybe there is some talent to share in your neighborhood. Be sensitive about the volume and city ordinances.
- ▶ Ask neighbors to bring some of their activities, like yard games, etc.
- ▶ Consider a few games, activities or icebreakers for kids and all ages to help connect everyone and keep them engaged.
- ▶ Take time to introduce one another and point to one's houses. This can be done in a game format.
- ▶ Consider reserving the **Constance Block Party Trailer**, especially if there are kids in the neighborhood. Visit www.constancefree.org for more info.



FOLLOWING THE EVENT

Remember names and some facts about your neighbors. Write them down, so you don't forget. Send thank-you's, including those who helped out. You may also wish to do an evaluation at the end of the event to collect any new ideas for the future. Consider the long-term opportunities in your neighborhood, such as serving those who may need a little extra help from time to time, sharing resources and skills, capitalizing on new friendships, promoting safety and care throughout the neighborhood, etc.

Refer to *The Art Of Neighboring* sermon series (www.constancefree.org/resources/service-videos) and related Small Group Notes (www.constancefree.org/small-group-notes) for further resourcing as well as the BLESS Missional Practices for additional thoughts and ideas.

OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT WITH NEIGHBORS



Give A Welcome or Gift Bag

- ▶ Customize a gift bag for your neighbor
- ▶ Give a welcome-to-the-neighborhood gift

Offer Service or Help

- ▶ Cut a neighbor's lawn
- ▶ Shovel snow from a neighbor's driveway
- ▶ Offer childcare
- ▶ Help with a DIY project
- ▶ Offer home improvement skills

Invite In Or Eat Out

- ▶ Have a cookout or a pizza party
- ▶ Serve coffee, tea and/or dessert
- ▶ Host a come-and-go "open house"
- ▶ Invite neighbors to a favorite restaurant

Do A Random Act of Kindness

- ▶ Visit an elderly person
- ▶ Run an errand for them
- ▶ Have a free lemonade stand
- ▶ Rake a neighbor's leaves
- ▶ Help a neighbor move in

Make The Most of The Holidays

- ▶ Choose a holiday (i.e. Easter, St. Patrick's Day, Cinco De Mayo, National Donut Day, Veterans Day, Christmas etc.) and give a gift, have a party, invite neighbors to an event, or do something together

Serve The Community Together

- ▶ Plan a neighborhood service project
- ▶ Volunteer together for a worthy cause
- ▶ Organize a fundraiser or awareness-raiser for a worthy cause
- ▶ Organize a community garage sale
- ▶ Invite & meet a local "celebrity" (community representative, public servant, politician, etc.)

Plan A Gathering or Outing

- ▶ Go on a neighborhood bike ride
- ▶ Have a popsicle meet-and-greet
- ▶ Go Christmas caroling
- ▶ Coordinate an Easter egg hunt
- ▶ Host an outdoor movie night
- ▶ Have a theme party

Reach Out With Food

- ▶ Host a neighborhood ice cream social or ice cream sundae bar
- ▶ Deliver some cookies or pie or popcorn
- ▶ Have a pancake feed
- ▶ Share something from your garden

Get Creative And Unique

- ▶ Create a list of the birthdays & anniversaries of your neighbors. Celebrate with a gift or card.
- ▶ Watch a TV sporting event together
- ▶ Play sports together (Kickball, whiffle ball, etc.)
- ▶ Have a game night (Board games, cards, etc.)
- ▶ Have a kids crafts night
- ▶ Coordinate an art or painting party (and not necessarily just for kids!)
- ▶ Offer a photo shoot session
- ▶ Provide cooking lessons
- ▶ Start a neighborhood social media group (i.e. Facebook)
- ▶ Organize a book club
- ▶ Organize a spiritual discussion, prayer gathering or Bible study for those interested
- ▶ When in doubt, ask your neighbors for ideas

BLOCK PARTY PLANNING CHECKLIST



A successful block party is not hard to have. It just takes a little motivation, a lot of cooperation and a willingness to enjoy time with your neighbors.

