



*The International*TM



Viewing Party Organizer's Guide

(2023)

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An ever improving guide

If you have any questions, criticism, feedback, or feel critical subjects are missing in this guide, please contact Barcraft United via [support email](#), [Discord](#), the [Organizer portal](#), or [social media](#). This living document is the culmination of experiences faced by multitudes of organizers hosting their first or even hundredth events all over the world - do not assume your concerns are too trivial. We value all constructive feedback no matter your level of experience!

Interested in translating this guide for other organizers in your region?
Contact us, compensation is available for your assistance!

Credits and special thanks

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Special thanks to Oskar Bowers, Xifan 'Primadog' Hong and all the other organizers that broke the mold in 2011 - becoming the first step towards global esports awareness, allowing fans to enjoy lively experiences around the world. We all miss you Xifan, wherever you are ❤️

Should I organize a watch party?

Yes, yes, YES!

The answer should always be yes. At least, you shouldn't be *afraid of* organizing a watch party. Be brave—dive in. Nobody became an expert overnight.

You'll be joining a legacy of fans uniting others over a love for the game. Esports watch parties go back as far as people have been able to hook their stream up to televisions, from impromptu household parties to our first Barcraft events.

In *Dota 2*, watch parties (dubbed 'pubstomps' by the community, a term that also means 'dominating in public matches') became widely popular and were later officially sanctioned by Valve through Barcraft United. Around the world, many regional teams also host their own watch parties for local fans.

More importantly, any organizer of any watch party will tell you about the satisfaction and joy in doing so, regardless of any obstacles and difficulties they faced. Lifelong friendships, gaming squads, and even love have sprouted from the efforts of organizers. Even if only three people show up, now everyone knows three others who share a common passion—and that's worth celebrating!

So don't hesitate. Your favorite event will be here before you know it, and great work lies ahead!

Your event's scope

There are many factors to consider when hosting a watch party (also known as a viewing party) or general meetup. Below are common questions when researching and planning your event:

- Which community am I bringing together? Does one already exist in my area?
- Am I planning around a specific major event or broadcast?
 - Is it at a reasonable time and day of the week?
 - How long do I expect the broadcast to run?
 - How will guests keep themselves entertained during downtime?
- How many attendees do I realistically expect, and ideally would like to reach?
 - Does my neighborhood support that many attendees, or will I have to host my event in a larger metropolitan area?
- Will my event be all-ages or limited? Is the venue appropriate for this age group?
- Will my event have free entry, or will attendees pay a fee?
- Will I host raffles, giveaways or other promotions?
- Will I be taking photographs or recording media during my event?
- Do I want to sell merchandise at the event?
- What are my legal liabilities as an event organizer?
- Can I run this entire event myself, or will I need a team?

Many of these questions are dependent on one another – For example, it's difficult to operate an event alone where you wish to sell merchandise; Who supervises the material when you need to take a break?

Although you may not have immediate answers to these questions, this document will help you answer them, and many more, as you progress on your organizer journey!

Collaboration opportunities

Before getting started on your own, consider researching existing established local groups or individuals that have previously hosted events in your area, or are planning to do so moving forward. Collaboration may provide a deeper understanding of the process from planning through execution... and could result in a better overall event than two independent organizers competing for the same local audience (we call this 'cannibalization').

We urge you to make full use of both this guide and our [Discord server](#), where many experienced organizers idle. Make the most of it and get your questions answered by your peers. If you're unsure, you may also contact Barcraft United at any point via our event organizer portal or directly via email.

Hosting a viewing party

Your first step is deciding which specific event you wish to host a viewing party for. There are plenty of leagues and tournaments running year-round. Do you want to host a watch party for a grand showdown like the *Dota 2* International, or perhaps something smaller but more consistent throughout the year? Ideally the broadcast you pick has a start time far enough in the future to provide sufficient time for both event planning and promotion.

A rule of thumb is to give yourself at least 6 weeks before a broadcast to pick a venue and promote your event. The longer you are able to promote, the larger your potential attendance may grow (within reason).

If you have an existing relation with a venue willing to host your event, it's possible to do so within shorter time frames. However, if the venue hosts many events, it may be hard to squeeze in your own when you want it. Be flexible when needed.

Check your game communities' popular sites as well as esports tournament partners for event schedules. [Liquipedia](#), Reddit (gaming subreddits) and localized Facebook gaming communities are some examples of common sites for some prospective games.

