

Chapter 3

Where to Host Your Party

Have you ever been to a “barty”? You probably have, even if you’re not familiar with the word.

A barty is a birthday party or other special event held at a bar.

Whenever I get invited to a barty, a little piece of me dies inside. I feel like the good luck leprechaun of party hosting has just lost his pot of gold.

A Barty is the Enemy

Here are some of the reasons why a barty is a major missed opportunity:

- They’re noisy, so it’s hard to talk.
- You can’t control the aesthetics of the space or who is allowed in.
- Ordering drinks is transactional, the opposite of welcoming.

Barties usually lack clear structure and rules. Crowded bars can inhibit connecting. We miss out on making new friends and strengthening relationships with the people we know.

Many people are tempted to throw parties at a bar because it seems so easy. Resist this temptation. Host your first party at a venue where you feel confident and can control as many variables as possible.

Why You Should Host at Home

The best place to host your party is at your home. Your house or apartment is instantly personal. It's a chance to break out of your work and online identity.

When you invite people into your home, you offer them the chance to visit your personal space. You reveal more about who you are, especially in a world where digital interaction dominates. A lot of people appreciate this vulnerability. You feel more relatable to them. It will help your guests see you in a positive light and they will forgive any aspects of your home that aren't "perfect." They won't care if your house is small, plain, or a little messy. They're coming to your party to enjoy themselves and to meet new people, not to pass judgment on your dust bunnies.

Host your party in your own house or apartment because:

- You'll have more confidence in your own space.
- You can control variables like noise levels and costs.
- Your guests will appreciate you more because of how intimate and generous it feels.



Host your party at home for these reasons. The crown is optional.

Common Objections to Hosting at Home

When I suggest hosting a cocktail party at home, many people resist the idea. Some live far away from friends and worry that no one will make the effort to come to their event. Others worry their kids' playroom is messy, their guest bedroom isn't finished, they don't have the right furniture in the dining room, or their apartment is too small.

If you feel this way, your concerns are normal. But the location, size, and state of your home aren't as big of a deal as you think. People aren't going to judge you harshly if your home is a little cluttered or you don't have a huge, fancy apartment. Guests are more likely to appreciate your authenticity. You'll have more confidence, too, being in your own space. You'll build relationships better, faster, and set yourself apart when you host at home.

Small Is OK

New York City has many tiny living spaces. My friend Phillip has hosted twenty people in his 200-square-foot apartment. I've seen his photos of a group of people crammed into a kitchen the size of a yoga mat. They were all smiling.

A small space makes an event feel intimate and special. I hosted at least ninety parties in my New York City studio apartment. It consisted of one main room with a built-in kitchen the size of the galley you'd find on a small boat. It's tiny but functional.

If Phillip and I can host parties in a small space, so can you.

Party People in Action: Danielle Schulz

Ballet Dancer at The Metropolitan Opera in Brooklyn, New York

Nick: Why did you decide to start hosting parties?

Danielle: I wanted to blend my artistic group of friends with my husband's MBA circle.

Nick: What's the biggest challenge or fear you've faced hosting parties?

Danielle: I thought that a modestly sized one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn would deter people from attending, but that hasn't been the case. I find last minute cancellations and no-shows frustrating, even disheartening. But it's bound to happen, and I remind myself not to take it personally.

Nick: What have you gained by hosting parties?

Danielle: Hosting these parties is all about connecting and nurturing relationships for me. One of the best compliments I received after a party was, "For two whole hours I didn't see a single person break out their phone. Everyone was enthralled in conversation and truly connected with one another." I've also used these parties to practice and increase my confidence in facilitating group interaction and making more corporate connections for my business.

Nick: Do you have any advice to new hosts?

Danielle: I was nervous about the name tags. To help ease the awkwardness, I had guests write their favorite food underneath their name. This created a built-in icebreaker and made it feel more fun. People love talking about food.

When Hosting at Home Isn't Possible

For ninety-five percent of the people I've advised, hosting at home is a realistic option despite their initial objections. For the other five percent, it simply isn't. Here's why:

- A family member requires care at home which makes it complicated to invite a lot of people over.
- They do not have an elevator and they want their parties to be wheelchair accessible.

