

How to plan a seriously good party

A photograph of a modern lounge or bar interior. The scene is dimly lit with blue and purple ambient lighting. In the center, there is a curved bar with a mosaic tile front and a backlit blue base. The bar is stocked with various bottles. To the left, there are heavy, patterned curtains. In the foreground, there are several plush, dark-colored armchairs arranged in a seating area. The ceiling has recessed spotlights.

The essential
guide to
making your
party a hit

Packed with
expert tips!

The 3 rules of planning party:

Whatever you do, however busy and cool and nonchalant you are when you arrange your function via Partystar; make sure you:

01

Sign a Booking Form and/or pay a deposit

Get a copy of the signed Booking Form and **get a receipt** of the deposit payment. This helps reduce the likelihood of venues cancelling your booking.

Pay the deposit with a credit card, if possible. It helps you get your deposit back should the venue close down, as you can attempt a credit card chargeback with your bank.

02

Get a copy of the Cancellation Policy

Helps you understand the implications of changing your mind later on. You may lose your deposit, or even be obligated to pay more.

03

Get important details in writing and ensure they cover:

- total cost
- food order
- food timing
- anything promised verbally not covered on the booking form

Arranging this could be as simple as you specifying everything agreed in an email to the venue, and asking them to confirm via return email. This helps reduce the likelihood of things going wrong on the night.

Completing numbers 1, 2 and 3 will help minimise problems. In the unfortunate and unlikely event that they arise, it also enables Partystar to help you with the dispute.

Need help finding a venue? Outsource it to us.

Partystar offers a personal venue-finding service, where we do all of the hard work for you.



Tell us your requirements, and we will get to work for you, searching our databases to find function spaces that meet as many of your requirements as possible.

We offer two options:

Telephone service - \$99 inc GST - up to one hour of phone consultation

Face-to-face at our Melbourne office - \$299 inc GST - up to one hour of face-to-face consultation

To book either of these, please phone us, and ask to be put through to the Sales team.