Be wary of other major events

You **must** account for time zone differences. You may find it exciting to host a viewing party for a particular broadcast, only to realize it begins at midnight in your region, or ends just as the sun rises and the work week begins!

Additionally, research what other major broadcast events are being held at the same time. If there's another major sports event, such as a well-known regional rivalry or league finals, you might discover it difficult to locate an unbooked venue, or venue management comfortable switching TVs over to your broadcast.

The following excerpt showcases such a conflict occurring:

“The Sunday party was indeed much more crowded, but we failed to consider that our event conflicted with NFL football.” ... “a bad day to rent out a local sports bar known for showing football games. We reserved about half of the TVs in the venue, but during the football game the place was jam-packed. Football fans were not excited about seeing women in costumes or watching video games on TV. We had the majority of the patrons in the bar, but the football fans were pissed off about not hearing their game.” ... “Needless to say, the bar did not invite us back”.

— Andrew M. Campbell’s 2019 book, [Surviving Esports: The Zyori Story](#)



Finding the right venue

You may already have a venue in mind or are actively researching one that could meet your needs. Either way, make sure it fits the scope of your event. Even your dream venue may have difficulties in unexpected ways.

Age range

Depending on the broadcast and/or game demographic, you may have more success at bars, or be limited to all-ages venues. Be sure to check if potential venues have age limits or not, or only permits entry above a certain age.

Location

Choose a venue that is easily accessible that will accommodate the number of attendees you plan to have. If you are kickstarting a local community with no pre-existing social groups to rely on, a small venue is best - It is best to be cautious than to overcommit to a larger venue.

For all-day events (~8 hours), consider venues with additional entertainment options and balanced menus. Regardless of event length, accessibility via public transport and parking options are important considerations.

For instance, a bar located downtown or near a college campus will often have public transportation available or be within walking distance of a stop. Similarly walkable areas will also permit guests to take a breather and walk around.

Ensuring a proper viewing experience

Whilst at the venue, check for ample seating and good viewing areas, with preferably more than one screen. Sports bars are a good choice as they are accustomed to showing sporting events, and they'll often have televisions or projectors already set up so that everyone has a decent viewing experience. A venue with function rooms can be great for hosting events, as owners can set up an area specifically for the esports crowd whilst leaving room for their regular patronage - in this situation signage should be placed to ensure your guests know where to go.

If you're considering non-traditional venues, such as cinemas, scrutinize whether they can accommodate your patrons and entertainment for the entire length of the broadcast. For example, a standard cinema theater may be unusual for a social event lasting six hours, unless there's space and accommodations suitable for mingling somewhere within the theater room itself.

Contacting the venue

After locating a potential venue, you must contact the venue owner, floor manager, or events manager. We recommend speaking to them in person to reduce the possibility of missed calls or emails, and to further cement the legitimacy of your inquiry. Introduce yourself and let them know what you have planned and that you would like to speak to them further. If they are unfamiliar with the concept of viewing parties, provide them some basic information as to what they are. Using sport analogies is often a great way to bridge the knowledge gap.

Explain that people do indeed watch video games just as much as, and in a few cases more than sports! If they're still skeptical, show them videos of the huge crowds from previous events and its equivalence to large sporting events such as the Superbowl opening ceremony:

- [The International TI11 2022 Opening Ceremony \(full length\)](#)
- [Worlds 2022 Finals Opening Ceremony Presented by Mastercard ft. Lil Nas X, Jack...](#)
- [Map 1 win Astralis #BLASTPremier caster + crowd POV \(Attendee POV\)](#)

If they seem interested, schedule a meeting to view the facility and to discuss the event in detail. This prevents situations where you show up unexpectedly at an inopportune time and allows staff to prepare for an event discussion.

The person meeting will want to know how this event will benefit their venue financially. If they are new to the idea, they will at the very least be worried about losing business.

Be prepared to educate them of the prior successes of similar watch parties using news articles, videos, information about the game and tournament you'd like to present at your event. Here are some sample testimonials and recaps of previous viewing parties:

- [YouTube Venue Testimonial - Boulder, CO - Barcraft Watch Party](#)
- [YouTube Real Sports Bar Viewing Party Recap](#)
- [YouTube Sydney BlizzCon BarCraft](#)
- [Is Barcraft Toronto the new Hockey Night in Canada?](#)

If they are hesitant, convince the owner to host a single event as a trial. They may consider charging a cover charge, which may ease the owners' concerns, but create additional roadblocks (see "Cover charges and RSVPs" below).