2 MONTHS PRIOR

- Locate a couple neighbors to help design the questionnaire (if first time event)
- Talk/deliver survey to neighbors to gauge interest
- Once results are in, invite those interested to a planning meeting, and have applicable parts of this Block Party Packet available:
 - Planning Meeting Date _____ Time _____ Where _____
 - Planning Meeting Decisions:
 - ▶ Party Date & Time: _____
 - ▶ Rainout Alternatives: _____
 - ▶ Scope of Block Party (How big?): _____
 - ▶ Location of Party (House, Street, Park, etc.): _____
 - ▶ Type or Theme of Party (BBQ, Potluck, Holiday, etc.): _____
 - ▶ Budget (How will the cost of permits, supplies, etc., be covered?): _____
 - ▶ Alcohol Consumption (Consider neighbors who may not prefer this for different reasons, whether religious or other): _____
 - ▶ Other Overall Decisions: _____
- Refer to Planning Committee To Do List

1 MONTH PRIOR

- Follow-up planning meeting to discuss:
 - What has been done?
 - What still needs to be accomplished?
 - Who will be responsible?
- Send out invitations
- Obtain any necessary city permits

1 WEEK PRIOR

- Send out reminder, and include reminders about any street closings, etc.
- Confirm arrangements for any traffic barricades

PARTY DAY (OR JUST BEFORE)

- Designate areas for food, seating, music, and activities
- Place garbage cans in strategic places
- Assign greeters who can introduce neighbors to each other
- Have sign in sheet and name tags available
- After everyone has arrived, welcome everyone and make announcements
- Get everyone to help clean up area before leaving
- Take down barriers, etc.

PLANNING COMMITTEE TO-DO LIST



This is meant to be a helpful example for your planning. Feel free to modify and use this checklist to meet the needs of your own party!

RESPONSIBILITY	NAME(S)	CONTACT INFO
CHAIR / MAIN CONTACT		
Send out invitations Answer questions Organize planning meetings Get name tags		
ACTIVITIES		
Include games, activities and icebreakers for all ages Decide whether to offer prizes Get kids and students involved in the planning & supervising		
FOOD		
Arrange tables for food, BBQ's, coolers Collect money for any group food supplies (if needed)		
PERMITS		
Contact the city Fulfill any requirements		
CLEAN-UP		
Obtain garbage cans and replacement bags Take down any signs that have been put up		
OTHER		

BLOCK PARTY QUESTIONNAIRE



A few neighbors have been talking, and we thought it would be fun to get together and have a “block party” event. It would be an opportunity to meet each other and to have some fun! To get this underway, we would like to know what you think!

Are you interested in participating in a neighborhood party? Yes No

If YES, which of the following is the best date and time of day?

	Date	Day	Time
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____

Which of the following suggestions would suit you or your family best?

- [A] Each family brings their own hamburgers, buns & refreshments, plus a dessert or a salad to share.
- [B] The hamburgers and buns are supplied, and everyone contributes money to pay for them.
Each family brings their own refreshments plus an appetizer, salad or dessert to share.
- [C] Each family brings their own picnic meal for themselves, & a dessert to share with others.
- [D] Everyone brings one dish to share (hot dish, salad, or desert to be assigned) and their own refreshments.

1st Choice: _____ 2nd Choice: _____

If you have other ideas please write them down!

Are you interested in helping to organize the block party? Yes No

Please return this questionnaire

by _____ to _____ at _____
Date Name Address

We will send you a second notice to let everyone know the outcome of the survey. Please remember to give us your name, address and contact info, so we can contact you directly. →

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

YOU ARE INVITED TO A BLOCK PARTY



DATE

TIME

LOCATION

Are you interested in attending this party? Yes No

If YES, we are asking each family to bring:

- Chairs to sit on
- Meat or vegetarian food to barbecue for your family
- One salad or one dessert to share (make enough for 6 people)
- Beverages for your family (water will be available)
- Non-breakable plates, cups, and utensils for your family
- Other _____

In addition, do you have the following that could be used at the event?

- Barbecue
- Tables
- Coolers
- Other _____
- Other _____

Do you have a talent that you or someone in your family would like to share with us?

Any suggestions for activities you could help organize?

Are you able to help with some of the “behind the scenes” work?