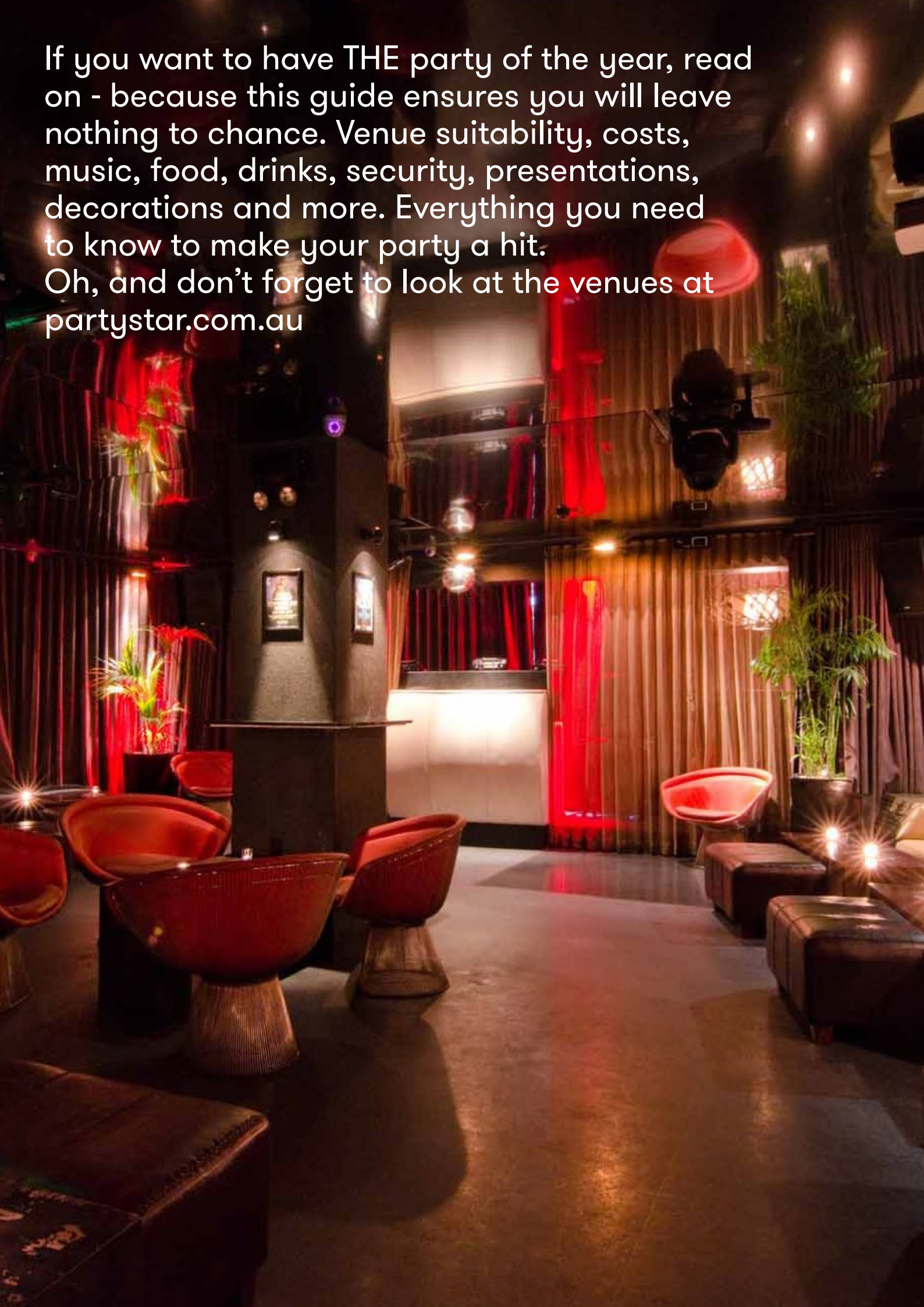
Be prepared. Make sure you can tell us

- budget
- preferred location/s
- guest number
- anything else you are particular about

We want to do the best we can, so make sure you have thought about the important things and discussed them with your friends and family so we can get you a fabulous shortlist.

It's your party. Make it our job.

If you want to have THE party of the year, read on - because this guide ensures you will leave nothing to chance. Venue suitability, costs, music, food, drinks, security, presentations, decorations and more. Everything you need to know to make your party a hit. Oh, and don't forget to look at the venues at partystar.com.au





Suitability

Plan ahead

Have a think about your needs, and start early. Very early. To get your choice of venue you will need to enquire, check availability and book well ahead of time. Recurring feedback we get from Partystar users is to start early as the good ones are booked out way in advance. November and December can be particularly difficult times to get a booking.

Numbers

How many people do you want? Don't feel obliged to invite everyone you know. Remove troublemakers, friends of friends and long-losts from your guest list or costs could blow out. On the other hand, some venues require a minimum number of guests, so be realistic about who is going to show up. Partystar lets you sort and filter by capacity to narrow down your venue options according to expected numbers.

Size and layout

Is the venue the right size for your event? How many people is it licensed to hold? You may be tempted to get a bigger place to allow for last-minute guests, but if the place is half empty it will lack atmosphere.

The older guests may appreciate a chill-out zone away from the music. Is the layout flexible? Can another area of the venue be used if numbers swell as the date approaches? This can help determine how strict or flexible you can be with final numbers.

Inspect the venue

Does the venue look good and will it suit the demographic? Schedule an inspection, as photos can be deceiving. If you are having your party at night, view the venue at night. Try to visit on the night of the week your party will be, so you can assess the crowd (too young? too corporate? etc), traffic, parking etc. Take a list of questions. This will save scores of emails and phone calls later. Meet staff. And ask for lights to be turned on (or off) as if your event was underway, to get a real feel for the place.

