

Step-by-step: campover

Great for: Everyone **Fun factor:** ★★★★★ **Effort:** ★★★★★ **£ potential:** ★★★★★

For an event that offers family fun and fresh air by the bucket-load, look no further than a campover! A night on the school field offers families a digital detox, while relaxing with friends and supporting the school at the same time!

Step-by-step

1. **Six months before:** Find a suitable site and check what permissions may be required. Ensure there will be enough parking for visitors across the duration of the event. Send out a save-the-date to parents.
2. **Four months before:** Order any equipment you need, such as marquees, toilets, bins, lighting, generators, staging and a PA system. If you're holding your event in summer, bear in mind that this is the busiest time of year for outdoor events suppliers, so the earlier you order the better. If you're using external caterers, get quotes and start booking. If you're planning to have live music then book bands and performers. Push ticket sales via your usual channels, potentially offering an early bird price.
3. **Two months before:** Confirm with your local authority which licences you need - the sale of alcohol will require a TEN, but if numbers exceed 500, a premises licence may be required. If playing music then you may need a licence from TheMusicLicence. Check whether your PTA insurance covers your event and get copies of public liability cover from any external contractors. Start planning activities, making sure you have the equipment you need and enough people to run them safely.
4. **One month before:** Draw up a rota of volunteers and start to fill in time slots. Roles might include: set up/take down, serving food, serving on the bar, running activities, parking stewards, gate security, first aiders and campfire stewards. Finalise your schedule and let attendees know what sort of activities and entertainment to expect. Order floats from the bank. Notify local residents of the event.
5. **One week before:** If you have marquees and staging then try to stagger the build. A few people may need to camp on the site the night before to keep an eye on equipment. Confirm details with external suppliers. Depending on the scale of your event, you may want to inform the local police and fire service, giving them a contact number.
6. **On the day:** Check that the site and all equipment is safe. Don't forget your cash floats. Try to relax and go with the flow. Although you will have done lots of planning, be prepared for people to make their own spontaneous entertainment.
7. **After the event:** Have a post-event debrief to discuss what worked well and what may need tweaking for next time. Thank your volunteers and ask for feedback. Give details about how much was raised and how it will be spent.

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Tips & advice

Find a site: A safe and secure site where children can play with minimal supervision allows adults to relax. Check the site after heavy rain - has it turned into a swamp? You will also need to consider: access to water for drinking, cooking and washing; electricity (you can cook on open fires or barbecues and ask people to bring torches, but if you have catering units you will need power); enough toilets (or portaloos) and loo roll.

Safety and security: Choose a site where access in and out can be easily monitored. Issue attendees with a wristband and ensure that they are worn. Keep cars out of your campsite if possible - use stewards to help people park and transport luggage. Carry out a full risk assessment and appoint first aiders.

Activities: The following things work well, especially for getting dads involved: treasure hunt, obstacle course, a slippery slope (a big plastic sheet covered in water for kids to slide along), campfire sing-a-long, family games of rounders, and football tournaments. Encourage some friendly competition between families with some team events. What about a den-building challenge?

Wet weather: Work on the assumption that the weather will be wet. This may involve arranging access to indoor facilities such as the school hall or a farmer's barn. Erect some marquees to use as covered communal areas and think about wet weather games such as bingo. Make sure people pay in advance so that if the weather turns bad at the last minute they won't pull out. Find out how to make a wet weather contingency plan.

Boost profits: Offer face painting and temporary tattoos, run a tuck shop and sell 'mocktails'. Ask a local camping shop for a discount (with some commission for you), for parents who need to buy equipment.

Food: You may decide that it's easier for people to bring and cook their own food and drinks or you may want to put on a communal feast and provide a full bar. Also consider calling in local catering companies. This decision will depend on how many people you have to feed and over what time period, and what cooking facilities you have available. Pre-sell an all-inclusive food package if possible. Don't forget the morning after - will you serve breakfast?

Publicity: Promote your event with reluctant campers in mind, pointing out that it's just one or two nights, held somewhere close to home, and you are providing a good variety of food and fun activities for all ages.