Venue specific technical requirements

Before committing to a venue review the [Technical Requirements](#) section, as it provides additional critical requirements and suggested test procedures. Discuss these requirements directly with the venue owner, and go in for a test on a slow day if need be.

Cover charges & RSVPs

There's a chance you may need to have a 'cover fee' to guarantee revenue for the venue. If this is the case, anticipate how you'll collect these in advance and on-site.

While a cover charge can ensure RSVPs show up and provide revenue to the venue, it can impact overall attendance if no additional benefits come with the added cost. Some venues may allow you to give a drink ticket per attendee paid, but others simply need to guarantee income, as they aren't sure your guests will drink or eat, and you're taking up space for other potential customers. You can also make games and giveaways to make the ticket "worth it," though this begins to accrue costs and work for you, the organizer.

If you're very unsure about what steps can be taken for a cover charge, ask the venue, fellow Barcraft organizers, and possibly other local event organizers, gaming or not, how it normally works for your venue or area.

Cover charge or not, it's good to anticipate how many people will be attending your event by collecting RSVPs. This way, both you and the venue can anticipate how many staff and supplies are necessary, and if you have a cover charge, you'll want a way to collect that in advance. There are many online platforms nowadays that allow you to 'host' events and collect RSVPs/cover charges, so pick the one that makes the most sense for you. If your venue already uses one regularly, feel free to ask!

Technical Requirements

Today, almost all venues you consider will be prepared to host sports events via television, but not all may be equipped to handle live-streamed content. It's important to ensure that both you and your venue can host the stream for attendees to enjoy.

While the following list may seem complicated, it boils down to a few select needs that are easy to overlook or take for granted, mostly audio/visual and internet connectivity that must be verified before you commit to a particular venue.

Necessary equipment

Make sure you have access to the appropriate equipment. How much, and what kind depends on both the venue and scope of your event. Some typical items include:

- Laptop or other device capable of reliably encoding/decoding live streams and outputting high definition AV (audio/video).
- Portable chargers or spare batteries.
- Adapters and cables to patch into the venue's AV system. Power strips, extension cords, floor tape for temporary wiring. Ethernet cables if wireless connectivity is unreliable.
- Private mobile hotspot or alternative backup internet connection.
- Cameras and encoding/streaming hardware for remote 'crowd cams' to capture your guests' reactions for use by the broadcasters during the main event (if applicable).

Venue video

The most important part of watching a live stream is that fans can, of course, watch it. It's likely that your chosen venue already has this in mind, whether through a multitude of TVs or via a projector, but it's good to be sure these options are available to you and your setup.

Review the venue's AV system to verify its input options (HDMI, Displayport, DVI, Component, Composite, VGA) and output capabilities in the desired locations. Some setups only connect to one single TV whilst others can output to all or select venue displays at the same time ('multiplexing').



Generally venues have HDMI-compatible displays. HDMI is high-fidelity and does not degrade much over distance. Additionally, HDMI splitters, extenders and switches can be used to feed several devices from a single source.

Use available displays to their fullest. If the broadcast provides secondary streams - such as stadium crowd cameras or live maps - why not use them to enhance the viewing party experience? Remember to either mute or mix secondary audio inputs to comfortable levels.

When testing, some TVs incorrectly crop input video due to poorly configured display ratios, which must be accounted for or corrected.

Venue audio

Some setups may automatically take your HDMI audio routing, which will make for straightforward audio mixing.

If not, you will have to broadcast audio to a pair of RCA connectors. You'll feed an input via RCA connectors passed through powerful amplifiers and a mixing table, so each room in the venue has appropriate audio.

If not using a dedicated streaming device, consider an additional independent sound output (be it sound card, USB dongle or virtual/emulated) so the OS will send any beep, boop, or even the occasional quack to the internal speakers, and the stream audio goes through the secondary output plugged into the venue audio setup without interruption.

Keep the stream volume at the default settings before any sound checks. Next, ask the venue to lower or raise the volume to a comfortable level, so that those who want to listen can, while others may socialize. It's a community event, after all!

If the broadcast has extreme volume changes, try applying an 'audio normalizer' or 'loudness equalizer' (built-in to some operating systems) to the audio stream. Some venues will have this option available in their in-house audio equipment stack, it doesn't hurt to ask.

Internet connectivity

You must test the venue's internet capacity before committing to it! Connectivity is a critical factor in choosing a venue when streaming a live broadcast and is something both organizers and venue owners often overlook.

