

Step-by-step: race night

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

Looking for an exciting event to gee up your parents? Look no further! Race nights are an entertaining way to get people together, promising a lively night of shouting as participants cheer their horses over the finish line!

Step-by-step

1. **Two months before:** Choose a date and time for your event, book your school hall and send out a 'save the date' notification to parents. Recruit volunteers - as you will require a compere on the night, plus people to run the tote, serve food and drinks and sell raffle tickets. Approach local businesses about sponsoring each round and ask whether they can also donate prizes for the winners - explain exactly what coverage they will get in return (i.e. announcements by compere, details on race cards, coverage in letters home to parents, etc). If running a raffle or auction, seek prizes for these too. Decide whether you will serve food, and if this will be prepared on the premises or delivered by a local restaurant. If providing food, include this in the ticket price and invite people to pre-order, noting any dietary requirements. Alternatively, ask guests to bring their own food and provide extra rubbish bags. Start selling tickets for £3-5 each, or up to £10 if providing food. Encourage class reps to fill a table.
2. **Four weeks before:** Make sure you have a PA system, microphone, DVD player/projector and screen, and confirm that you can borrow tables and chairs from the school. Spread the word using posters (see tips and advice), letters and social media. Order your race-night kit or confirm the event details with your supplier.
3. **Two weeks before:** Finalise any refreshments and food that you're providing and agree who will be in charge of buying the stock and serving on the night. Any sale or supply of alcohol, even if included in the ticket price, will require a TEN. Submit an application to your local council at least ten working days before your event.
4. **On the day:** Pick up your cash floats and arrive early to set up your venue. If running a raffle or auction, encourage guests to buy tickets or place bids as they arrive, then announce the winners at the end. Once guests have arrived, get your compere to explain how the evening will work. Present prizes and cash winnings at the end of each race. At the end of the night, draw the raffle, if running one, and encourage everyone to put betting slips and other rubbish in the bins provided!
5. **After the event:** Have a post-event debrief with your team to discuss what worked well and what might need tweaking. Cultivate relationships with sponsors by sending them thank-you letters noting how much the event raised and how this has contributed towards your fundraising goal.

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Tips & advice

Licensing: Race nights can be run for charitable purposes, under the terms of non-commercial gaming. This is where the selection of a 'horse' by a participant is totally dependent on chance, and no 'odds' or 'form' are available to assist selection. Such nights can be run without a licence, or any other form of permission, providing the operation of the gaming meets the following terms as set out by the Gambling Commission: 'Non-commercial prize gaming - The players must be told what good cause will benefit from the profits of the gaming. The prizes must be advertised in advance and must not depend on the number of people playing or the stakes raised. In non-commercial prize gaming, the "race" determines the individual winner or winners - for example, those who have paid are allocated or select a named horse in the race. The winners are then awarded the prizes that had been advertised in advance.' For more information, visit the Gambling Commission. If running a bar, remember that you will need to submit a Temporary Event Notice to your local council at least ten days prior to the event. This is a simple process and, as the profit potential is huge, don't be put off by any licensing requirements!

Marketing: For a quick solution for promoting your event, use the editable poster service provided by PTA Print Shop.

Boost profits: Increase revenue by serving food such as fish and chips, curry or pizza - increase your ticket price accordingly. Run a raffle on the night, securing prizes from local sponsors. Or, if sourcing prize donations is too much work, run a 100-square grid on the night, giving a percentage of the takings as a prize (usually 25-50%).