Guaranteed duration

What time can you start and is there a guaranteed duration? The guaranteed duration is the amount of time you can have the space exclusively, for the budget listed on Partystar. We know that is important in planning your party. Nothing more disastrous than the venue opening your room to the public, or wanting to close it altogether, before the speeches have even commenced.

Exclusivity

Some spaces open to the public at a certain time, and some of those will allow you to extend your time at a price, or if your guests are still drinking. Sometimes the room becoming non-exclusive or closing is no big deal, as you can spread your party to other parts of the venue and continue to celebrate. Partystar gives you all of this info online in advance.

Children

If you have young cousins or friends you want to invite, check the underage policy – whether kids are allowed at all, and if so, must they be off the premises by a certain time? When a venue states a parent needs to attend this means one parent per child. Venues are extremely strict on this and may immediately close a function if the rules are broken. Nothing personal, just a licensing issue.

Disabled and elderly

If grandpa can't cope with stairs, ensure the room is on the ground floor or has a lift. If you have any guests with disabilities, check with the venue for disabled toilets, whether in your function space or somewhere else in the venue.

Toilets

Are the toilets sufficient for your guests? Are they clean? Some may be shared with the public. Is private important?

Transport and parking

Where will your guests park? Ask about private and public parking options, and public transport availability. And check Partystar's Parking section.

Smokers

What about the smokers? Ask about the smoking area – is there a designated area and is it private? Or are smokers shunted into an alleyway out the back? A fragmented party could mean an empty dance floor, which is the last thing you want.

Air conditioner

Will you need air conditioning? That cool and breezy room you inspect can turn into a hotbox when full of thirsty party animals.

Particular celebrations

Some places shy away from particular parties. Partystar indicates venues that allow 18ths, 21sts, hens and bucks nights, so use our filter to eliminate incompatible venues. Other more novel touches like foam parties and ticketed events may be disallowed, so be upfront about your needs from the beginning to avoid disappointment. *See also Ticketed events on page 14.*

After-party

What time is the venue or room licensed until? If you will want to dance until the wee hours without leaving, ensure your venue won't close early. Or else organise an after-party at another venue that you know your guests will be admitted to. In fact being close proximity to a few potential after-party options is wise. Lack of planning here is possibly one of the most common blunders, and could see your guests all dressed up with nowhere to go just as you get your dancing legs on. Look into organising a guestlist for an after-party – Partystar can help with that too.



Conditions for exclusive hire: costs

Hire charge

Hire charge is a fee for use of the venue. You don't get anything to eat or drink, just the space.

Minimum spend

Minimum spend is much more festive than hire charge, because it involves drinking and/or eating. The min spend is the amount the venue needs from your function to make it viable for them. You and your party must spend at least this amount. Find out the repercussions if the figure is not reached. Some may charge you the difference and some may charge a flat fee (effectively a 'hire charge'). Who spends the money? Discuss this with the venue. Some may apply the full min spend to your credit card, and some may take an imprint and not charge, but allow your guests to pay as they go.

Minimum spend options

Sometimes the minimum spend can be spent on other things like entertainment and security, but this is not very common.

Combined charges

Venues may have one or both of hire charge and minimum spend, and in some instances you can choose.

Bar tab

Some venues may not let you increase the bar tab on the night, so check beforehand.

Inclusions

Make sure you confirm what is covered by the costs. Never assume. Do you have use of furniture, crockery, a cake stand etc? Nothing worse than having nowhere for gran to sit, or no plates to serve the cake on.

Deposits and bonds

There's sure to be a deposit and/or bond involved in booking your venue. The deposit secures your booking,

and may go towards your min spend or hire. The bond is in case of damage and is usually refundable, but not always. You might need to sign a T&Cs document outlining all of this. The T&Cs could also allow management to shut down your party for certain reasons – so make sure you read it.

Money savings

Consider having your function midweek or off-peak to save costs. Ask your venue if this is an option. You could also ask for a smaller part of the venue with a shared bar for a cheaper price.

Cancellation fees

Are there cancellation fees? Hopefully the issue won't arise but it's good to know you wouldn't be up for a small fortune if the unthinkable happens.