A reliable internet connection providing a consistent download rate is critical for smooth viewing experiences. When Barcraft United first began in 2012 only 600 Kbps was required; however as of 2019 a single 1080p stream is at minimum 3000 Kbps and may reach upwards of 25 Mbps when streaming premium HD, ~90Gb per hour.

The following are broad estimated bandwidth requirements to stream a single 1080p broadcast and will vary depending on video encoding quality. Multiply these figures when streaming adding multiple channels (secondary/tertiary supplemental streams):

- [Twitch.tv](https://www.twitch.tv) - 3500 to 6000 Kbps
- [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) - 3000 to 10,000 Kbps
- **Facebook** - 4000 to 10,000 Kbps

Always test connectivity and basic throughput connection via fast.com, speedtest.net or similar services. Run several tests to ensure a constant reading. You should have a safety margin of 30% additional bandwidth.

Verify whether the internet connection will be publicly accessible to patrons, or if one can be dedicated to your event. Very often nowadays, a venue will have a dedicated 'staff' or venue wifi connection, which you can ask to use to run the stream exclusively for the event.

If the venue lacks the sufficient speed, bandwidth and/or consistency, it may not be good for hosting this event, though it may be worth noting the issue to a venue manager or owner so they can consider upgrades for customer and staff convenience. A hotspot is a fantastic alternative and/or backup, though maintaining a stable connection can be difficult during a crowded evening.

Shared connectivity, throttling, and quality of service

Hosting events with hundreds of tech-savvy patrons all using their smartphones can strain venue-provided guest wifi, in many cases. Consider limiting or augmenting access, especially if your event relies on this same connection for incoming video streams. Whenever possible connect your streaming devices via ethernet cable. Wifi becomes unreliable in crowded venues.

Check whether the provided connection has any throttling, and make sure throttled bandwidth is sufficient for your needs. Certain connection types such as coax cable internet are affected by use in the surrounding neighborhood and could yield surprisingly bad results at different times of the day.

When forced to share a connection with venue patrons, and the venue has some technical competency, ask the venue if their router's Quality of Service (QoS) settings may be modified to ensure your streaming devices get the necessary bandwidth. This is normally achieved by adding the device MAC and/or static IP addresses to the router configuration.

Equipment Locations & Safety

Ask the venue manager about safe locations for your equipment during the event, and negotiate the use of a separate space for your team to keep additional gear out of reach of the public. Depending on the venue, it's possible that your equipment may be located near guests that are drinking and getting excited about their favorite teams. You can prepare for this by using 'gaffer tape' to secure wiring on the floor and table, placing signage, and by alerting staff, volunteers and patrons of the area.



Putting together a team

Now that you have a plan you will need to decide if you require a team. Remember, the larger the event, the more work and responsibility you will have. Underpreparation and a lack of support can cause long setup times and failure to meet patron expectations, and attendees can often tell when things are running at a minimum level. Ultimately, relying on trustworthy friends or acquaintances is considered a good thing, as is having more help than you might immediately need.

Most events hosting 40 or less patrons do not require a large team. You may fulfill several roles and scale depending on the size and scope of the event being operated. The two basic roles are:

- **Event planner** - Oversight of the event as a whole and ultimately responsible for ensuring each aspect of the event is handled correctly. They keep the team motivated and focused. They coordinate interactions with venues, sponsors, etc. Generally only a single person takes this role to prevent miscommunication. When getting started, this is likely you!
- **Volunteers** - Help setup, breakdown ('teardown' in the business), distribute freebies, assist other roles, and ensure everyone is having a good time. Consider onboarding at least one volunteer for up to 50 attendees, then one or two more for every 25-50 extra beyond that point, depending on the size, format, and length of your event.

As your event expands in size and scope consider the following roles (which can be shared or overlapping):

- **Technical expert** - Responsible for major technical aspects of the event including hardware, networking/internet, any needed software, and general equipment being used at the venue (TVs/projectors, audio equipment, etc). Some venues will have a staff member that may assist.
- **Cashiers / Merchandisers** - Setting up and handling cover fees (if applicable), merchandise table or area, showcasing items in an appealing manner, secures and monitors inventory/cash-on-hand, handling transactions and any related issues that might arise. When money is involved, always ensure there is always at least one team member securing the area to prevent potential loss.
- **Photographer / Social media manager** - Keeping your community informed and up to date on the relevant websites and social media your community uses is important. Taking great photos / videos and sharing them!

Aside from these roles, it's also good to have a volunteer available for any general questions and help, whether about drink specials, schedules, or even to take group photos.

