

MUST-HAVES FOR YOUR SILENT AUCTION



“Being able to help those in our community who are going through a difficult time makes you feel like you’re doing something pretty amazing.”

- Talea Danbrook, DressFest, supporting Cancer Care at LHSC

Coordinating a silent auction is challenging. But if done right, it can be extremely rewarding. Before gathering items to build your silent auction, there are a couple **key questions** you should ask yourself:

1. Do I have enough guests attending to make money from a silent auction?
2. Do I have the resources to promote, gather and package items?

If you said yes to the above, you are ready to start putting together your silent auction. Here are your next steps:

Soliciting Items

- Determine what items would appeal most to your event attendees.
- Create a list of items you would like to secure for your auction; determine who you know who could be approached for a donation.
- Create a donation request letter. Customize the letter for each individual (see example [Donation Request Letter](#)) and ensure your letter includes your contact information and a follow-up date.
- Once donations have been confirmed, keep a master list of all items; include a description of item(s) donated, who donated the item(s) and the donors' complete contact information for a post-event 'thank you.'
- All items should be received at least two weeks prior to your event. This will allow you enough time to package and promote them (if desired).
- Lesser-valued donations should be bundled into packages. This will bring just as much money in, if not more, and cause less clutter on the silent auction table.





Best Silent Auction Items

Here are the top five silent auction items that attract the most bidders:

1. **Once-in-a-Lifetime Experiences** – Exotic trips, hot air balloon rides, meet-and-greets with well-known people, or back-stage visits.
2. **Unique Culinary Packages** – A seat in the chef's kitchen, cooking classes, an in-house chef, dinner hosted in an executive's house, wine tours, etc.
3. **Electronics** – TV's, tablets, phones, computers, gaming systems.
4. **Baskets** – Get creative with these. Gather items with a lower value and combine them to fit within a theme that relates to any of the above.
5. **Trips** – Anything from gathering friends for a group trip abroad, to hotel stays, to mini getaways.



Set Up

Bid Sheets:

- Write the item name and description, have an opening bid (generally 20-50% of the retail value) and indicate the bid must be made in the pre-determined increments
- Print extra blank copies of bid sheets
- Have separate columns for Name, Phone # and Amount
- Have all your bid sheets printed prior to setting up the event (do not write auction item numbers on the sheet)

Placement:

- Try to alternate between an eye-catching item and a certificate to ensure no tables are overlooked. Keep the real certificates and place a photocopy version on the table.
- Have correlating numbered stickers on both the bid sheet and the item. This will help match up the winners with the proper items at the end of the auction.
- Collect the bid sheets after the auction closes and organize them in numerical order where you will be cashing out the winners





Closing the Auction Table

- Set a closing time and display this on table and event programs
- Assign someone to circle the winning bid on all bid sheets when the auction closes
- Assign someone to take photos (proof) of the winning bid sheets after the winning bid has been circled. There are a lot of moving parts in an auction, and the less margin for error, the better.
- Ask bidders to return to the items they bid on to see if they won
- The winning bidder will need to bring the bid sheet to the auction close-out table
- LHSF will bring one point of sale (POS) machine to close out the auction (when available)
- Have two or three individuals collect items individuals have won (by having numbers on the items, individuals will be able to quickly collect them)
- Write the item number on the POS sheet and write "paid" on the bid sheet

TIP: Ensure there is enough time when the auction closes and cash-out begins to allow your cashiers to get organized (20 minutes minimum).