Hidden costs

Check for hidden costs including security, cleaning, equipment hire and staff hire.

Seasonal surcharges

Venues may bump up prices in December, certain sporting events or public holidays.

In writing

Verbal agreements are not a good idea. Get whatever you agree to in writing. That includes what drinks you will be paying for. As much as you like your friends, you don't want to be paying for countless beer imports and fancy cocktails.

Partystar's promise

Partystar realises that cost is a crucial factor in deciding on a function venue, and we do our best to keep the venues honest. So if a venue doesn't honour a listed price, we promise to follow it up for you – just let us know.

Minimum spend is much more festive than hire charge, because it involves drinking and/or eating.

Conditions for exclusive hire: drinks

Beverage options

Budget and other factors will determine whether you supply beer, wine and soft drink, open bar or nothing at all. Drinks options include:

- Bar tab – the venue will let you know when it has been reached and you can then extend it or let guests pay for themselves
- Pay as you go (aka cash bar) – gives you the option to allow guests to pay their own way
- Drink cards – prepaid or prearranged vouchers
- Waiter service – a nice touch for more formal occasions and sometimes necessary when there is no bar in the room
- Packages – a pre-arranged selection paid on a per-head basis for a set period, usually with no limit on quantity. Packages usually vary from basic to premium, reflecting different types and brands of beverages. More expensive packages probably include spirits, and premium beer and wine rather than cask and keg. This can help you to budget. If you go with this option, ensure there will be enough staff and supplies to keep your guests happy.

Private bar

Does the room have a private bar and is that important to you? This is an key field on Partystar, and we classify fully private, portable and sectioned bars so you know what you're up for.

Drinks expenditure

If you can't afford all the trimmings drinks-wise, consider serving a signature cocktail or champers on arrival to make your guests feel special. If made and served in bulk, it may not be as expensive as you think. You could also charge a small entry fee to offset your expenses. *See also Ticketed events on page 14.*

Conditions for exclusive hire: security



Bouncers

They may be included, or required but not included (meaning you have to pay), or not included but not required. The amount of security you will need may depend the type of gig. Some venues only require security for 21sts, for example. Partystar's listings include information on security requirements.

Guestlists

If partying at a club, ensure that your guests' names are on the guestlist so they don't end up stranded out the front.

Gatecrashers

If you've hired a venue exclusively, you'll want to check if bouncers will be out front looking for gatecrashers. Your guests won't be expecting intruders and theft of belongings ends up being a real downer for everyone.

If you can't afford all the trimmings drinks-wise, consider serving a signature cocktail or champers on arrival to make your guests feel special.



Music:

There are loads of options to entertain your guests, as outlined in Partystar's Music section.

DJs

A DJ is a popular choice. Some venues don't allow BYO DJ, while others do. The venue may have a DJ console for hire or free use, or the DJ may have his/her own. This info is on Partystar, so check there first and then discuss with the venue and your DJ.

Bands

Bands can be very hit and miss, so make sure you have heard them play. A friend's cousin's amateur garage band could have people running for the hills. Yikes.

Interview the DJ/band

Arrange an interview to discuss in detail what songs/genres you expect from your DJ/band. If they are running late or disinterested, find someone else. A reliable, experienced entertainer is crucial for a smooth, successful event party.

MC

Your DJ or lead singer might be willing and able to MC for you. Ask them if this is an option, and ensure they are fit for the task.

Noise restrictions

Are there any noise restrictions which may limit volume or force your party to shut down at a certain time, close

all the windows, get off the balcony or turn off the music? Residential areas are particularly touchy, but no matter where the venue, never assume, please ask.

If you know the music has to be turned down at a certain time you'll be able to let the DJ know in advance, which will save hassles on the night.

Licensing

Sometimes licensing restrictions will dictate what sort of entertainment you can have. Bands may be acoustic only, and if the venue is not licensed for DJs, music may be restricted to playlists from an MP3 player or laptop.

