Grad night planning kit

A head start for your grad night committee. Take what's useful and change the rest.

Timeline

8 to 6 months out

- [ ] Form the committee and choose co-chairs
- [ ] Ask the school about its grad night rules
  Chaperone numbers, volunteer background checks, insurance, and what the school handles itself. Your school or district can tell you what applies.
- [ ] Pick the date and confirm it with the school
- [ ] Set the budget and fundraising goal
  Decide what the ticket price covers, and whether to set aside help for students who can't pay.
- [ ] Book the venue
  Ask about overnight hours, insurance, setup time, and what you can bring in.
- [ ] Plan the year's fundraisers
- [ ] Send donation letters to local businesses
- [ ] Choose a theme
- [ ] Book entertainment
  Hypnotist, casino tables, inflatables, or karaoke. Ask about cancellation and insurance before you sign.

5 to 4 months out

- [ ] Get bus quotes, if the party is off campus
- [ ] Start collecting prize donations
- [ ] Tell senior families about grad night
- [ ] Check fundraising against the goal

3 months out

- [ ] Plan food for the whole night
  Something hearty early, snacks through the night, and breakfast before pickup.
- [ ] Plan check-in and the leave-early rule with the school
  Agree on what happens if a student wants to leave before morning, and who gets called.

10 to 8 weeks out

- [ ] Set up tickets and permission forms with the school
  Student details stay in the school's system.
- [ ] Share the volunteer signup link with senior parents
- [ ] Plan the decorations and the decorating crew

6 weeks out

- [ ] Decide the prize drawings and grand prizes
- [ ] Remind families about the ticket deadline

4 to 5 weeks out

- [ ] Fill the shifts after midnight
  Late shifts tend to fill last. Shorter shifts can make them easier to fill.

2 to 3 weeks out

- [ ] Confirm security and first aid
  Some schools arrange off-duty officers or a nurse parent. Ask what your school or venue expects.
- [ ] Confirm every vendor, with arrival times and venue access
- [ ] Confirm the buses and the parents riding along
- [ ] Order the food
- [ ] Walk through the venue with the committee

The final week

- [ ] Send families the drop-off, pickup, and what-to-bring details
- [ ] Buy everything on the shopping list
- [ ] Sort and label the prizes
- [ ] Get the check-in list from the school

The night

- [ ] Do a final walkthrough before the doors open

After the party

- [ ] Thank volunteers, donors, and the venue
- [ ] Record receipts and reimburse parents
- [ ] Send thank-you notes to every donor
- [ ] Write notes and meet next year's committee
  Next year's chairs are often parents of juniors. A short meeting before summer can save them months.

Volunteer spots

A sample to adapt. Add, cut, or rename spots to suit your school.

Spot	When	People
Decorating Crew Turn the venue into this year's theme.	1:00 PM to 5:00 PM	10
Check-In Table Welcome seniors and check them in.	9:30 PM to 11:00 PM	4
Food Service Serve food and keep the snack tables stocked.	10:00 PM to 1:00 AM	4
Activity Hosts: First Shift Run a game, casino table, or activity. No experience needed.	10:00 PM to 1:00 AM	8
Activity Hosts: Second Shift Run a game, casino table, or activity. No experience needed.	After midnight 1:00 AM to 3:30 AM	8
Floor Chaperones: First Shift Walk the venue, help where needed, and keep an eye on the doors.	10:00 PM to 1:00 AM	4
Floor Chaperones: Second Shift Walk the venue, help where needed, and keep an eye on the doors.	After midnight 1:00 AM to 5:00 AM	4

Spot	When	People
Breakfast Crew Set up and serve breakfast before pickup.	Next morning 3:30 AM to 5:30 AM	4
Prize Drawing Helpers Hand out prizes and keep the drawings moving.	Next morning 4:00 AM to 5:30 AM	3
Cleanup Crew Pack up, take down decorations, and leave the venue clean.	Next morning 5:00 AM to 7:00 AM	8

Sample budget

Placeholder amounts to help you get started, not real prices. Swap in your own numbers.

Item	Example	Our budget
Venue rental	$1,500	
Entertainment	$1,200	
Food and drinks	$900	
Inflatables and games	$800	
Buses	$700	
Prizes beyond donations	$600	
Keepsakes or T-shirts	$400	
Decorations	$300	
Security or venue staff	$300	
Wristbands, signs, and printing	$100	
Total	**$6,800**	

Shopping list

Warehouse club

- [ ] Water and sports drinks
- [ ] Snacks for the whole night
- [ ] Breakfast items
- [ ] Plates, cups, and napkins
- [ ] Coffee for volunteers
- [ ] Trash bags

Party store

- [ ] Theme decorations
- [ ] Balloons
- [ ] Tablecloths
- [ ] Glow sticks
- [ ] Photo backdrop

Office supply store

- [ ] Wristbands
- [ ] Raffle tickets
- [ ] Clipboards for check-in
- [ ] Name tags for volunteers
- [ ] Tape, zip ties, and scissors

Hardware store

- [ ] Extension cords and power strips
- [ ] Flashlights
- [ ] Duct tape

Pharmacy

- [ ] First-aid kit
- [ ] Hand sanitizer and wipes

Easy things to overlook

The leave-early rule
Someone will ask to leave before morning. Agreeing with the school ahead of time on what happens, and who gets called, makes it a calm moment.

Shifts after midnight
Late shifts fill last, and long ones are hard on everyone. Shorter shifts and a fresh breakfast crew help people stay alert.

Seniors who can’t pay
Some committees set aside ticket help or find a quiet sponsor. It may be worth deciding early.

A first-aid plan
Knowing who handles first aid, and where the nearest urgent care is, saves scrambling at 2 a.m.

Next year’s committee
A brand-new group of parents takes over every year. Notes and a short handoff meeting give them a real head start.

Want it all in one place?
PineBoard can hold your tasks, volunteers, shopping, and budget together, and copies the plan to next year. Try it free for 60 days at pineboard.app.