

## **Event Planning Tips – Bar / Bat Mitzvahs**

**Planning an event can be a daunting task.**

**We hope these tips will assist you in making the process easier.**

**If you need additional assistance, feel free to call us at  
(800) 899-1140 or visit us at [www.lifeofthepartyonline.com](http://www.lifeofthepartyonline.com).**

1. **Date of the event:** Choose the date of your event as early as possible. Many banquet facilities and entertainment services book-up far in advance, especially during the holiday season. Therefore, you will want to reserve these as soon as possible.
2. **Choosing a location:** There are many options for locations to hold a bar / bat mitzvah reception. Hotel banquet halls and restaurants are by far the most popular. There are also facilities that specialize in banquets. Some temple and community centers have halls available for rent. Some parents even host the reception at their own homes. Factors to consider when choosing a location include: proximity to your temple, availability, capacity, whether or not they allow outside caterers, menu options (including kosher availability), parking fees, cost and ambiance. If the facility offers valet parking, will you be validating? If you are hosting a lot of out-of-towners, you may want to request a block of rooms at a local hotel for your event. Remember to reserve your facility early (up to a year in advance) to insure availability.
3. **Choosing a theme:** Although formal or semi-formal banquets are traditional, themeing bar / bat mitzvahs has become popular in recent years. Choosing a theme can help you decide on decorations and entertainment. Themes are limited only by your imagination, but some popular themes include: Hollywood, Mardi Gras, Casino, Caribbean, Western, sports, etc. The guest of honor will almost certainly have an opinion on theme ideas.
4. **Create a budget:** Banquets can run the gamut for expenses. Knowing your budget will help you determine how elaborate you can make your party. Keep in mind the following items when estimating your expenses: food, facility rental, decorations, photographer / videographer, and entertainment.
5. **Invitations:** Invitations are the first step to building excitement for your event. While traditional invitations are an option, consider unique invitations that fit your theme. For example, a Caribbean themed banquet might have a message in a bottle as an invitation. For a Hollywood themed party, consider “issuing” theatre style tickets. Work with your event planner to create invitations that compliment your event. Make sure to allow enough time for printing (6 or more months). Mail out these invitations early with an RSVP deadline.

6. **Guest Lists:** Managing your headcount can be tricky if you have limited space. Determine a range of how many people you can comfortably handle. Develop a plan for inviting additional guests if your RSVP regrets free up additional space.
7. **Event Itinerary:** Developing an outline for your event can help keep everything running smoothly. Keep in mind that your outline should be used as a guideline, and schedules rarely work out exactly as planned. Schedule padding so that fixed events (eg. entertainment) can start on time. An example of a sample itinerary may include:

#### **Sample Itinerary**

6:00 – 7:00	Guests Arrive / Check in / Cocktail Hour / Hors d'oeuvres Strolling / Background Entertainment: Caricature Artist Balloon Artist Close-up Magician Mime Fortune Teller Celebrity Impersonators DJ or Band providing background music Photographer / Videographer
7:00 – 7:10	Kiddush
7:15 – 8:00	Dinner
8:00 – 8:15	Padding (if dinner ends on time, the “Candle Lighting Ceremony” can start early).
8:15 – 8:40	Candle Lighting Ceremony
8:40 – 9:00	Padding (if the “Candle Lighting” ends on time, the DJ or band can play music while your guests use the facilities or stretch their legs. Just make sure to announce that the show will begin promptly at 9:00).
9:00 – 9:45	After dinner show (eg. hypnotism, magic, musical act, etc.)
9:45 – 11:30	Dancing / Activities DJ or Band Dance Motivator / Games Coordinator

Please note that this is a sample itinerary.

Factors to consider when creating your itinerary include:

- how long will it take your guests to arrive at the reception from the temple
- what time sunset falls if your Bar Mitzvah is on the Sabbath

8. **Hiring Entertainment:** Once you know what kind of entertainment you want, reserve it. Make sure that you are working with a reputable company that is familiar with the ceremonies and traditions associated with bar / bat mitzvahs. Companies that emphasize high quality often book-up during peak times. We recommend that you book early if quality is important to you. Make sure to address any special loading or set-up requirements with your talent when you are booking your event. Weekend evenings are peak times for banquets, and the first 2 –3 weekends in December are exceptionally busy industry-wide. While a high quality entertainment company can sometimes handle last minute bookings, we recommend scheduling your entertainment 6 or more weeks in advance (even earlier for June (grad nights) or December). It's never too early to book your entertainment (some of our long term clients re-book a year in advance as soon as the current event ends).
9. **Decorations / Supplies:** - Decorations can greatly enhance a reception, especially if you are themeing it. Most party stores have a complete supply of decorations and party supplies. More elaborate items (eg. casino tables, balloon arches or balloon drops, ice sculptures, other themed props, etc) can often be provided by your event planner.
10. **Event Time:** A check in table will provide a location for your guests or entertainers to ask questions. This is a good location to provide a validation stamp if you need to validate parking. Make sure to keep your cell phone handy in case someone needs to reach you. Have a list of emergency contact numbers in case people don't arrive as expected. During the event, keep an eye on the time to make sure the itinerary is on schedule. You may even want to assign or hire someone to attend to these tasks.
11. **Enjoy:** Finally, enjoy: Try to remain flexible and have fun. Things don't always work out exactly as planned, but that's okay. After all, it's a party. You've worked hard to plan the event, and you deserve to have a good time!

**Co-written by:**

**David Skale** – Owner of *Auntie Roxie's Life of the Party*, David has been one of Southern California's top professional magicians and event planners for over 25 years. He specializes in incorporating unique entertainment ideas to enhance any event.

**Dwyane Faux** – Dwyane has been helping clients plan and coordinate their banquets since 1990.. In addition to consulting for Auntie Roxie's Life of the Party, Dwyane also owns his own promotional products company and helps our clients find unique invitations, party favors, and gifts.