Dress code

Ensure your DJ/band knows the dress code if there is one. They need to fit in.

Timing

Schedule in speeches, cake cutting and other formalities at set times (*see also Presentations on page 11*), inform your DJ/band, and enlist someone you trust to keep their eye on the clock also. Time flies when you're having fun.



The venue may have free tunes piped in for you.

Food/drink for the DJ/band

Should you pay for the DJ/band's food and drink? You should consider their comfort and factor that in to the catering.

Insurance and what-ifs

Ask the DJ/band/venue about public liability insurance. If someone trips over a loose cable, they will be looking to the entertainer for compensation. Or worse - to you.

Also ask them about sound system failure, and whether they have a backup plan. Sounds grim but it could happen.

Setup

Find out how long the DJ/band will need to set up and pack up (aka bump-in and bump-out), and check with the venue that they can accommodate that.

Free tunes or jukebox

The venue may also have free tunes piped in for you. Alternatively some venues have a jukebox which may be free or accept coins.

Dance floor

Do you need a dance floor? The venue may have one already, may be able to install one, or may have plenty of dancing space but no formal dance floor. Dance floor lighting is important too. Partystar makes mention of both these things, but best you ask so you get what you want.

Money saving

If space or money is tight, consider having a friend DJ from an iPod or laptop. Simpler still, is to set up a playlist on an iPod and let it run. Check if you need to bring an iPod cable though, as it may not be supplied. Remember that a song on average is about four minutes long, so a four hour function will require 60 songs (minus speeches, etc). Ask the venue if they can accommodate what you want to play and how you want to play it.



Food is important

Food is essential to limit the impact of alcohol and to make your guests comfortable. Discuss catering options with the venue, and choose from their menus in accordance with your budget, guest numbers, dietary requirements and the time of the event.

Minimum food spends

Check on Partystar whether food purchase is compulsory and if so, how much you are required to spend. Food is usually priced as a flat minimum spend and the venue will usually have various ways to mix and match platters in order to meet the minimum spend requirements.

Catering options

Most venues won't allow you to bring your own food (aside from a cake), but some will, and in some rare cases, they will allow you to heat it up onsite. Or, your BYO food may be limited to uncooked items like crisps and nuts.

Serving

Will venue staff hand it around, or will you enlist someone to do so? Remember that your guests are there to have a good time too, so may not do the best job of passing around platters. However the venue may charge extra for their staff to wait on your guests. Or they may just put the platters straight onto tables

with peckish guests unaware food has been served. Timing is crucial too, so make sure staff know when to commence food service so that your guests aren't tipsy and hungry for most of the night, and so that your presentation isn't interrupted with platters arriving.

Food placement

Ask the venue what happens with the food if they don't hand it around, or whatever is left after it has been handed around. Do they leave it somewhere central? Individual group tables? At the end of the bar? A food table or two is a good idea for edibles that peckish guests can access throughout the evening.

