

Sustainable Party Best Practices Guide

organizing a sustainable event

Planning a sustainable event takes more than just tableware. True sustainability means working to ensure every element of your event, from the lights to the decor, is chosen with it's impact on the earth in mind.

Since the world of sustainability can seem a bit gigantic, we've created this nifty guide to help you focus on the steps that speak to you.

how to contribute!

The goal of this guide is to offer a constantly evolving resource of helpful ideas. We've tapped industry experts for their advice and we'd love to get your input too. Send in your own best practices and tips for organizing sustainable events and we'll include the juicy ones in the next version of the guide.

Take a peek and contact us at weloveyou@sustainableparty.com if you have any ideas to add!

categories of sustainability

Our ideas are organized across seven categories of sustainability. While there are oodles of things you can do, these categories are the core areas of event planning that could use a little eco-conscious love.

Community

Resource Conservation

Food

Transportation

Materials

Waste Management

rating system

It's hard to know the level of impact your efforts are having. So we've created the Sustainable Party rating system to help you keep track of all of your good deeds.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

Simply check off the ideas you've implemented and count them up when you're through. Check out the chart below and see how your event stacks up.

Sustainable Party Rating System Results

0-5	not very sustainable. start with the simple stuff and build up to true sustainability.
6-15	planting the seeds you're on you're way to a sustainable party- don't stop now!
16-beyond	bring on the party! you've planned an event to be proud of.



category one

Community

category :: community

idea #1

Create signs promoting the best your community has to offer.

how it's done

Signs serve as a reminders to guests of the awesome things available right around the corner. Highlight the local community's needs, accomplishments, and history and prompt people to attend a community building event or make a donation.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: community

idea #2

Raise money for a non-profit

how it's done

Make a positive impact in the local or global community by using your event as a vehicle for donations. Whether you require your guests or sponsors to make direct donations or come up with a creative solution, throwing a party for a cause can increase attendance and make your guests feel all warm and fuzzy.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: community

idea #3

Find unique ways to connect your event to the community

some ideas!

- hire disadvantaged staff for your event
- partner with a community group and highlight their cause
- provide living-wage to staff along with education or skill training programs



SP rating system

☐ I did this!



category two

Resource Conservation

category :: resource conservation

idea #4

Create signs reminding guests
to conserve energy

how it's done

Most of the time, people just forget to do the simple eco-things that can make a big difference. Create signs reminding guests to turn off the lights. You can also get creative and incorporate regional and global facts, further actions steps the reader can take, or more energy-related information.

Bonus! The Sustainable Party signage package features sleek printable reminder signs for turning out the lights!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: resource conservation

idea #5

Create signs that promote water conservation

how it's done

Bring attention to the responsibilities we all have in conserving our water by creating signs that remind guests to conserve water.

Get creative with your signs by incorporating regional and global facts, and tips about water saving methods outside of your event.

Bonus! Water conservation reminders are available in the Sustainable Party signage package!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: resource conservation

idea #6

Use LEDs and CFLs

how it's done

We hope your event goes all night long. But keeping your space lit can be a huge energy sucker. Switch all bulbs to CFLs and LEDs and save a dramatic amount of energy compared to traditional incandescent light bulbs.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: energy conservation

idea #7

Upgrade old appliances and
unplug seldom used ones

how it's done

New technologies have dramatically increased the efficiency of most household appliances. Upgrade to energy star appliances if you can or simply unplug (not just turn off!) appliances that are often left on standby or seldom used.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: resource conservation

idea #8

Audit your energy

how it's done

Calculate energy use before and after your event by reading your meter or utility bill. Learn more about the different types of energy you are using by checking out www.ghgprotocol.org.

You can also take your audit a step further by calculating what the GHG protocol calls “Scope 3” energy. “Scope 3” means energy related to things such as commuting, or the life cycle of products used at your event.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: resource conservation

idea #9

Perform a water audit

how it's done

A Water Audit can be simple or complicated, but the goal is to measure the amount of water used during the event and understand the impact. Try to perform a water audit before the event to promote enhanced conservation steps.

Steps in a standard water audit can include the following:

1. Locating and describing the water source the facility relies upon, as well as the watershed it is within. Information on watershed can be obtained online.
2. Determining whether or not the facility is located within or adjacent to a RAMSAR listed wetland (<http://www.ramsar.org>)
3. Determining whether the facility withdraws or discharges effluent to a water source that is listed as impaired by the EPA, state or local authorities.
4. Researching the water concerns for the area and how impact the facility has on these concerns.
5. If venue is over 50,000 square feet, asking the local or regional water authority whether the facility is considered a major or minor user of water relative to other users in the watershed region.



SP rating system

☒ I did this!

category :: resource conservation

idea #10

Purchase Energy Offsets or RECs

how it's done

The fact is, you're not going to be able to reduce your energy consumption completely. But you can take the amount of carbon used out of the atmosphere at a later date.

After you perform your energy audit, purchase Energy Offsets and/or Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from a Green-e certified provider. The amount purchased should correspond to at least 50% of the energy consumed at your event. Check out green-e.org to view a list of offset and REC companies.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!



category three

Food

category :: food

idea #11

Create signs that communicate
the locality and life cycle
of your party treats

how it's done

Prompting guests to think about where their food comes from encourages the creation of sustainable food systems outside of your event. Create table signs that tell guests what each item is, where it came from (hopefully somewhere local!) and whether it is USDA-certified organic.

