Silent auction planning kit

A head start for your PTO or PTA board. Take what's useful and change the rest.

Timeline

12 weeks out

- [ ] Set the date and a fundraising goal
  Decide what the money is for. Families and donors often give more to something specific.
- [ ] Book the venue
- [ ] Ask the school or district about auction and raffle rules
  Some places have rules about raffles, alcohol, or fundraisers on school grounds.
- [ ] Write the donation letter and list businesses to ask

10 to 8 weeks out

- [ ] Send donation letters and start asking in person
- [ ] Ask each class to put together a themed basket
- [ ] Set up a shared list to track every donation
  Item, donor, value, contact, and whether it's been picked up.
- [ ] Decide on tickets, food, and how winners will pay

6 weeks out

- [ ] Follow up on donations not yet confirmed

4 to 5 weeks out

- [ ] Share the volunteer signup link
- [ ] Send invitations and post it online

2 to 3 weeks out

- [ ] Group items into baskets and set opening bids
- [ ] Order food and drinks
- [ ] Follow up on empty volunteer spots

The final week

- [ ] Print bid sheets, item cards, and bidder numbers
- [ ] Pick up the last donated items
- [ ] Send a reminder and a preview of top items
- [ ] Set up card payments and cash boxes

Auction night

- [ ] Set up item tables and the checkout area
- [ ] Count the money with two people and match it to bid sheets

After the auction

- [ ] Send thank-you notes to every donor
  Donors are often asked again next year, so a prompt thank-you helps.
- [ ] Arrange pickup for anything not taken home
- [ ] Record receipts, reimburse helpers, and share the total
- [ ] Write down what to change next year
  A few quick notes, and the donor list, can save next year's board a lot of time.

Volunteer spots

A sample to adapt, for a school of 300–600 students. The online version at pineboard.app/templates resizes it for yours. Add, cut, or rename spots to suit your school.

Spot	When	People
Item Pickup Drivers Collect donated items from businesses and bring them to school.	Week before 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM	3
Setup Crew Arrange items, bid sheets, and decorations.	2:00 PM to 5:30 PM	6
Check-In and Bidder Numbers Welcome guests and hand out bidder numbers.	5:30 PM to 7:00 PM	3
Floor Helpers Answer questions and keep an eye on the bid sheets.	6:00 PM to 8:00 PM	4
Closing and Tally Crew Close each table on time and list the winning bids.	7:45 PM to 9:00 PM	4
Checkout and Payments Take payments and hand winners their items.	8:00 PM to 9:30 PM	3
Cleanup Crew Pack up and leave the room clean.	9:00 PM to 10:00 PM	5

Sample budget

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

Item	Example	Our budget
Food and drinks	$600	
Venue rental	$200	
Decorations	$100	
Printed bid sheets, signs, and bidder cards	$80	
Baskets, cellophane, and display easels	$70	
Total	**$1,050**	

Shopping list

Office supply store

- [ ] Card stock for bid sheets
- [ ] Clipboards
- [ ] Pens for every table
- [ ] Cash box
- [ ] Receipt book

Craft or dollar store

- [ ] Baskets
- [ ] Cellophane and ribbon
- [ ] Table easels

Party store

- [ ] Tablecloths
- [ ] Centerpieces
- [ ] Balloons

Easy things to overlook

A donation tracker
One shared list of items, donors, and values makes thank-you notes and next year's asks much easier.

Raffle and alcohol rules
Your school, district, or state may have rules worth checking before anything is promised.

A clear closing time
Announcing when each table closes, and sticking to it, keeps checkout fair and calm.

Checkout lines
Checkout is often the busiest part of the night. Extra helpers there make a good last impression.

Donor receipts
Some donors want a receipt for their records. Your treasurer will know what you can provide.

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.