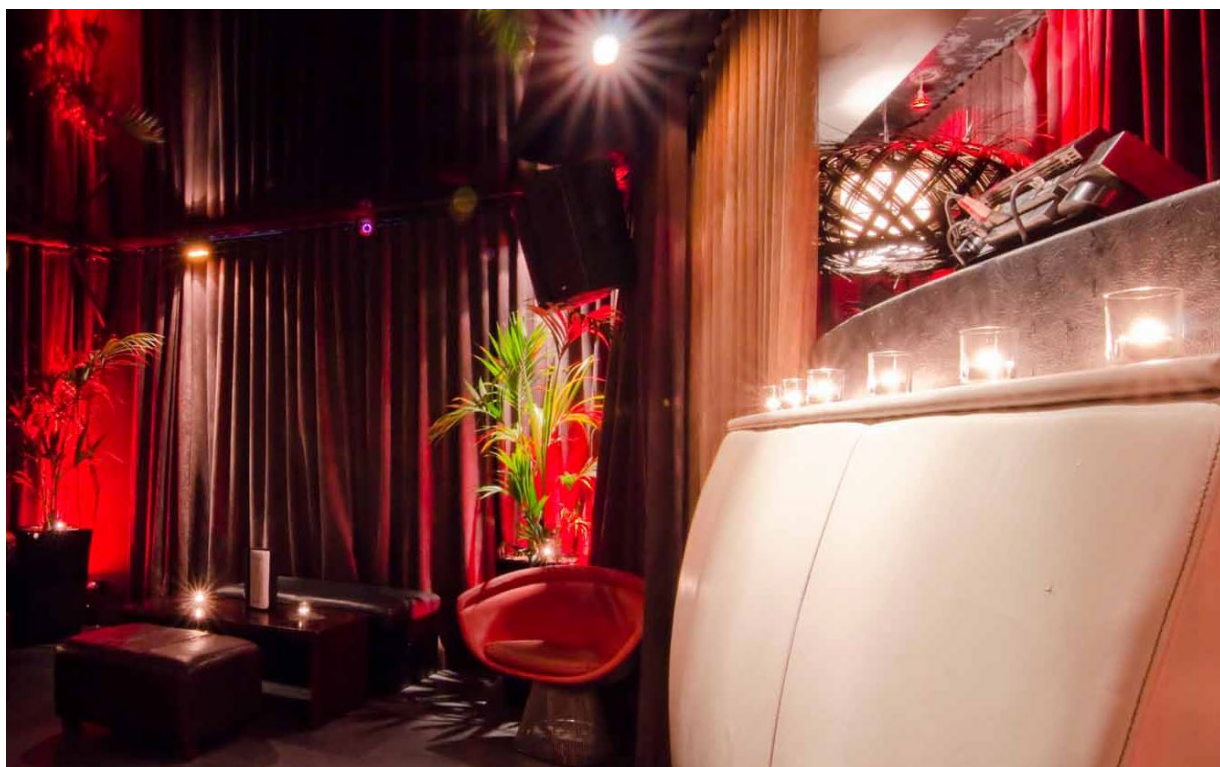
Quantity

Check sizes of platters on offer. You don't want to feel ripped off and hungry.

Cake

A cake is a necessary formality at some events and a nice touch at others. All venues on Partystar will allow a cake, but do tell the venue if you are bringing a cake, as they may require cakes to be purchased from approved caterers to satisfy food safety regulations. Ask the venue if they can store the cake for you and plate it up, and ask whether they charge cakeage - a fee to cover time spent cutting and plating up, and washing of cutlery and crockery afterwards.





Presentation:

Depending on your presentations, you may need to ensure there is a mic, PA system, stage, projector and screen.

Speeches

A mic is pretty important for any kind of speech, and may be more necessary than you think. Parties and venues can get pretty noisy.

We recommend having a microphone plugged in and ready to go, even if you don't end up using it.

Keep the speeches to a time limit, and tell friends to censor anything that might offend your relatives. Tales of debauchery can be kept for another time.

Slide shows

Play photo slide shows or video slide shows of the birthday boy/girl growing up. All this can be done from your laptop or DVD player hooked up to a data projector projected on to the projector screen. Some venues might only have LCDs via a DVD player, or, they might allow laptop input as well.

Check out Partystar's Presentations section to see what the venue has.

Photo Montage

You have put a lot of effort into this, so ensure it gets people's attention. It should be put somewhere where people can see it at standing-height, without needing to bend down. Don't bury it behind the presents or cake and one more thing – consider the lighting.

Other formalities

A key may be presented at a 21st to signify coming of age. Or something unique and significant to the party you are planning.

Tell friends to censor anything that might offend your relatives. Tales of debauchery can be kept for another time.

Decorations and finishing touches

Theme

Some people dislike theme parties, while others can't get enough of them. Think about these popular ideas: 80s / 80s rock, roaring 20s, vintage, las vegas, casino, murder mystery, masquerade, horror, nerds, burlesque, mad hatter, movie stars, and the list goes on. Make sure your theme is ok with the venue. Importantly, it should reflect you the host. That means also, if you hate themes, don't have one.

