

Guest Experience Checklist: From Parking Lot to Follow-Up

Operational tool for outreach events with first-time guests.

Service events are one of your highest-volume entry points for first-time guests. People decide quickly whether they feel welcome, guided, and safe. This checklist helps you engineer a clear guest journey from pre-arrival to follow-up so invited friends leave thinking, "I am glad I came."

QUICK SETUP

- Assign a guest experience champion (they think like a guest, not like staff).
- Walk the event flow 48 hours before the event with this checklist in hand.
- Score each stage 1-5. Anything below a 3 gets fixed before launch.
- Pre-write follow-up text and email before event day.

SCORING KEY

- 1 = guests must guess (confusing, inconsistent, easy to drift).
- 3 = workable but leaky (clear in places, gaps still create awkwardness).
- 5 = seamless and repeatable (guests feel guided, valued, and confident to return).

Stage 1: Pre-Arrival

Before they show up, remove guesswork.

- ☐ Event description is guest-friendly (plain language, no church insider terms).
- ☐ Exact start and end time is stated in every place it appears (ex: Sat 9:00-11:00 AM).
- ☐ What-to-expect is clear in 3 bullets (what we will do, how long it lasts, what it feels like).
- ☐ Registration is simple: 3-click test passes (no account creation, no long form).
- ☐ Confirmation message sends immediately with address, parking instructions, and what to wear.
- ☐ A reminder text/email goes out 24-48 hours before the event with check-in directions.
- ☐ Guests can tell if kids can participate and what ages or roles are available.
- ☐ A real contact person is listed for questions (name + phone or email).

AVOID THESE RED FLAGS

- Vague timing ("come for a while," "all day," "whenever") or unclear end time.
- Branding that feels like a church service in disguise.
- Registration that feels like paperwork (long form, multiple pages, unclear confirmation).
- No parking or arrival instructions. Guests show up stressed.

Stage 2: Arrival & Wayfinding

The first 60 seconds decides whether they relax or retreat.

- ☐ Parking team is assigned and trained (visible, smiling, clear hand signals).
- ☐ Signage is placed at every decision point: street entrance, parking, check-in, restrooms.
- ☐ A clear guest line or welcome zone is visible within 30 seconds of exiting the car.
- ☐ Greeters are positioned to initiate contact (guests do not have to hunt for help).
- ☐ A first 60-second experience audit is done (walk it like a guest).
- ☐ Restrooms, water, and kid info are clearly marked.
- ☐ Bad weather plan exists (rain route, indoor check-in, umbrellas or covered zones).
- ☐ Accessibility is obvious (ramps, reserved spots, clear routes for mobility needs).

AVOID THESE RED FLAGS

- No signage. Guests wander and feel embarrassed.
- Volunteer clusters chatting with each other while guests stand alone.
- Confusing parking flow or blocked entrances.
- A check-in table that is hidden or looks like a line to the DMV.

Stage 3: Check-In

Fast, human, and confidence-building.

- ☐ Name tags are ready and easy (self-serve or fast staffed check-in).
- ☐ A discreet new-here identifier is available (optional dot sticker or small mark).
- ☐ Contact capture is intentional (QR code or tablet) with a clear, honest reason.
- ☐ Volunteers know the guest script: welcome, direct, and introduce to a person.
- ☐ Guests are assigned a clear next step immediately (team, station, or host).
- ☐ Volunteer huddle includes a guest-awareness reminder (watch for stand-alone people).
- ☐ Safety and task orientation is given in plain language (no assumptions).
- ☐ Photo/video expectations are stated (opt-out option when possible).

AVOID THESE RED FLAGS

- Long lines, slow tech, or first-time guests stuck filling out forms.
- No names. Guests stay anonymous and disconnected.
- Contact info collected without follow-up capacity.
- Volunteers use church shorthand or inside jokes during orientation.

Stage 4: During the Event

Hospitality does not end after check-in.

- ☐ Guest pairing strategy is in place (each guest has a host volunteer or team leader).
- ☐ Leaders circulate and thank guests personally within the first 20 minutes.
- ☐ Visible hospitality moments happen (water, snacks, music, encouragement).
- ☐ Milestones are celebrated so guests feel progress (ex: "1,000 meals packed").
- ☐ Tasks are beginner-friendly with clear instructions and role options.
- ☐ No insider-only conversations: leaders redirect cliques and include newcomers.
- ☐ A clear "who to ask" person is obvious if guests feel lost.
- ☐ Optional photo moments exist that do not pressure participation.

AVOID THESE RED FLAGS

- Guests get stuck standing around, unsure what to do.
- Inside language, private friend groups, or leaders only talking to leaders.
- Overly spiritual framing that makes guests feel bait-and-switch.
- Confusing instructions or constant task changes.

Stage 5: Closing Moment

End on time, celebrate the win, open a door.

- ☐ Event ends on time (time-box honored).
- ☐ A clear thank you is delivered to guests and volunteers.
- ☐ The measurable win is announced (numbers, impact, result).
- ☐ A simple next step is offered (one clear invitation, low pressure).
- ☐ A pathway forward is clear: where to learn more or stay connected.
- ☐ No pressure spiritual manipulation (no guilt, no surprise altar call).
- ☐ Dismissal is organized (return supplies, directions to exit, final high-fives).

AVOID THESE RED FLAGS

- Running long or adding "one more thing" at the end.
- Guest call-outs that embarrass people.
- Next step is vague ("stay connected") with no clear action.
- High pressure moment that makes inviters regret inviting.

Stage 6: Follow-Up

Speed communicates value. Silence communicates indifference.

- ☐ Same-day text goes out: gratitude, impact win, and a simple next step link.
- ☐ Next-day email recap is sent (short, specific, event-referenced).
- ☐ A 7-day reminder invites them to a next step (service, group, or next outreach).
- ☐ Inviters are prompted to personally follow up with the guests they brought.
- ☐ Guest follow-up is assigned to an owner (so it does not disappear).
- ☐ Data is tagged so you can track return visits and next step engagement.
- ☐ A brief internal debrief captures what guests experienced and what to fix.

AVOID THESE RED FLAGS

- No follow-up plan until after the event (too late).
- Generic marketing blast that ignores what they actually did with you.
- Delayed contact (3+ days) that signals, "we did not notice you."
- Too many messages too fast. Guests feel spammed.

Guest Ready Score Summary

Score each stage from 1-5. Then calculate the overall score so your team can fix the biggest guest-leaks before the next event.

Stage	Score (1-5)	Priority fix / notes
1: Pre-Arrival	_____	_____
2: Arrival & Wayfinding	_____	_____
3: Check-In	_____	_____
4: During the Event	_____	_____
5: Closing Moment	_____	_____
6: Follow-Up	_____	_____

SCORING

Average stage score = (add the 6 scores) / 6

Guest Ready Score (0-100) = (Average stage score - 1) x 25

Interpretation: 0-49 = fragile • 50-69 = workable but leaky • 70-84 = strong • 85-100 = exceptional

Top 3 fixes before the next outreach

Be specific. Fixes should reduce confusion, awkwardness, or follow-up delay.



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