Christmas fair checklist

Overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work to do in the run-up to your fair? Use our editable checklist to stay on top of those tasks…

Three months before

* If you haven’t already done so, agree on the date and time with the school.
* Establish who will be taking the lead on the event and form a sub-committee.
* Send a ‘save the date’ to parents through your most effective channel.
* Schedule any non-uniform day fundraisers with the school.
* Choose a theme to help inspire your choice of stalls and refreshments. Ideas might include winter wonderland or Christmas market.
* Consider whether you want any headline attractions such as a rodeo reindeer, synthetic ice rink or pantomime. Use our directory (**pta.co.uk/supplier-search**) to search for suppliers and book them as early as possible.
* If you’ve held a Christmas fair before, review previous events, looking at which stalls were most popular and which ones generated the most money. Agree a shortlist of stalls and work out how many volunteers you will need.
* If you’re planning to sell any personalised items at your event, such as calendars, recipe books or Christmas puddings, source a supplier and get the process going.
* Speak to the school to find ways of getting the children involved. Are there any activities they could do in class, such as making decorations to be sold at the fair? Consider year group stalls, where pupils can set up their own mini businesses.

Two months before

* Work out how much food you’ll need to buy. This may include burgers, biscuits, tea and coffee, and soft drinks, plus sweets as stall prizes. To minimise waste and maximise profits, order from Booker, which offers a sale-or-return option on unopened packs. Visit **pta.co.uk/events/planning/buy-wholesale-with-booker** to find out how PTA+ can help you set up your account.
* If you’re running a secret gift room as part of your fair, start buying your gifts.
* Contact local businesses to source sponsorship (on stalls, posters and in programmes) and raffle prizes. To improve your chances of success, do it before other local schools start asking.
* Advertise for external stallholders, and charge them a pitch fee for attending.
* Book a Santa for your grotto. Can you borrow an outfit from a local community group or church?
* Find a willing MC/announcer who will provide details and updates during the event.
* If you are having a programme, appoint someone to compile it and sell advertising space to local businesses. Include timings and give special thanks to key supporters.
* Aim to start publicising the event around six weeks before with posters in libraries, doctor’s surgeries, leisure centres and local playgroups. Get editable posters and flyers from PTA Print Shop (**charityprintshop.co.uk**).
* If you are using street banners to advertise your event, ask permission from your local authority.

One month before

* Create a list of stalls with time slots and consider how many volunteers you will need for each stall and for how long. Begin slotting in those who have already agreed to help against each stall to help identify gaps.
* Ask volunteers to check whether their employers offer match funding. Put any who do so on your most lucrative stalls to ensure maximum profits.
* If you are serving alcohol you will need to apply for a TEN (Temporary Event Notice) at least ten days before your event.
* Make sure your lottery licence is up to date if you are selling raffle tickets prior to the event.
* Ensure there will be someone at the fair who can administer basic first aid. For large events, you might want to consider paying for a local ambulance service to attend.
* Work out how much float each stall requires and get the treasurer to order it from the bank.
* Remind parents of any mufti days that are taking place in exchange for donations.
* Plan a leaflet drop to local residents inviting them to attend.

Two weeks before

* Create a floor plan, outlining where each activity will go.
* If any elements are going to be outside, put a wet weather contingency plan in place.
* Carry out a risk assessment for each element of your fair, as well as for the overall event. Ask stallholders to complete them using last year’s version as a guide, if available.
* If you are asking the children to make anything, for example filling a jar or decorating a paper bag, send these items home along with a letter explaining what to do.
* Send letters home with details about any pre-order items such as Christmas puddings or calendars.
* Create signage for the basics – toilets, first aid, refreshments – as well as for each stall.
* If you’re doing your own catering, make sure those working on food and drinks stalls are brushed up on their food hygiene best practice – visit **pta.co.uk/events/planning/faqs-catering** to read our guide.
* Send a media release to local newspapers and radio stations.

One week before

* Finalise your volunteer list and rotas. Distribute a spreadsheet listing each stall, with time slots, outlining who is signed up to help out where and when. Initiate a final recruitment drive.
* Based on previous experience, put together running notes for each stall, with details of costs per go, rules, instructions and advice. Laminate and stick these on each stall to reassure new volunteers.
* Collate and sort any mufti-day donations by labelling with raffle tickets or sorting into hampers.
* Hold a gift-wrapping/tombola ticketing evening with a group of volunteers, music and wine.

On the day

* Prepare a box containing essentials such as marker pens, sticky tape, scissors, staplers, Blu Tack, string, drawing pins and paper.
* Write a list of jobs for volunteers who come along to help set up.
* Boost morale by providing refreshments for those volunteers who arrive early to help.
* Keep checking that stallholders have everything they need, and that stalls are well staffed and well stocked. Offer to take refreshments to them if they have no chance of a break.
* Appoint at least two people to be responsible for floats, and the collection and counting of cash during the event. Make a book listing each stall, with details of the float. Make additional notes each time cash is collected from a stall.
* Place some runners around the fair, identifiable with badges, lanyards or T-shirts, for any visitors or stallholders to talk to in case of a query or problem.

After the event

* Be prepared for the clean-up with plenty of bin bags and willing volunteers.
* Thank all your volunteers and write to the businesses who gave donations or supported your event in any way – let them know how much was raised and what you plan to do with the money.
* Ask stallholders and external contractors to complete a feedback form, so you will know if anything needs to be changed for next year.
* Thank everyone who came and let the school community know how much they raised.