

Invite-Friendly Design Checklist: Engineering Low-Risk Events People Want to Bring Friends To

Practical planning tool for executive pastors, outreach leaders, and communications directors

Invite-friendly design reduces social risk and friction for the inviter. Your people are doing simple mental math: will my friend enjoy this, or will I owe them an apology. Use this tool to make the event clear, time-boxed, newcomer-safe, family-friendly, and easy to sign up for.

CORE IDEA

Predictable beats impressive.
Clarity beats clever branding.
No weird surprises.

1) Invite-Friendly Score (0 to 100)

Score each category from 0 to 20. Total equals 0 to 100.

Category	Weight	Score (0-20)	Notes
Clarity	20	_____	One-sentence cause that a guest can repeat.
Time-Boxing & Predictability	20	_____	Exact start and end. No ambiguity.
Newcomer Comfort	20	_____	First 10 minutes are designed, not improvised.
Family & Accessibility Design	20	_____	All ages and abilities can participate.
Communication & Sign-Up Friction	20	_____	Easy sign-up and clear logistics.

Total score (0 to 100): _____

Priority fix trigger: any category under **12** out of 20.

Interpretation

0-49 Not invite-ready

50-74 Somewhat inviteable but risky

75-89 Invite-friendly

90-100 Extremely inviteable (expect organic invites)

2) Checklist: Design for Low Risk

Use pass or fail thinking. If it fails, redesign.

A. Cause & Language

- ☐ **One-sentence cause** is written and repeated everywhere.
- ☐ Cause passes the **Coffee Shop Test**: one breath, no stumbling.
- ☐ Outcome is concrete (number, item, or deliverable) and not a theme.
- ☐ Audience is specific (who benefits) and not "the community".
- ☐ Ban insider language. No acronyms. No ministry nicknames.
- ☐ Event name is plain and obvious. If it needs an explanation, rename it.
- ☐ Your "Bring a friend" line is built into the main call to action.

PASS if

- A guest can repeat the cause after hearing it once.
- The cause includes a measurable win.

FAIL if

- The cause sounds like a mission statement.
- You need to explain church language to make it make sense.

Plain Language Rewrite

Before (churchy or abstract): _____

After (plain language): _____

B. Time & Commitment

- ☐ Exact start and end times are published (example: **9:00-11:00 AM** or **Saturday 10:30 AM-12:00 PM**).
- ☐ Time-box is short and normal. Default options: **90 minutes**, **2 hours**, or **shifts**.
- ☐ Shifts are identical and repeatable. Same orientation, same work, same finish.
- ☐ People can leave at the end without awkwardness. No surprise "one more thing".
- ☐ If training is required, you offer a beginner-friendly role that does not require it.

VAGUE TIMING = NO INVITE

If people cannot say "it is from 9 to 11," they will not invite.
Open-ended commitment feels risky. Risk kills invites.

C. The Newcomer Experience

- ☐ **First 10 minutes** are designed: arrival, check-in, orientation, first task.
- ☐ Check-in is obvious. A first-timer does not need to ask where to go.
- ☐ Orientation is short (3-5 minutes). It explains: what we are doing, why it matters, what to do next.
- ☐ A leader says out loud: "If you are new, you are in the right place."
- ☐ Newcomers are paired with a friendly guide or assigned to a low-pressure table.
- ☐ No weird surprises. No unexpected sharing circle. No pressure moments.
- ☐ Exit is clear: how to wrap up, where to return supplies, what happens next.

PASS if

- A guest can participate without knowing anyone.
- A guest can leave feeling respected, not targeted.

FAIL if

- A guest feels like an outsider watching insiders.
- The event feels like a disguised service.

What a first-timer will feel (be honest)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ I know exactly what is happening. | ☐ I fit in here. |
| ☐ This is easy to join. | ☐ I can leave without awkwardness. |
| ☐ I am not being sold to. | ☐ I would do this again. |

D. Family & Accessibility

- ☐ Kids can participate or there is a clear kids plan (child-friendly station or childcare).
- ☐ Tasks are age and ability inclusive (standing and seated options).
- ☐ Mobility needs are considered: parking, ramps, restrooms, seating, distance between stations.
- ☐ Clear role options exist for introverts (quiet, predictable tasks).
- ☐ Clear role options exist for seniors (light lift tasks, seated tasks).
- ☐ Clear role options exist for teens (fast, active tasks with supervision).
- ☐ No one is forced into a role that requires high social energy.

