

Party/Gala

6 MONTHS FROM DATE

1. Pick event date.

Make sure your event doesn't coincide with any major holidays or events in your area. Ours clashed with Jewish holidays, so none of our Jewish friends could come. Ours was also the same night as homecoming at the local high school, so most of those kids couldn't help us out with childcare.

2. Compile guest list.

Aside from close friends and relatives, pick people who have followed your family's story and are likely to donate (Your friend's mom, who you've never met, but she likes literally *everything* you post about USP7 on Facebook? Yep, invite her for sure.) These people are your Tribe.

- Even if there's someone in the Tribe who you're certain *isn't* going to come, you should still put them on your guest list. We had a ton of folks from far away who didn't come, but they all donated.

3. Send out save-the-date email to entire guest list

No details needed here, other than the date. You'll figure out location and time later.

4. Pick venue

Ours was at our house. If you're able to have it somewhere other than your home, try to do that. It'll substantially reduce your stress. If you do choose to have it at your home, you may wish to contact the company that provides your homeowner's insurance, in order to arrange for a 24-hour policy that will cover the time of your party. This way, if something terrible happens to one of your guests, you will have insurance

3 MONTHS FROM DATE

1. Complete the Event Form to Set Up Ticket Sales

Upon completion of [this form](#) your unique ticket application will be created. Please allow at least one week for this to be completed.

The form will automatically collect the funds for your event and send them directly to the Foundation.

2. Order invitations.

Do this through our USP7 Shutterfly page, so your purchase raises funds for us: <http://usp7.shutterflystorefront.com/>

Order lots more than you think you'll need. Invariably, as with weddings, you'll think of more folks you want to invite as the date approaches.

On the invitation, make it clear that you're charging for tickets, and provide a link to your Unique Ticket Page so people can buy their tickets in advance. If you do this right, most will buy ahead of time, and you won't have to deal with too many ticket sales on the night of your event.

3. Meet with caterer.

Preferably this should be someone with a liquor license, so they can serve drinks.

It's up to you whether to have a sit-down meal, but we chose not to -- the food was put out on table for people to nosh on. We ordered big trays with two kinds of sliders: pulled pork and vegetable fritters. We also had a large bowl of potato salad, which no one touched. We also had a meat and cheese plate.

Our caterer charged us almost nothing for the food, but in our state of Maine it's illegal to give away alcohol, so he basically gave that to us at cost, meaning he didn't make anything on it.

4. Meet with alcohol provider, if caterer lacks liquor license.

5. Arrange for portable bathrooms, if necessary.

Call a company in your area to arrange for port-a-potties.

They'll want to know how many guests you'll have, how long your party will last, whether you'll be serving alcohol, and maybe also what food you'll be serving.

6. Rent a tent, if necessary.

We invited about 250 people, and around 125 attended. This was more than our house could hold, so we contacted a local company, rented a big tent, and put the tent up in our front yard. The same company also rented us tables and chairs, a PA (a sound system that came with a microphone, a projector, and a movie screen).

6 WEEKS FROM DATE

1. Send out invitations.

We also lacked addresses or emails for lots of folks, but we were Facebook friends with them, so we sent a large number of invitations through Facebook and included our ticket link.

Keep a spreadsheet of all your guests, so you can track your guests' responses. We organized them using these column headings:

SENT (date)

IN (meaning they're coming)

OUT (meaning they're not coming)

TIX (meaning whether they've bought tickets yet)

Then--depending on when your caterer needs to know your final head count--you can start hassling your guests who haven't responded.

For anyone who can't make it, strongly encourage them to donate to our foundation instead.

They can do this in either of **two ways**:

- Online

<http://usp7.org/donate>

or

Send a check made out to "Foundation for USP7 Related Diseases" and mail it to this address:

Foundation for USP7 Related Diseases

[11 Innkeepers Ln](#)

[Falmouth, ME 04105](#)

2. Arrange for childcare

This should be for your kids, not your guests' kids.

We strongly discouraged people from bringing their kids to our gala. Ours involved alcohol and we were charging \$100 per ticket, so it was strictly for adults. This is entirely up to you, though.

Our local high school has a volunteer program, and all students have a community service requirement in order to graduate. So we had an army of about 10 kids who came to babysit (and blew off homecoming!)

3. Set up Square.

To accept money from your guests at the event, whether for ticket sales or auction items (see below under Optional), you'll need a way to take credit cards.

Go to <http://squareup.com/> and set up an account. They'll send you a card reader that'll plug into your mobile device. You can install the Square app on that device, and be set to go on the night of your event.

You should arrange for these funds to go into **your** bank account, and then when it's all over, you'll write a check for the full amount to "Foundation for USP7 Related Diseases" and mail it to this address:

Foundation for USP7 Related Diseases

[11 Innkeepers Ln](#)

[Falmouth, ME 04105](#)

3 WEEKS FROM DATE

1. Get your final head count.

You may wish to make nametags for your guests. Especially if you have a hard time remembering names.

