

## **Event Planning Tips – Banquet**

**Planning an event can be a daunting task.**

**We hope these tips will assist you in making the process easier.**

**If you need additional assistance, feel free to call us at  
(800) 899-1140 or visit us at [www.lifeofthepartyonline.com](http://www.lifeofthepartyonline.com).**

1. **Date of the event:** Choose the date of your event as early as possible. Many banquet facilities and entertainment services book-up far in advance, especially during the holiday season. Therefore, you will want to be able to reserve these as soon as possible.
2. **Time of the event:** There are many things to consider when planning your party times. If your guests tend to run late, factor that into the start time. If you are planning a Sunday afternoon brunch, try to adjust the times if many of your guests are coming from church. If you are planning a weekday party, you may consider scheduling your event so your guests can avoid rush hour traffic. Make sure to schedule enough time to allow for everything in your itinerary.
3. **Choosing a location:** There are many options for locations to hold a banquet. Hotel banquet halls and restaurants are by far the most popular. There are also facilities that specialize in banquets. Churches and community centers often have halls available for rent. Some organizations will even host their event at their own facilities. Factors to consider when choosing a location include: proximity to your guests, availability, capacity, whether or not they allow outside caterers, menu options, parking fees, cost and ambiance. If the facility charges for parking, will your organization be validating? Remember to reserve your facility early to insure availability.
4. **Choosing a theme:** Although formal or semi-formal banquets are traditional, themeing can greatly enhance your event. Choosing a theme can help you decide on decorations and entertainment. Popular banquet themes include: Christmas, Mardi Gras, Casino, Caribbean, Western, Hollywood, etc. We even once provided a Monopoly themed banquet where every section of the facility was decorated to represent a different section of the monopoly board. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.
5. **Create a budget:** Banquets can run the gamut for expenses. Knowing your budget will help you determine how elaborate you can make your party. Will you be charging your guests to attend? If so, how much you will charge and how many people you anticipate can greatly affect your choices. . Keep in mind the following items when estimating your expenses: food, facility rental, decorations, photographer / videographer, and entertainment.

6. **Invitations:** Invitations are the first step to building excitement for your event. If you are planning an informal in-house event, and e-mailed invitation may be sufficient. More formal events or events that include outside guests require actual invitations. While traditional invitations are an option, consider unique invitations that fit your theme. For example, a Caribbean themed banquet might have a message in a bottle as an invitation. For a Hollywood themed party, consider “issuing” theatre style tickets. Work with your event planner to create invitations that compliment your event. Make sure to allow enough time for printing. Mail out these invitations early with an RSVP deadline.
7. **Guest Lists:** Managing your headcount can be tricky if you have limited space. Determine a range of how many people you can comfortably handle. Develop a plan for inviting additional guests if your RSVP regrets free up additional space.
8. **Event Itinerary:** Developing an outline for your event can help keep everything running smoothly. Keep in mind that your outline should be used as a guideline, and schedules rarely work out exactly as planned. Schedule padding so that fixed events (eg. entertainment) can start on time. An example of a sample itinerary may include:

#### **Sample Itinerary**

6:00 – 7:00	Guests Arrive / Check in / Cocktail Hour / Hors d’oeuvres Strolling / Background Entertainment: Caricature Artist Balloon Artist Strolling Magician Mime Fortune Teller Celebrity impersonators DJ or Band providing background music Photographer
7:00 – 7:45	Dinner
7:45 – 8:00	Padding (if dinner ends on time, the “Speeches / Awards” can start early).
8:00 – 8:45	Speeches / Awards
8:45 – 9:00	Padding (if “Speeches / Awards” end on time, the DJ or band can play music while your guests use the facilities or stretch their legs. Just make sure to announce that the show will begin promptly at 9:00).
9:00 – 9:45	After dinner show (eg. hypnotism, magic, musical act, etc.)
9:45 – 11:30	Dancing DJ or Band

Please note that these are sample itineraries.

We suggest that you create a schedule that meets your needs.

9. **Hiring Entertainment:** Once you know what kind of entertainment you want, reserve it. Make sure that you are working with a reputable company. Companies that emphasize high quality often book-up during peak times. We recommend that you book early if quality is important to you. Make sure to address any special loading or set-up requirements with your talent when you are booking your event. Weekend evenings are peak times for banquets, and the first 2 –3 weekends in December are exceptionally busy industry-wide. While a high quality entertainment company can sometimes handle last minute bookings, we recommend scheduling your entertainment 4 or more weeks in advance (even earlier for June (grad nights) or December). It's never too early to book your entertainment (some of our long term clients re-book a year in advance as soon as the current event ends).
10. **Decorations / Supplies:** - Decorations can greatly enhance an event, especially if you are themeing it. Many party stores have a complete supply of decorations and party supplies. More elaborate items (eg. casino tables, balloon arches or balloon drops, ice sculptures, other themed props, etc) can often be provided by your event planner. You may even request that your guests dress in appropriate costumes to help fit the theme.
11. **Event Time:** A check in table will provide a location for your guests or entertainers to ask questions. This is a good place to set-up a validation stamp if you need to validate parking. Make sure to keep your cell phone handy in case someone needs to reach you. Have a list of emergency contact numbers in case people don't arrive as expected. During the event, keep an eye on the time to make sure the itinerary is on schedule. You may even want to assign or hire someone to attend to these tasks.
12. **Enjoy:** Finally, enjoy! Try to remain flexible and have fun. After all it is a party. You've worked hard to plan the event, and you deserve to have a good time!

**Co-written by:**

**David Skale** – Owner of *Auntie Roxie's Life of the Party*, David has been one of Southern California's top professional magicians and stage hypnotists for over 25 years. He specializes in incorporating unique entertainment ideas to enhance any event. Additionally, David has a B.A. in Behavioral Science and his MBA.

**Dwyane Faux** – Dwyane has been helping companies plan and coordinate their events since 1990. He specializes in helping clients custom design complete themed packages that are both entertaining and help promote corporate values such as teamwork. In addition to consulting for Auntie Roxie's Life of the Party, Dwyane also owns his own promotional products company and helps our clients find unique invitations and awards.