For events that run over 4 hours, consider 2- to 3-hour shifts, with 2 to 3 team members assigned per shift in roles with major responsibilities such as merchandising and tech.

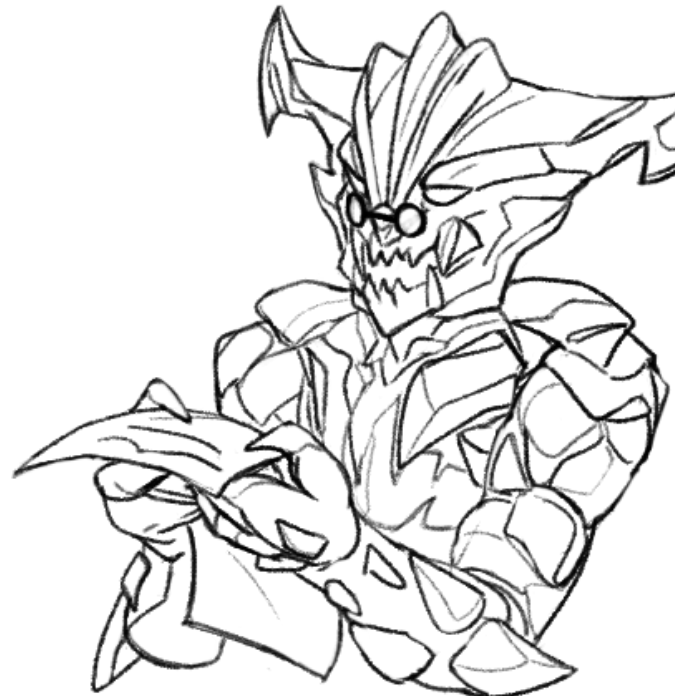
Legal 'Gotchas'

Liabilities / accountability as an organizer

Sometimes things do not go to plan. If you did not charge entry or are not directly involved in the operation of the venue hosting your event, your liabilities are limited. Historically, there have been no major incidents reported to Barcraft United while hosting viewing parties.

But while rare, accidents can happen, and you may be held accountable if negligence is proved.

Overall, the best step you can take to prevent issues is to be vigilant and proactive about attendees' and venue safety. Know who *on-site* you can reach out to from the venue staff or on your team in case of an emergency or disruption. Also know where details such as a first-aid kit, CPR pack, fire exit, bathroom etc. are within the venue.



When charging an entry or ticket fee, depending on the terms at purchase and local laws which might supersede these terms, you may be liable to refund the cost if anything does happen.

If you anticipate your event to be large in attendee count, it doesn't hurt to have liability insurance to cover unexpected circumstances, such as event cancellations, damages, or injuries. Obtaining liability insurance is a proactive step to cover unexpected situations and provides an extra layer of security.

Copyright / Broadcast Rights

Depending on the scope of your event, such as charging for admission or sale of merchandise, there are specific legal aspects that must be addressed.

Historically, permission to utilize official broadcast channels has been granted for viewing parties via Barcraft United, free of charge. However, in some circumstances broadcast partners may require payment of a pay-per-view, rebroadcast fee, and/or additional fees under specific circumstances (such as hosting 'for-profit' events). These potential fees, if applicable, will be displayed in the organizer portal. During event validation a Barcraft United representative will contact you to ensure compliance.

If you are hosting a viewing party in official capacity, there may be limitations placed by the broadcaster. These limitations are often unique, are set on a per-event basis, and will be clearly displayed within the organizer portal and/or within the specific viewing party submission form. Some examples include:

- Disallowing use of certain unofficial broadcast channels.
- Disallowing certain sponsor participation due to conflict with official broadcast.
- Illegal modification of official broadcast channels (3rd party overlays, ads)

Such limitations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and under normal circumstances do not prevent organizer participation, assuming there is active communication regarding potential issues. When in doubt, contact support or discuss with other participating organizers.

Promotional asset licensing

Prior to some broadcast events Barcraft United may provide packages containing art assets and other promotional materials that may be used for marketing and promoting your watch party both in-person and online. Some common restrictions are:

- Limiting use to the particular event or broadcast being promoted.
- Disallowing 'for profit' use, such as sale of merchandise created using these assets.
- Disallowing brand modifications, such as logo color or removing trademark symbols.

Providing ‘Notice of recording’

In the majority of countries, before recording video or taking photos during your event for official use, you MUST post legal notices at entry points of the venue or rooms where your event is taking place to inform potential patrons.