ACCESSIBILITY TEST

If a parent, senior, or person with limited mobility cannot picture themselves participating, invites drop.
Build at least 3 role types: active, seated, and support.

E. Sign-Up & Communication

- ☐ **3-click sign-up test:** home page to confirmed registration in 3 clicks or less.
- ☐ Sign-up page answers: what to wear, where to park, what you will do, and what you will not do.
- ☐ You list exact address and arrival time. No guessing.
- ☐ You show a simple schedule: arrive, orient, work, celebrate, leave.
- ☐ Confirmation message includes directions and a calendar link.
- ☐ Leaders are trained to say the exact same one sentence cause.

Template Copy Blocks (steal these)

Stage announcement (20 seconds)

This Saturday, 9:00 to 11:00 AM, we are packing 25,000 meals for local families. It is simple, family-friendly, and you can bring a friend. Sign up today.

Text message invite

Hey, want to come with me on Saturday from 9 to 11? We are packing meals for local families. It is easy and you can leave right at 11. Sign up: [link]

Social caption

Saturday 9:00-11:00 AM. Pack meals for local families. Bring a friend. Easy to join. Clear start and finish. Sign up: [link]

Bring a friend line (not churchy)

Want to come with me? It is low pressure, short, and you will know exactly what to do.

F. Social Risk Killers

Red flags that increase invite anxiety. If any are true, fix them.

- ☐ **Red Flag:** Open-ended commitment ("come for the day" or "stay as long as you can").
- ☐ **Red Flag:** Unclear expectations (people cannot picture what they will do).
- ☐ **Red Flag:** Mandatory training prerequisites with no beginner option.
- ☐ **Red Flag:** A members-only feel (inside jokes, insiders grouped together, guests ignored).
- ☐ **Red Flag:** Excessive spiritual framing that feels like bait and switch.
- ☐ **Red Flag:** No clear start or no clear finish.
- ☐ **Red Flag:** Hard-to-find parking or confusing arrival.
- ☐ **Red Flag:** Complex sign-up flow or unclear confirmation.
- ☐ **Red Flag:** Embarrassing roles for new people (cold outreach, awkward conversations).
- ☐ **Red Flag:** No plan for kids, seniors, or limited mobility participants.

3) Fix the Friction: Redesign Worksheet

Identify your top friction points, redesign them, then rewrite invite language in plain words.

Instructions

- 1) List the top 3 friction points that increase social risk.
- 2) Choose one redesign move per friction point.
- 3) Estimate friction reduction (0-25%). Be realistic.
- 4) Rewrite the invite-ready language in one sentence.

Friction point	Redesign move	Friction reduction (0-25%)	Invite-ready language (one sentence)
		%	
		%	
		%	

Fix before you promote

A better event is the best marketing.
Reduce risk first. Then invite.

4) Benchmark Examples: What Good Looks Like

Generic patterns you can replicate without copying a brand.

Example A: Charity 5K structure (invite-friendly pattern)

Clear: One obvious cause and a measurable win.

Time-boxed: Published start and finish window.

Inclusive: Walkers, strollers, teens, seniors. Team option.

Predictable: Route, parking, and schedule are published.

Easy sign-up: One page registration plus confirmation.

Pattern to copy: Clear + time-boxed + inclusive + predictable + easy sign-up.

Example B: Beginner-friendly build day (volunteering without intimidation)

Clear: Build one tangible thing with defined roles.

Time-boxed: Choose a 2-hour shift. Leave on time.

Inclusive: No experience required. Tools and brief training provided.

Predictable: Defined roles: active, seated, support.

Easy sign-up: Pick a shift, get a map, show up.

Pattern to copy: Make beginners feel competent fast.

Final decision

Our one-sentence cause: _____

Exact time window: _____

Top 3 friction fixes we will implement:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____



CHURCH
GROWTH
INCUBATOR