Get creative with your signs by incorporating regional or global facts, tips about buying seasonal, or steps guests can take after the event.

Bonus! The Sustainable Party signage package features awesome printable table tents!



SP rating system

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category :: food

idea #12

Buy it local, organic, and seasonal

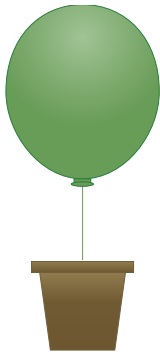
how it's done

Set a goal of making all food local, organic, and seasonal. Local foods provide the highest level of energy-conservation and benefit the local economy. All foods, even when local is not available should be organic and seasonal. Organic food ensures that environmental hazards were minimized during production and seasonal food is often more fresh and hazard-free than non-seasonal.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!



category four

Transportation

category :: transportation

idea #13

Create signs promoting
alternative transportation

how it's done

Simple signs can encourage awareness of the environmental and community impacts of transportation, and promote positive transportation options for guests.

Bonus! The Sustainable Party signage package features alternative transportation signage!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: transportation

idea #14

Offer incentives that encourage alternative transportation

how it's done

Pick a venue that has access to walkers, bikers, and public transit users or offer rewards such as subsidies and prizes for guests who choose these alternative transit methods.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!



category five

Materials

category :: materials

idea #15

Use paper products sparingly
and responsibly.

some ideas!

- All paper should be 100% Recycled (>20% Post-Consumer Waste content), or tree-free.
- Signs are a great way to engage your guests- just be sure to use them consciously.
- Send out web invitations instead of snail mail or paper.
- Utilize computers and email for all pre-party planning.
- Use soy-based inks whenever possible



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: materials

idea #16

Purchase fair labor goods

how it's done

Fair trade companies use methods of production that treat workers fairly and benefit communities. There are plenty of event-friendly items that can be purchased fair trade including coffee, reusable decor, and paper goods. Do your research, purchase some products, and don't forget to tell your guests all about it!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: materials

idea #17

Decorate without waste and give gifts with eco-friendly flair

how it's done

When it comes to gift giving and decor, choose items that avoid unnecessary waste and foster an environmental and community-centric ethic.

Some Ideas!

- All decorations should be bio-based such as plants or flowers or reusable.
- Use washable fabrics for tablecloths and coverings.
- Give gifts that are bio-based or directly benefit non-profit organizations.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: materials

idea #18

Use tableware that's reusable
or biodegradable

how it's done

One of the biggest sources of waste at an event is disposable plates, cups, utensils, and food containers. Whenever possible, use reusable tableware for every food-related item, preferably from sustainable sources and methods of production.

If you don't have 150 ceramic plates lying around and **MUST** use disposables, encourage the use of bio-based compostable products with beneficial methods of production. In addition, have markers available to guests so that they can designate their own cups or tableware and avoid unnecessary waste.

Bonus! Sustainableparty.com has
TONS of compostable products.
Woohoo!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: materials

idea #19

Hold your event at a green building

how it's done

And by green we mean LEED certified. These buildings incorporate ideas of sustainability and green living into the core of their design and give your event a huge boost towards low energy consumption. Check out www.usgbc.org/leed for more info on what it takes to be a green building and choose a venue that is up to the LEED standard of compliance.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: materials

idea #20

Use earth-friendly cleaning products

how it's done

Clean up at your event should use benign chemicals and substances in order to minimize strain on the environment. Avoid products made from carcinogens, toxins and harmful VOCs whenever possible and opt for bio-based cleaning supplies.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: materials

idea #21

Create signage about how event materials were produced

how it's done

It's important to educate guests about why you chose sustainable products. Your choices can encourage guests to consider a product's impact when making future purchase decisions.

Focus on two of the most-used product types at your event such as decorations, tableware, or paperwork and create signage letting guests know what they are all about. Information on the sign can include a product story, method of production outline, and raw material information.

Bonus! The Sustainable Party signage package features all kinds of printable product info signage!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category six

Waste Management

category :: waste management

idea #22

Promote composting and recycling via signage

how it's done

Proper disposal of all of your eco-conscious products is extremely important. Your main goal, after minimizing your event's waste, should be to bring as much waste back to the earth as possible. Be sure to have a clearly marked composting bin and post signage for products that can be composted.

For remaining waste, recycling is the next best option, followed by more traditional disposal such as landfills. Guests should be aware of where their waste goes, how much is produced and especially how waste can be avoided.

Bonus! The Sustainable Party signage package features printable signs for composting and recycling!



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: waste management

idea #23

Do a waste audit

how it's done

Promoting a “zero-waste” ethic starts with a waste audit, which measures the amount of waste per person.

After your event, weigh the amount of waste that was produced, breaking it down into compost, recycling, and standard refuse. Then divide by the amount of attendees. Be sure to inform your guests at a later date so they can understand the waste impact of the event.



SP rating system

☐ I did this!

category :: waste management

idea #24

Donate Leftovers

how it's done

When your festivities are complete, donate all leftovers to a local soup kitchen or group dedicated to feeding the hungry, or if neither is available, to a local community group.



SP rating system

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that's it!

don't forget to send in your
sustainable event ideas to
weloveyou@sustainableparty.com