Barcraft United provides general use notices in multiple languages to be printed and posted, as well as alternate special event notices that may be provided by the broadcaster (at their discretion). Additionally, ensure the venue is made aware of such arrangements ahead of the event, as there may be additional legal requirements when submitting your event for unique opportunities, such as live ‘crowd cams’ being showcased on the live broadcast!

Marketing & promoting your event

Once you have picked the date and planned the event with the venue manager it’s time to promote your event! How can you make sure the event is social, and geared toward building a local community that will want to keep coming back?

Give your potential attendees a reason to think, “This is so much better than watching at home!” Your goal is to create *anticipation*.

- If there are existing local communities following the interest in question, its best practice and highly recommended to get the group leaders involved to increase event awareness. If you are kickstarting a community, create a page or group on social media networks that are popular in your region.
- Ensure the venue itself participates in promotion to extend your reach on both social media and physically via flyers or a window notice on location.
- Advertise on websites that cater specifically to your community as well as more general sites related to gaming meetups. Local newspapers and print publications generally offer free event listings on their website and will sometimes even choose certain events to put in the paper.
- Distribute flyers where potential attendees will see them. Local game cafes, gaming related conventions and college campuses are a great way to find potential guests who may not even know watch parties or social gatherings for the interest exist!
- Consider creating locally relevant social media accounts (or chat servers) for promotions and announcements. This may not help much in the beginning, but as you run more events, it can become critical.



- Tweet at the tournament or to shoutcasters at the event. Many times, events will have specific hashtags to append to your posts for additional publicity.
- Invite local game personalities, players and/or teams to your event. They may be willing to promote the event for you on social media or stream as well.

When marketing your event, ensure information is clear and concise. At least highlight basic information such as time, date, location, price, activities and/or gifts, and venue restrictions, and make available rules, parking availability, public transportation options, etc. Check your ad placements for continued visibility, and set up a contact method to answer any questions that potential attendees have.

Announce your event ahead of time, but not *too* far ahead of time. People may forget the date if you announce your event too long in advance (say, two months). Announcing three or four weeks prior is generally a good balance, and it's an excellent idea to plan the majority of your reminders, updates, and social media pushes for the two days after the announcement and during the two days before the event.

Pre-event preparations

Keep 'comms' active

While you don't need to talk to everybody every day, you should at least be sure that your venue and your team are kept updated on preparations. For example, did you set up a deposit or an up-front payment of cover charges with the venue? Does the venue know how many people are coming? Are volunteer shifts and roles clear and understood?

Testing equipment and venue connectivity

It's recommended you test equipment the week before, the day before, and the day of your event when possible.

Check all software, plugins, etc, to ensure everything is up to date and functioning properly.

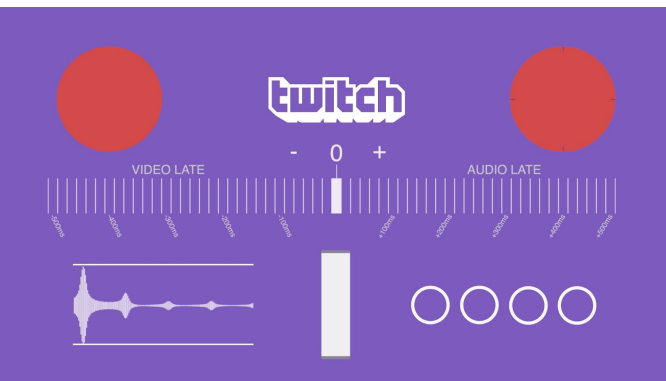
Check stream output quality, especially in full screen at the highest resolution your setup can handle, keeping in mind that some factors (such as internet bandwidth) might be different the day of your event. Experiment with device's output resolution and graphic settings to improve output quality.

Test your setup outputting both recorded videos and live streams to ensure both work as expected. During



testing, walk through trafficked areas to ensure audio output is clear and understood, taking note of potential audio dead zones in the venue.

Do not expect venue staff to help if your own equipment malfunctions. Being prepared for worst-case scenarios is essential. Even if everything runs smoothly, you'll have the peace of mind that you're ready to deal with technical problems that may arise.



Testing for audio / video delays

Test audio and video synchronization using the following links, courtesy of Twitch Event Engineering:

- [Live broadcast \(streamed 24/7\)](#)
- [H.264 \(download\)](#)
- [ProRes \(download\)](#)

Laptop specific technical tips

- Use a dedicated, stable web browser for stream playback and a separate one for browsing so it reduces potential stream interference.
- Increase your cursor size or enable the “Show location of pointer when I press the CTRL Key” in mouse settings to make it easier to locate if changes are needed.
- ‘Extending’ to secondary displays instead of ‘mirroring’ ensures the device’s primary screen is separated, preventing potential system notifications from appearing over the broadcast on secondary outputs.
- Put the device in ‘Do not disturb’ mode to silence alerts and other distractions.

