

Step-by-step: trails and hunts

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

Trails and hunts get everyone outside on a fundraising adventure. With families or businesses creating and hosting displays for you, the only outlay for the PTA is printing costs, advertising expenses and the cost of any prizes.

Step-by-step

- 1. Two months before:** Choose a theme and determine a start and end date. Decide where you're going to hold your trail: how big an area will it cover and which streets will be included? Set yourself a target number of displays to fill this space without too many gaps. Bear in mind the likely age range of participants and how much stamina they'll have for walking long distances.
Put out a request for families to create displays through your usual channels; spread the net wider by using local press and social media groups to involve the community. Set up an easy way for people to register for a display, such as an allocated email address or Google Form. Collect participants' contact details in case of emergencies or last-minute changes. Explain how you will store these under GDPR.
- 2. One month before:** Finalise display numbers and work out the best solution for presenting and sharing your trail information: is it essential to offer a hard copy, or can you make the entire trail paperless? Try using an interactive Google Map with an online trail sheet or Google Form for collecting answers.
Create your map using participants' addresses, numbering the displays accordingly for easy navigation. Establish the best route based on your display locations and test it out. If the trail involves finding clues, work out what they are and design instruction and answer sheets. Decide how to publicise your trail and how much to charge. Determine who will receive a prize: will you give something to everyone who completes the trail or award a main prize to one lucky participant picked at random?
- 3. Two weeks before:** Finish the maps, ready for distribution. Focus on sharing them online for printing at home to minimise costs and contact. Continue promoting the event, both within the school community and publicly. Explain how it will work, how to get involved and why the funds are needed.
- 4. One week before:** Promote the event on local social media groups and with banners around the area. Share teaser photos of the displays to generate excitement. If people hosting the displays need to include a letter, number or question, make sure they have this provided to them or have arrangements in place.
- 5. Throughout the trail:** Share daily photos on social media to maintain interest. Perform regular checks along the route to ensure any clues, signage and displays are still in place. Towards the final date, post images of all the displays so everyone can enjoy them, and create a poll asking participants to vote for their favourites.
- 6. After the event:** Award prizes to winning entries, making sure to thank everyone

Visit pta.co.uk for more articles, downloads and templates.

who entered. Organise a post-event debrief to discuss what worked well and what may need tweaking for next time. Thank those who participated in the trail and ask for feedback. Provide details about how much the event raised and what it will provide for the children.

Tips & advice

Charging: Keep it free to register a display, making money by charging £2-£3 for a trail sheet, depending on the cost of any prizes. Alternatively, you may wish to run the event on a donation-only basis to ensure everyone can participate.

Timings: Run the trail for one or two weeks. Gauge interest from parents to help make the decision and take into account how much time the PTA can commit. Can you keep up with the social media posting and trail maintenance for two weeks? Will a long duration put people off hosting?

Displays: Decide the kind of trail you want: scarecrows are always popular, and we've heard of bears, pigs and even Sunday dinners (not real, of course). Displays can be inside – supporters could create something on their windowsills or display an image in their window. For outdoor displays, bear in mind the likely weather conditions and the possibility of vandalism.

Theme: A theme is a great way to inspire display-makers and encourage some friendly competition. Classic themes include children's books, films, sporting events and seasonal holidays.

Make it a hunt: If you're looking to elevate your trail, create a question sheet with your map, where participants can find the answers at each display. Perhaps there are letters that need to be unscrambled to make a word.

The route: If there are significant gaps between some displays, try to fill them. Can you get permission to erect something in green spaces along the way? This could be an ideal way to include supporters who live outside the trail area. From a safety perspective, make sure your map avoids main roads and areas with no pavements.

Rewards: If guidelines allow, offer a prize for completing the trail. Ask participants to vote for their favourite display via a social media poll and award a prize to the winner.

Stay safe: Space out and rope off displays. Consider having them on common ground to avoid bringing crowds to private houses. Share social distancing messages on social media, trail sheets, posters and signs. Share images of displays online for those self-isolating.