Note: Fancy dress may not work if you intend to kick on at a club later.

Decorations

Find out if the venue allows decorations and what type. Some places won't want things stuck to walls but will be fine with balloons and candles. For an extra fee the venue can maybe be able to purchase and set them up, or maybe you can arrange to do it yourself. Partystar has all this covered.

Consider the bump-in (set up) and bump-out (pack up) of your decorations. No point needing three hours to decorate at a place that won't let you in until 30 minutes before the event.

Invitations

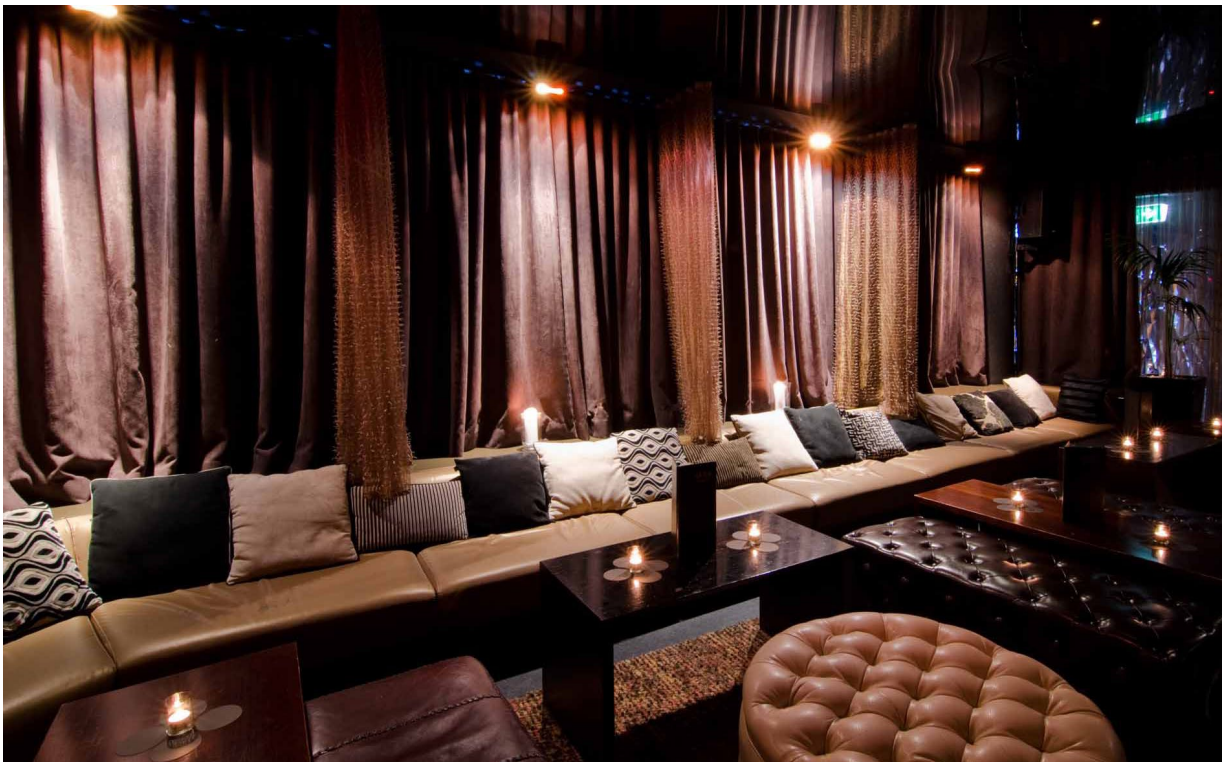
They should reflect your theme and set the scene for your bash, so don't underestimate their importance.

Photographs

You won't want to be carrying a digi-cam all evening. Nominate a friend or better still, hire a professional. Some venues may offer free photos, but be sure to check previous party photos to avoid disappointment with your mementos.