Event goodies & extras

As most esports events tend to run a bit longer, with multiple matches taking place in one day, make plans to fill downtime between matches. Social games, icebreaker activities, raffles and giveaways are great ways to keep your patrons engaged and entertained.

Technically, these aren't necessary, and a simple event is often a great one, especially if it's small! However, for larger events that run longer, well-planned engagement can also increase revenue for your venue and attendee satisfaction, which ensures continued partnerships down the line.

Should you choose to prepare these or any other ‘extras,’ be sure your venue knows about them to ensure space and resources. Also, coordinate with your volunteers—you never know what skills they have that can help them run smoothly.

Venue ‘specials’

Making and advertising custom drinks or a game-inspired menu are great ways to add a custom touch to your event related to the community you are catering to. Talk to the venue manager in advance about customized drinks named after your favorite in-game units or moments. While not every bartender will be willing to do this, you can keep the drinks simple and the ingredients low-cost to make the option more viable and likely to say yes.

If the manager isn't open to customized drinks, they might be willing to name a few of their regular menu items after the games for the night. If you do end up with a gaming-inspired food and drink menu, be sure to make a menu to show the attendees what's available to order—and, of course, get the bar owner's input and approval on what you create beforehand.

Giveaways and games

One way to entice fans to join instead of watching at home is to promote giveaways (local laws withstanding). This also creates engagement at the event and encourages attendees to stay for longer. You can create 'bingo' boards with competitive 'tropes' and common happenings, ask esports or game trivia throughout the evening, or even hold cosplay or fashion contests. Just be sure that it's suitable to the venue, and that you have a loud way to announce these!

Getting prizes can be as simple as buying merchandise from the official organizer or developer, or just buying game-adjacent items. You can also ask local businesses, gaming companies, or even teams competing at the big event if they'd be willing to contribute! If the event is smaller, you're more likely to get local businesses to contribute than bigger gaming corporations, but for some events, game developers will send promotional merch. Regardless, be sure to promote and thank these businesses should they choose to chip in!

Make it shareable

There are fun ways to make people want to 'share' your event, whether over social media or just with friends. An event-friendly hashtag or even the event's official one is a safe and easy way, but if you have social media for the gathering, you can encourage people to tag that as well.

You can make custom-printed items to help commemorate the event. Anything from drink napkins to wristbands or even pins will help attendees remember the great time they had, and 'wearables' boost visibility if you plan on holding more events, though this will obviously be at a cost.

'Photo booth' items go a long way on social media, whether it's 'masks' on sticks or signs for the event. Some companies rent out photo booths, but many attendees will be more than happy to hold up fun items for just a phone camera. Especially for fantasy-themed games, you can make large cut-outs of memorable items in the game, 'masks' of characters held on sticks, or details like status debuffs. Otherwise, signs with your event name are enough, too.

If you make custom items, avoid copyright issues with the original gaming company (see Copyright / Broadcast rights above). Don't sell any items displaying copyrighted images without permission. Especially avoid full-on logos from the original game and/or publishers. If you make promotional images, it's safer to use details such as images and costume details of characters, items, and game settings. For major events, some companies will loosen permissions and guidelines for image use to promote viewing parties (fliers and non-merch items), but be absolutely sure first. If all else fails, get creative!

Making your own pre-event checklist

As you run more events, you will find certain preparation details require additional attention. Thankfully, a sample [pre-event checklist](#) is provided at the end of this guide as a starting point for your own! If you feel the sample is missing something, [please let us know!](#)

At the event!

The time has come! Double-check your checklist of necessities—tech, games, prizes—and arrive earlier than you think you'll need to. Be sure you and the venue staff are on the same page, and be prepared to have an awesome event involving your favorite game.

Hype the crowd

When the broadcast goes live, especially for pre-game content such as panels and opening ceremonies, present it on the screen as soon as possible to build up excitement.

During the event, be social! Introduce yourself to people and thank them for coming. Greet everyone who comes to your event warmly. Whether it is a big group of friends or a lone esports fan, everyone wants to feel welcome. Ask how they found out about your event, ask for constructive feedback.

