

# Step-by-step: grand ball

**Great for:** Adults **Fun factor:** ★★★★★ **Effort:** ★★★★★ **£ potential:** ★★★★★

The end of the summer term is the perfect time to hold a grand ball - think posh frocks, black ties and champagne on the lawn!

## Step-by-step

1. **Six months before:** Book the venue and any entertainment, especially if it's a busy hotel, and pay a deposit. Send out a 'save the date' to parents.
2. **Three months before:** Start advertising the event and selling tickets through an online platform or in person, possibly offering an early bird discount. Approach local companies via letter, email or in person to ask for donations for auction and raffle prizes. These could be a product, service or experience. Contact local press to come and take photographs at the event.
3. **Two months before:** Continue promoting the event. Confirm all prizes for auctions and the raffle. Begin designing the programme, and approach companies and businesses if you're selling advertising space.
4. **Three weeks before:** Decide how you're going to utilise your auction prizes - consider increasing the interest in lower-value items by creating auction 'packages', where you group various prizes together. You might also split prizes between a raffle, a main auction - where a compère shouts out each lot and whips up excitement - and a silent auction - where guests write down their bids against each prize.
5. **Two weeks before:** Finish the ball programme and get it printed. Put a table plan together, taking guests' requests into consideration. This will probably need adapting a few times. Organise a team of helpers for on the night. Have different people in charge of each element of the ball (raffle, auction, casino, games, entertainment, etc.). Invite parents who cannot attend on the night to submit sealed bids for the auction.
6. **One week before:** Liaise with the hotel to finalise arrangements, including confirming guest numbers and any dietary requirements.
7. **On the day:** Earlier in the day, take all the prizes to the venue and check the layout of the room. Set up and decorate the venue. Meet with the DJ and Event Manager to confirm the order of events. Check if the venue's safe can be used to store cash, with a view to collecting it the next day.
8. **After the event:** Gather feedback on what went well and what could be improved for next time, making detailed notes for future reference. Thank your volunteers, guests, auction donors and any event/programme sponsors and give them details about how much the event raised and how this money will be spent.

Visit [pta.co.uk](http://pta.co.uk) for more articles, downloads and templates.

## Tips & advice

**Timing:** Allow around six months to plan your ball, avoiding major sporting fixtures and local events.

**Tickets:** The right ticket price is vital to ensuring a profit without deterring your audience. Once you've estimated your costs, you will be able to make an informed decision on ticket price. Remember that this isn't the limit of your fundraising. Number your tickets and offer a discount on a table of eight or ten to encourage bulk sales - challenge year reps to sell a table each. If the ball is for a specific project, mention this on the tickets.

**Boost profits:** Auctions or raffles are ideal for a ball as they create excitement and a focal point for your guests. Reach out to parents, teachers and the local community for support, whether it's for auction prizes or sponsorship. This will increase your profit margin considerably. Simple party games can also be popular - see [pta.co.uk/boost-profits](http://pta.co.uk/boost-profits) for ideas.

**Venue:** The venue is of huge importance for a ball. Research local hotels or golf clubs and see if you can negotiate a charity discount. You could hire a marquee and hold the event on school grounds, but this may not make the cut for a £30 price tag! External venues mean that food, drinks, music and service are taken care of, enabling PTA volunteers to enjoy the evening. It also removes the need for TEN and music licences. When researching venues, consider the dance floor, capacity, how far guests will have to travel, space for the band and whether you can bring alcohol to the venue.

**Entertainment:** Music is a sure-fire way to get everyone in the celebrating spirit, so source a live band to add some glamour to the night. In addition, how about booking a magician or a comedian?

**Publicity:** Design and print tickets, programmes and posters to create a buzz. This will add a professional touch that will reflect the ticket price.