Please return this sheet

by _____ to _____ at _____
Date Name Address

Thank you for responding to this invite! We are excited to host this get together for our neighborhood! Please include your contact information when you return this flyer. →

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

ICEBREAKER IDEAS



While the majority of your block party will be neighbors talking to one another, etc., it can't hurt to have some pre-planned icebreakers for the children and adults alike, to help connect everyone and keep them engaged. You can find a lot of ideas searching icebreakers online. Here are a few ideas.

NAME TAG FUN FACTS

Write a different question on each name tag, and hand them out to attendees. When neighbors introduce themselves, they should answer the question on their neighbors' tags as a way to start conversations. Some questions might include:

- Where did you grow up?
- How long have you lived in the neighborhood?
- What is your favorite restaurant in Minnesota?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- What has been one of the most memorable experiences in your life?
- If you could meet anyone in the world, who would that be?

RAFFLE TICKETS

Have a free raffle giveaway. Talk to your neighbors, associations, businesses, resource centers, etc. There are many different people and organizations that might be willing to contribute resources and supplies for a block party. When neighbors arrive, ask them to fill out a raffle ticket at no charge that includes their name, address, phone and email. And, then, have a drawing.

NEIGHBORHOOD BINGO

Make your own bingo cards. You can find free "human bingo" templates online. Instead of numbers, fill the squares with questions that will help neighbors connect and discover shared interests. Players need to find neighbors who can answer "yes" to the questions, and, then, have them sign their name in that square. Each neighbor can only sign one square, so players are encouraged to keep meeting neighbors until they achieve a bingo. Consider giving away prizes. Here are some ideas for questions:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Likes gardening | Has 2 or more brothers | Reads 2+ books per month |
| Plays golf | Is left-handed | Is involved with a non-profit |
| Has been to Europe | Is afraid of heights | Likes to play board games |
| Plays video games | Has a dog | Likes to play cards |
| Can stand on their head | Likes to fish | Enjoys cooking |
| Has an allergy | Likes to hunt | Likes scrapbooking |
| Has a cat | Has a tattoo | Likes working on cars |
| Has lived on a farm | Plays a sport | Does woodworking projects |

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Give each person a piece of paper and instruct everyone to write down two truths and one lie about themselves. Go around the group and have each person read off their two truths and one lie. The other players, then, have to guess which fact is a lie. This can create entertaining story telling since players must come up with unexpected facts to stump the other players.

ICEBREAKER BALL

Write various questions (25 or more) on an inflatable beach ball with a permanent marker. Questions can include "How long have you lived in the neighborhood?" or "What is your favorite ice cream?" At the party, toss the ball around and each person who catches the ball must answer the question under their left thumb before tossing the ball again.

SHOWING YOUR AGE

Break into small groups and give each person a penny. Ask them to talk about what they were doing and/or what was going on in the world during the year on the coin.

BLOCK PARTY EVALUATION FORM



To help plan the possibility of future block parties, your feedback is appreciated.

What were the 3 best things about the block party:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What 3 things would you like to recommend for the next party:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How would you like to maintain the neighborhood connection that was started at the block party during the rest of the year?

Are you willing to help with the planning of a future neighborhood event? Yes No

IF YES, please provide your info



Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please return this sheet

by _____ to _____ at _____
Date Name Address

Thanks Neighbor!

BLESS PRACTICES

...AND DON'T FORGET TO "BRING"



BLESS

Since the very beginning of a person's story with God, God demonstrated his deep love for us through his blessing. In turn we can become a blessing to others, including our neighbors (Genesis 12:2; Matthew 22:36-40). BLESS focuses on five missional practices we can engage to naturally introduce people to Jesus through our actions and words.

Begin with prayer

Pray for your neighbors who need to experience God. Ask God, "How do you want to use me to bless the neighbors in my life?"

Listen with care

Pay attention to your neighbor's dreams and pain. Listen for evidence of God's work in their lives.

Eat together

Share meals and life with your neighbors who need to experience God. Let them see Christ through your actions and words.

Serve with love

Be attentive to opportunities God provides for you to care for people and attend to their needs.

Share your story

Once you build relationship and earn trust, look for ways you can share the story of how God is transforming your life and the world.

BRING

When people express openness to spiritual conversations, don't forget to invite and bring them to an applicable worship service or small group.