2. Confirm caterer and alcohol.

3. Confirm tent rental and port-a-potties.

4. Test out Square with your card reader.

Practice going through a transaction and then voiding it, just so you're all set.

EVENT DATE

1. Tell your guests to donate.

Make it clear that even though they've already paid for tickets, your guests can always donate directly to our foundation at any point. They can do this online (<http://usp7.org/donate>). Or if they want to write a check, they should make it out to "Foundation for USP7 Related Diseases" and either give it to you or mail it to this address:

Foundation for USP7 Related Diseases
11 Innkeepers Ln
Foundation@usp7.org
Falmouth, ME 04105

Keep records of who donates and how much they donate. For anyone who makes a donation of \$75 or more and does NOT get any goods or services in return, we'll need to provide them with a tax letter at year's end. A simple Excel spreadsheet of name, address, amount, and donation date is sufficient.

Here's an easy rule to keep in mind: if they're getting anything at all for their money--a raffle ticket, a glass of wine, a sandwich, the chance to attend this awesome party you've thrown--then we *don't* include that amount as a donation.

A quick tax FAQ for your event:

Q. Should my event's ticket price be considered a donation?

A. No. They're getting something in return.

Q. What if they pay \$100 for a ticket, but once they're at my party, they also write the foundation a check for \$500?

A. The \$100 is their ticket price, so it's not a donation, since they've paid to be at your party. The \$500 is a donation, so yes, we'd owe them a tax letter for the \$500.

Q. Let's say someone donates \$50 in January, and then at my party in June, they donate another \$50. Would we have to collect their info and get them a tax letter?

A. Yes, since their total donation over the year is \$100, which is greater than \$75.

Q. What if I hold an auction at my party? (See below)

A. Anything that people spend on auction items should *not* be considered a donation, since they're getting the item in return for their money.

Q. So really it's just straight-up checks and online donations that I need to track, right?

A. Yep.

After your event ends and you have all your donations, you'll need to send your full record to Bo, by emailing it to him: bo.bigelow@gmail.com.

2. Get helpers to welcome your guests and take their money.

We tapped into the high school students who had come to be our babysitters. They sat at a welcome table and handed out nametags, ran credit cards, and directed our guests to the step-and-repeat banner to do photos (see below under Optional.)

Optional:

These aren't strictly necessary, but they can have a dramatic impact on how much money your event raises and also how much buzz it generates.

6 MONTHS FROM DATE

1. Collect items for auction/raffle

- Ask a friend or relative to be your auction coordinator - they'll hunt down items for you. You might be tempted to do this yourself. Don't. It's a ton of work.
- The best item is a block of time at a vacation home - an weeklong April getaway at your parents' condo in Hilton Head, a ski weekend at your friends' chalet in Vail, etc.
- Hit up your friends who own local businesses: a football-watching party with free apps at your buddy's sports bar, a package of soaps and spa stuff from your friend's day spa, etc.
- Have your coordinator maintain a spreadsheet of all your items, and obtain a physical representation of each item, even if it's just a photo (like of the ski house). Those items will all be on tables at your event, so your guests can look at them.
- Whatever you do, when collecting items for auction, you need to focus on quality, not quantity. Feel free to say no to someone who's offering an item that you don't think anyone will want. It's better to have six or eight amazing items, rather than 30 crummy ones.

2. If having an auction, find your auctioneer

- With the right person on the mike, an auction can bring in tons of cash. Pick your most outgoing friend.

2 MONTHS FROM DATE

1. Order a USP7 step and repeat banner

- This is a custom background for photos, like you see in red carpet photos at the Oscars
- great for encouraging your guests to post about USP7 on social media
- on banner, use USP7 logo and text of "#FixTheDimmerSwitch" (files attached)
- to order: head to stickersbanners.com, select 14oz Heavy Duty Vinyl (NFPA 701 Fire Proof), with pole pockets (Top and Bottom), width 8, height 8 (\$199)
- here's what it'll look like: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10155640566233954&set=t.502818953&type=3&theater>

2. Order a retractable sign

- lightweight, portable sign, reusable anytime you have a USP7 event
- to order: head to display-wholesale.com, select PDE03 Retractable Roll Up Banner Stand 33" with Vinyl Print (\$80)
- on sign, use your child's photo on top, plus USP7 logo, #FixTheDimmerSwitch, and our foundation's website (some files attached)
- here's what it'll look like: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10214201356614122&set=t.502818953&type=3&theater>

ONE MONTH FROM DATE

1. Contact Bo about getting a copy of our USP7 documentary

- Bo can send you a thumb drive containing the film. This will probably be better than simply streaming it from YouTube. Screen the film for your guests at the event. Be sure that your venue has a movie screen, sound system, and projector.