- They live with unfriendly roommates or in a multifamily situation. It makes it hard to know when the house will be free.

You can still throw parties even if hosting at home is not a possibility. The easiest and most common solution is to find a friend or colleague who will let you use their home for your party. Other options include:

- A park.
- A library or community center.
- Your apartment or neighborhood common space or game room.
- Your office.



Party Pro Tip: Name tags are especially important when you're hosting an event outside your home. In a shared space, name tags become a visual unifier for your group. They'll make it easier to identify your guests.

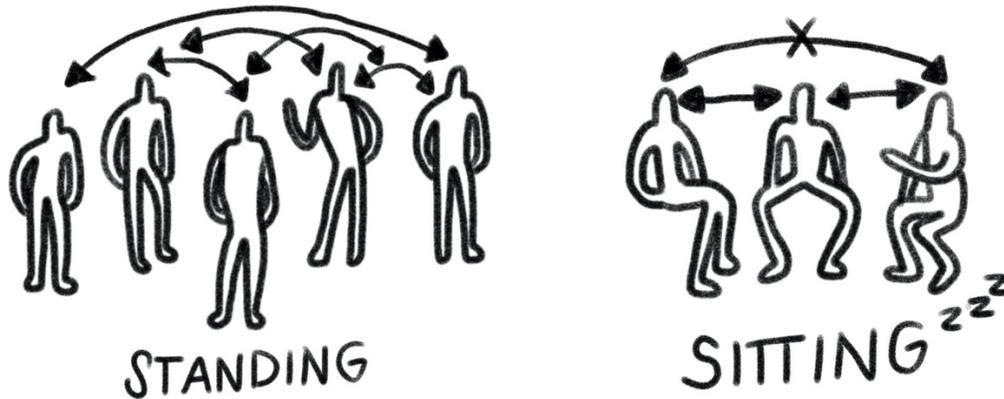


See more tips and tricks for hosting outside your home, including additional venue ideas, at www.party.pro/venues.

Nia's Story: Bloody Marys and Brunch

Nia, a fitness instructor in Texas, chose to host her first event at a local restaurant. She was worried that her house was too small. She felt her home wasn't located in a prestigious or trendy neighborhood and didn't have the layout to successfully host a group, which she thought should be a large dining table that could seat twelve or more people.

I told Nia these things didn't matter as much as she thought. I tried to tell her that **sitting down is kryptonite to a successful event** and that it would cause her icebreakers to drone on forever and kill the energy level.



Standing allows for more dynamic interactions. Sitting keeps people trapped in conversation.

Nia continued with her plan and hosted her first event at the local restaurant. She called the party “Bloody Marys and Brunch.” The brunch went relatively well. But doing it at the restaurant saddled her with logistical hurdles outside her control:

- Splitting checks between twelve different people was a major distraction. It prevented the event from ending on a high note.
- The room was noisy. It was hard to hear people at normal conversation levels. Talking to people more than one or two chairs away was impossible.
- When Nia started her first round of icebreakers, her guests were already seated. There wasn’t an easy space in the restaurant to have everyone stand up and gather. This made it hard for Nia to keep the icebreakers short. They ended up taking almost forty minutes to complete.

When Nia later took the leap and hosted an event in her home, she quickly realized how much better it was. Nobody cared about the size of her house. None of her guests snuck into her guest bedroom to check whether it was clean. They were simply happy to be there. People could move around. Conversations flowed more freely. Everyone had a great time, including Nia. She emailed me later:

The party I hosted at my home was so much better. My home does not reflect where I'm at in my career. But I put that fear away and now I have new best friends and several new acquaintances. Also, no one cares! There are so many people with bigger and better decorated homes who don't have the confidence to host. People look up to those who host.



CHAPTER CHECKLIST

- Write down all of your concerns about hosting at home. Address each one. Know that you're making the right decision to host at home.
- Believe in your decision, recommit to your party date, and have confidence that you're doing the smart thing by hosting at home.
- If you're unable to host at home, try partnering with a friend who will let you use their space. Or host your party at a park, library, community center, or office. See www.party.pro/venues for more resources.