Entertainment

Depending on your theme and budget, you could employ a clairvoyant, masseuse, face painter, burlesque performer or roving comedian as alternative or supplementary entertainment for your guests. The possibilities are endless.



Other things to consider



Storage

Gifts table: Will you need a gifts table? Can you pick up your gifts the next day? Think about who could take them home for you if you will be kicking on at a nightclub.

Jackets and other belongings: Some venues have a lockable area for coats and valuables. This may be handy for your guests. We have heard horror stories about left-behind coats and belongings being binned at clean up time, so find out who is responsible if something goes missing.

Functions manager

Do you get a dedicated function host or function manager who you can contact with questions leading up to the event? Will they be at your party in case a problem arises with the speakers or food? Bar staff on shift may be clueless or have no prior knowledge of what you agreed with the function manager. Make sure you get names and numbers in case you need them on the night.

Responsible serving of alcohol (RSA)

A venue may finish your function if your guests are intoxicated, so plan ahead and keep an eye on things if you want everything to go smoothly.

Water

To minimise drunkenness and mischief, serve food, have water available, and set times for formalities to break up people's drinking time. We're not suggesting you be a killjoy, on the contrary – people will have a much better time if things go smoothly.

Respect the venue

Venues tell us they are frustrated by customers who:

- need to book ASAP at busy times of the year.
- expect things that were not offered.
- change the drinks list on the night.
- don't work properly with venue staff.

The venue staff want a good night too, so respect them and they are more likely to give you a great party.



Ticketed events

Selling tix

A ticketed event allows you to either run a party for people you don't know (like running your own club night), or, a way of having those attending contributing to the hire charge, or even minimum spend. Even asking for a gold coin at the door could help bring your costs down substantially.

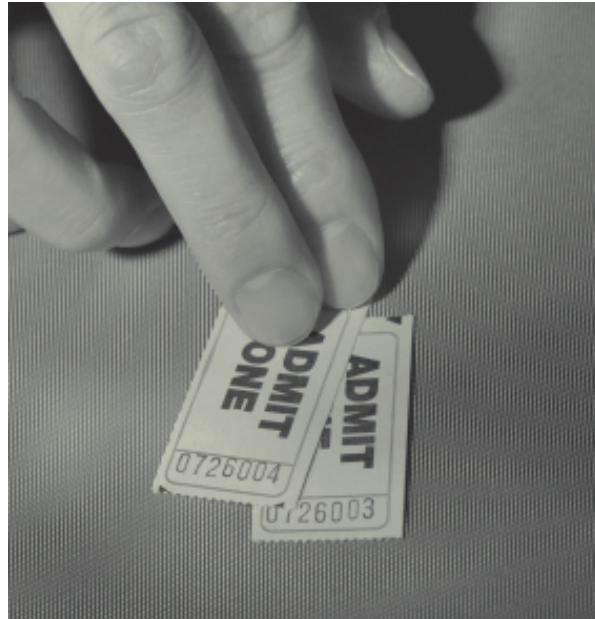
Door or pre-sale?

You may want to sell tickets at the door or pre-sale, and the venue may allow one and not the other, so ask. Partystar has it covered, too.

Extra charges

There may also be extra security charges payable for ticketed events, generally because the venues will assume you don't know the guests attending.

The Ticketed Events section on Partystar will tell you which of the above applies to your venue/s of choice, so get browsing.



So now that you know what you want, peruse the Partystar directory and use the filter to narrow down your selection. Hopefully we have provided most of the info you need, but you will need to ask them about availability first and foremost.

You can send an enquiry via the website and venues will respond within 4 working days. If they don't, please let us know and we will follow it up for you.

Have fun, and happy partying.



Partystar's user friendly design means you save time, sorting through images and information on a huge range of venues quickly and easily. Partystar regularly updates its listings so you can compare features, narrow down your search and feel confident you've made the right decision.

Find the perfect function room with Partystar.
www.partystar.com.au