Many times your guests will sustain themselves socially by chatting each other up and talking about the games! On the other hand, be vigilant and talk to guests that seem quiet or secluded to make sure all their needs are being met. There's also no harm in swinging by tables to introduce yourself and ask how things are going.

Take plenty of photos during the event and encourage attendees to post them on social media. Everyone loves a good group photo! This helps you promote future events by showing engagement and excitement. (You remembered your [recording notices](#), right?)

Avoid technical hitches

The best way to avoid issues is preparation. Again, be sure to test your tech at the venue, if they'll permit it. Take into account placement of equipment and cables, and if streams are being shown at the proper display ratio and volume.

Ensure before you arrive that you have everything you need. This cannot be stressed enough, as it's quite easy to overlook the little things, for both first-timers and experienced organizers! One missing cable or a lack of space on provided power strips can significantly delay setup. Arrange your backup supplies for easy access where possible.

Your prior preparation and venue testing ensure fans don't miss out on the action. Tape down cable runs with gaffer tape and/or cover with anti-slip mats when crossing high-traffic areas. Consider placing signs to remind staff and patrons not to touch equipment. Alternatively a volunteer may occasionally remind attendees celebrating a little too close to move away from critical hardware.

Be excellent to each other

The best part of a gaming event is sharing a unique passion and creating a sense of belonging among its fans, no matter where they come from.

Inclusion and respect at your events should be the rule, not an afterthought. Be proactive in ensuring each attendee feels valued, respected, and involved, as every attendee, new or old, should feel just as much part of the community as anyone else. By fostering inclusive, engaging, and respectful interactions, you're not just hosting an event; you're nurturing a tight-knit community that others will be thrilled to join and help grow.

While enjoying the venue, be inclusive of venue staff (they make their living there, after all). Treat everybody professionally! Be courteous and respectful of their work. You can be friendly, but try not to block or overly distract staff as they take care of customers. Also, if applicable (especially in the USA), remind attendees to tip.

Be courteous to venue regulars, and don't dismiss them because of a potential lack of understanding. If they show interest, explain the basics of what you are spectating and try getting them engaged! It's moments like these that directly improve awareness and legitimacy of gaming and the esports community as a whole.



Post-event: review and improve

At the end of your event, be sure to thank your attendees for coming and repeat this sentiment on your social media accounts. Let them know if you plan to do another event in the future and to bring their friends!

This is where you start building and strengthening your relationships with your attendees. Even if you don't run another event, you now know others near you who share your passions!

Thank the venue for their involvement on the day of the event and ask for feedback from their perspective. If you and your attendees felt comfortable at this particular venue, find out if they would like to host another event in the future. Optionally, send the owner and/or floor manager a personalized thank-you card, and let them know you look forward to working with them again. Don't forget to thank everyone else who also may have been supporting your event such as sponsors, bar staff, online staff unable to attend, etc.

At the end of your event, evaluate how it went critically and what can be done better. Use feedback from attendees and the venue to eliminate or work out things people disliked and improve upon the things they did.

If you hosted the event as a team, gather them and go over the event as a whole. Talk about what you did well and what can be improved upon. Take note of everything being said and try to summarize it into a 'post-mortem' document, it will help future events run more smoothly even when you are not around to manage them.

The sentiments and knowledge you gained are likely similar to other organizers worldwide, so why not join our [official Discord server](#) and discuss them?

Sample Pre-event Checklist

	Technical Equipment
	Primary streaming laptop/device (and its charging cable).
	Spare AV cables, converters, extension cords, power strips.
	Internet setup, if needed: ethernet cables, private mobile hotspot.
	Optional "Crowd/reaction Cam" streaming equipment.
	Optional backup streaming device.
	Ensure device safety.
	Tech Quality Assurance
	User accounts for the primary event broadcast platforms.
	Save important bookmarks on both your phone and stream devices.
	Check (and potentially update) all software and plugins the day prior.
	Ensure venue internet speed / reliability.
	Ensure audio/video is synchronized .
	Plan Downtime Entertainment
	Setup and Decoration
	Have items needed for decor available and plan an appropriate setup time.
	Front door / window signage (venue might provide).
	Directions within the venue (if in a private party room, or non-obvious location).
	Print and placement of recording notices (if recording official video / photos).
	Custom menu / drink lists (if pre-arranged with venue).
	Event Schedule Review (Double-check the event's flow, from the time the doors open until closing)
	Confirm Staff/Volunteers (Ensure volunteers know their roles and what time to arrive.)
	Coordinate venue resources and in-venue emergency contacts.