



PLANNING GUIDE

Now that you've decided to host a Christmas Open House for your neighbors, it's time to deck the halls with boughs of holly – but don't worry, you'll still be jolly when you're done!

Focus on your honored guests, not a glowing home. Preparing your heart takes precedence over cleaning your house.

PRAY FOR YOUR NEIGHBORS

Pray for open doors, open minds and open schedules. Pray that you will be brave enough to knock on the door of their home and their heart. Pray that your neighbors will be even braver, brave enough to let you in.

PICK A DATE AND TIME

Look for an open time slot on your calendar in December. Didn't find one? Me neither! That's OK: we're just going to have to create one. We will probably have to say **no** to something in order to say **yes** to our neighbors. There is no perfect date or time, so just pick one that works for you and your family.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

PASS OUT INVITATIONS

Print [these adorable invitations](#) on cardstock, then cut them to size – they print multiple copies per page to save you paper and ink. There are two versions, so only print the page you want: one invites your neighbors to create a Christmas countdown craft, the other does not have the craft.

Deliver your invitations one to three weeks before your Open House. If you can deliver them in person, that's wonderful. If you only have time to leave them at the door, that's fine, too! Attaching a simple Christmas ornament or a few pieces of hard candy in a clear bag is a nice touch.

DATE TO PASS OUT INVITATIONS: _____

PICK UP A FEW SUPPLIES

FOOD: Search for recipes at www.howtoloveyourneighbor.com, or put out a few of your favorite Christmas cookies. Or, make some slice-n-bake treats and call it a day! Don't hesitate to use paper plates, plastic silverware, disposable cups and paper napkins. Serve coffee, tea, water, cocoa, and hot or cold cider. Simple is essential!

CRAFT: If you're doing the Christmas countdown craft, you'll need a few items you may even have around the house. [Check out this blog with step-by-step instructions and illustrations for making the craft.](#)

"WE LOVED YOU SO MUCH THAT WE SHARED WITH YOU NOT ONLY GOD'S GOOD NEWS BUT OUR OWN LIVES, TOO."
1 THESSALONIANS 2:8



SAMPLE SHOPPING LIST Check off any items you already have or won't be using before you go to the store

FOOD

- Coffee
- Decaf coffee
- Half and half
- Flavored creamer
- Sugar
- Sweeteners
- Tea
- Cocoa mix
- Cider

- Dessert
- Fruit
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Plastic silverware
- Plastic cups

CRAFT

- 4x6 photo frame, glass removed
- Cardstock (heavy white paper) – 3 or 6 sheets per craft
- Christmas scrapbook paper or gift wrap
- Scissors or paper cutter
- Glue
- Mini clothespins
- Small bag to store extra cards



PREPARE YOUR HOME

Once you've given your home some TLC, you can stop fretting and enjoy your guests. Here are some housekeeping tips that will put your guests at ease –

LIVING ROOM

- Put away anything that doesn't belong (even if you have to temporarily stash it in trash bags or laundry baskets)
- Fold blankets and straighten magazines, discard old newspapers
- Knock down any cobwebs along the ceiling or light fixtures
- Polish furniture
- Clean glass surfaces and pictures
- Vacuum upholstery and flip cushions
- Sweep or vacuum floors; mop hardwood floors

KITCHEN

- Put away unnecessary clutter and dishes
- Wipe cabinets, stovetop, and appliances
- Dust any knickknacks and clean small countertop appliances
- Scour the sink
- Clean floors
- Wipe down the kitchen table and chairs

BATHROOM

- Put away personal items like toothbrushes and combs
- Clean mirror
- Clean sink, countertop and toilet
- Empty wastebaskets
- Provide ample toilet paper and offer paper towels for drying hands

FRONT PORCH AND ENTRYWAY

- Sweep sidewalk and porch
- Shake out the doormat
- Clean glass door
- Put away any clutter that was abandoned at the front door

GENERAL TIPS

- Wipe the switch plates, doorknobs, and doorjamb to instantly brighten a room
- Don't use overpowering scents
- Have a plan for overly friendly or unfriendly pets



PARTY TIME!

Remember the real reason for your Open House: to meet, greet and treat your neighbors. Be completely ready at least 30 minutes before the time you've told your guests. Pray right up until the doorbell rings! Take time with your family to pray over each guest who may grace you with their presence. Ask your guests to sign a Guest List so you don't forget new neighbors' names ([here's a free printable Guest List!](#)).

Since this is an Open House, your guests may arrive at any time during the time you specified. Some guests may stay the entire time while others may leave after saying hello. Think about a few ice-breakers you may sprinkle into conversation with your neighbors. These questions aren't intrusive but can get people talking:

- What's your favorite Christmas carol? cookie? movie?
- Where did you spend holidays as a child?
- Do you stay up to watch the ball drop on New Year's Eve?
- What's the best gift you've ever given? received?
- Do you enjoy participating in or watching winter sports like ice skating, sledding, skiing?

Before you do the dishes or gather abandoned coffee cups, jot down a few notes about each guest so you don't forget anything you've learned about your neighbors.



**FINALLY, TAKE A MOMENT TO PRAISE THE LORD
FOR TURNING YOUR HOME INTO A NATIVITY WHERE LOVE WAS BORN.**