

Step-by-step: Silent auction

Great for: **ADULTS**

Fun factor: ★★★★★

Effort: ★★★★★

£ potential: £££££

A silent auction enables you to be much more creative with prizes and offers far greater profit potential...

1 **Once you know** the date of your event you can start requesting auction prize donations via email, phone or face-to-face. Let companies know what sort of prizes you are after and what coverage they can expect in return. If you are fundraising towards a specific goal, include details. Invite parents to contribute auction prizes, too. Aim for a minimum of 10 high-quality prizes.

2 **Chase up companies** that haven't yet responded and keep records detailing those who have agreed to support you, what prizes they have offered, as well as those who turned down your request and why. Start drumming up excitement by announcing prizes on social media. Display the list on the school noticeboard for everyone to see and send out a letter to parents with a reply slip for those who are unable to attend the event but want to place bids.

3 **Prepare your bidding** sheets to include a description of the prize and the value, with spaces for names, numbers and the amounts bid. Think about your display - if you only have a small number of items, and it's an informal event, attach bidding sheets to a board, or you may want to place the items themselves or photographs on a table with the bidding sheets on clipboards.

4 **Set up your** auction display – include a set of terms next to your bidding sheets (see right). Make sure you have plenty of pens! Five minutes before the end, announce that your auction is about to close. Once the auction ends, collect in bid sheets and announce your winners – some may already have left, so call them to arrange collection of prizes and payment. Explain that prizes need to be collected and paid for within a certain timeframe. Where the bid is a service (i.e. singing lessons) stipulate appropriate 'use-by' dates.

5 **There may be** things that, for whatever reason, did not receive any bids or did not reach the reserve – keep a note of these and let the donors know. Some people may change their mind about their bid, so you may need to call the next person on the sheet. Thank all bidders and cultivate your donors by sending thank you letters detailing how much the event raised and how this has contributed towards your fundraising goal.

Tips and advice

Legalities: There are no licensing requirements for a silent auction, however you will need to consider the Sale of Goods Act when providing descriptions and stating the value of each item. Parents are providing their names and contact details voluntarily, but these should be destroyed at the end of your event. If your supporters would prefer to remain anonymous, invite anyone who wants to bid to register for a unique number. That way all they have to do is write down their bidder number and the amount against the lots. You can then reconcile winners and award prizes.

Be organised: Get requests for prizes sent out early. Track auction items, set up bid sheets, have thank you letters ready to send to donors, and be firm with deadlines. Keep detailed notes for future reference: how much did each prize raise; which prizes received the most bids, etc.

State your terms: Explain that winning bids need to be collected and paid for within a certain timeframe, and that it is for winners to arrange collection. If two people bid the same amount, invite them to submit a sealed bid on a piece of paper – the highest bid wins. Where appropriate, include 'use-by' dates. Display your terms next to your bidding sheets.

Download templates: We have a sample donation request letter, a letter to parents and a bidding sheet. Go to pta.co.uk/boost-profits.

For more ideas and advice, visit pta.co.uk

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