

# PARTY PLANNING CHECKLIST

## Dark Manor Halloween · A Timeline

*The difference between a party and a great party is planning. Work the timeline so you are not scrambling at 5 PM on Halloween.*

### 🕒 4 WEEKS OUT · FOUNDATIONS

- Lock in party theme, color palette, and dress code
- Pick a date the moon is in your favor (full moon adds atmosphere)
- Draft guest list; cap headcount against venue capacity
- Send save-the-dates or invitations — printed or digital, your call
- Inspect venue: lighting, outlets, traffic flow, fire exits
- Set a working budget across food, drinks, decor, rentals, contingencies
- Reserve any rentals (tables, glassware, fog machine) before October books out



### 3 WEEKS OUT · MENU AND DECOR PLANNING

- Draft food and drink menu with dietary notes per guest
- Plan one signature cocktail and one zero-proof equivalent
- Shop core decor: lighting, fabrics, candles, fog machine
- Confirm your costume (and the host costume that lets you move)
- Build the playlist; sequence ambient to peak to wind-down
- Decide on activities: contest, scavenger hunt, tarot corner, séance
- Identify your prep helpers; ask now, not the day before



### 2 WEEKS OUT · DECOR SETUP BEGINS

- Hang fabric drape, string lights, and any ceiling installations
- Test fog machine in the venue — always test before guests arrive

- Block out food prep schedule across day-before and day-of



1 WEEK OUT · GROCERIES AND FINALIZE

- Order specialty ingredients (dry ice, edible glitter, garnishes) -----
- Final RSVP deadline — confirm yes/no and update headcount -----
- Buy non-perishables: liquor, mixers, paper goods, ice bags -----
- Test one recipe you have not made before — better to fail now -----
- Charge cameras, batteries, and any battery-operated decor -----
- Stock the bar: glassware count, garnish trays, bottle openers -----
- Print this checklist again with notes added; tape it inside a cabinet -----



DAY BEFORE · HEAVY LIFT

- Major decoration setup: tablescape, bar, photo corner -----
- Marinate, brine, and prep components that hold overnight -----
- Move furniture, stage the bar, set up coat drop -----
- Chill drinks and prep ice; reserve a second cooler for backup -----
- Walk the safety route: clear exits, secure cords, smoke alarms armed -----
- Lay out costume, accessories, and a backup shoe option -----
- Blow out every test candle before bed — every single one -----



DAY OF · FINAL TOUCHES

- Final clean: bathrooms, entry, kitchen counters, mirrors
- Assemble food platters that hold; stage the rest for warming
- Set out games, props, costume contest sign-up sheet
- Light candles 30 minutes before guests arrive — never sooner
- Queue playlist; set volume low for arrivals, plan a build
- Run fog machine, lighting, and music together as a final check
- Eat something and sit down for ten minutes before the doorbell



NIGHT OF · DOORS OPEN

- Greet guests at the door; collect coats and direct to the bar
- Pace food service; replenish platters before they look picked over
- Trigger the costume contest at peak attendance, not before
- Photograph the winners, the bar, the room — once, then put the phone down
- Watch the fog machine and candles every 30 minutes
- Wind down: water and snacks for stragglers, lights up a notch
- Lock up, blow out the candles, leave the dishes for morning