



**write around**<sup>®</sup>  
— PORTLAND —

## A GUIDE FOR HOUSE PARTY HOSTS



**write around**<sup>®</sup>  
— PORTLAND —

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[www.writearound.org](http://www.writearound.org)



**Changing lives through  
the power of writing.**

## House Party Hosts Are Amazing!

respect.  
writing.  
community.

Donations that you help raise mean more creative writing workshops in hospitals, prisons, shelters, schools, treatment centers and other healthcare and social service settings.

Volunteers and supporters have helped raise anywhere from \$100 to \$10,000. **Every dollar helps!**

You invite your family and friends to join you to fund a specific workshop, a book or to provide funding for the greatest need. Whichever you choose, you'll be making a huge difference and we are so grateful for your support.

*Hosting a Write Around Portland house party was a blast. Our friends loved it, and together we sponsored an entire ten-week writing workshop.*  
*Kate, House Party Host*

*I was honored to be invited to my friend's house party to share in the lives, experiences and remarkable gifts of the Write Around Portland community.*  
*House Party Guest*

*Write Around Portland is my favorite Portland non-profit. I wanted to do what I could to help ensure it sticks around for a very long time. Turns out, I had fun in the process!*  
*Miriam, House Party Host*



Contact our Development Director with your own ideas or for help with hosting a fundraiser:

**Beth White**  
**503.796.9224**  
**[bwhite@writearound.org](mailto:bwhite@writearound.org)**

You're almost done. There's just a little bit of follow-up left.

## Thank You Notes

After the house party, we will provide you with a list of guests who made donations to Write Around Portland.

Everyone who donates will receive a thank you letter and tax receipt. It is great if you would also follow up with all of your guests with a personal thank you note.



## Letters to Non-Attendees

We like to follow up with a letter to everyone who was invited but unable to attend. A typical letter includes a reference to the success of your house party, a piece of writing that was shared at your event and a return envelope in which people can send a gift. Anyone who responds to this letter with a gift will also receive a thank you letter and tax receipt. We will inform you of any gifts that come in after the party, so that you can personally thank your invitees.

## You did it!

Congratulations! You did it. You just raised funds that will help us change lives through the power of writing.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

## In this guide:

- ☑ **House party timeline** page 3
- ☑ **Guest resources and lists** pages 4-6
- ☑ **Invitations: Samples + Ideas** page 7
- ☑ **Party Logistics** pages 8-9
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- ☑ **House Party Follow-up** page 13

To Do	Weeks Before Party	Your Actual Deadlines
Choose party date* Date: Time:		<u>Work backward from your date</u>
Brainstorm guest list	6	
Set goals (guest numbers and funds raised)	6	
Create invitations	5	
Send invitations	3	
Follow-up calls to guests who haven't responded	1-2	
Plan party logistics	2	
Write first draft of your pitch	2	
Buy drinks, food, plates, and napkins	1	
Practice and finalize pitch with Write Around Portland staff	1-2 Days before	
Set out food, drinks and utensils	Party Day	
Greet guests and have fun	Party Day	

\* The best days to hold house parties are Thursday evenings and Sundays in the late afternoon/early evening. Of course, you should choose dates and times that work best for you and the people in your social circles.

Part of the beauty of Write Around Portland is its simplicity. Bring people together, let them share their stories and great things happen.

Last fall I went to a Write Around Portland reading at McLaren Youth Correctional Facility. My son was just starting his senior year, and the thought of him getting ready to leave home was very much on my mind. Inside, there were about 13 young men reading. One of the boys began reading his piece about waiting for a bus on a misty day. He knew it was coming and that it would change his life forever. He was in this in between state. He was torn by his attachment to what he was leaving and knowing that he had to embrace whatever was ahead. I was kind of stunned. It was just a perfect expression of what I was feeling and thinking about my son at the time.

What I didn't know until I talked with him after the reading is that the bus he was waiting for would be taking him to the correctional facility. His destination and Henry's were so vastly different, but I was reminded how similar our stories can be. And I was struck by how writing and sharing our stories reminds us that we are not alone. In that room of 13 incarcerated young men and those of us audience members...no one was alone. And that to me is one of the most beautiful pieces of Write Around Portland.

I have invited all of you here to celebrate writing, to celebrate community and to show your support. I am asking everyone here to make a contribution.

We have a goal to fund another writing workshop at MacLaren. I know we can reach our goal if fifteen of you step up and contribute \$100 or more. \$100 covers materials for one participant—like the young man I met in MacLaren--in a ten week workshop.

I am giving \$100 tonight. So please get out your checkbooks and credit cards. Be generous and join me in giving.

Your guests will be aware that the party is a fundraiser (you told them in the invitations). They know you're going to ask them to make a donation, so plan some thoughtful, personal words about your connection to Write Around Portland and why you give to inspire them. Consider making the first donation, announcing it, and asking your guests to join you.

Because your guests know you, your enthusiasm for Write Around Portland will be infectious! That's why you're the best person to ask your friends and family to contribute.

The most successful asks include the host:

- 1) telling a story about why they are involved with Write Around
- 2) explaining why they personally contribute and
- 3) ending with a very specific ask for guests to make donations.

We're happy to help you plan your pitch. There's a sample ask on the next page that was very successful. We have other successful examples to share as well.

*We strongly recommend that you write out your pitch at least a few days in advance and practice it out loud.* Past hosts who have practiced their pitch in advance have told us that it helped them to refine their wording and also made them feel more comfortable and less nervous when the time came to speak to their guests.

After you have made the ask, we will pass around envelopes and remit materials prepared specifically for your party so your guests are aware that this is the appropriate time to pull out their checkbooks and cards.

We've provided the forms on the next two pages to help you track your guest list.

You may consider co-hosting your party with a friend, thereby increasing your potential invite list and sharing the party planning and hosting duties!

Think of people with whom you would like to share your passion for Write Around Portland:

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Colleagues

*I was nervous, so I only invited my closest friends. After the party I realized how many of the people I know would have loved to have been there. Next time, I'll be inviting EVERYONE I know!*  
Jenni, House Party Host

There are lots of ways to get someone interested. You can mention the populations we serve or speak more specifically about writing. Don't be afraid to ask, your guests will be honored to be invited.

Fifteen to twenty people in attendance is a good minimum goal. Typically, 1/3 of the people you invite will show up, so plan on inviting 45-60 people. If you think your home or backyard could accommodate more people and you would like to host more, expand your invitation list.

If your guests have friends who might be interested in Write Around Portland, make sure it is clear on the invitation that additional guests are welcome.

# Sample

Name	Address
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	

This is a sample. We'll send you with room for more invitees. You version, an electronic version c

## Sample Agenda

Consider this an event that's just a gathering of your friends, with a short break for talking about Write Around Portland.

Here's what a Thursday evening party from 7-9 might look like:

- 7:00 Guests start arriving, mingling
- 7:45 Introduction to Write Around Portland
- 7:47 Short reading or writing exercise
- 7:52 Ask
- 7:55 Q&A with readers
- 8:00 Back to mingling

## Setting A Fundraising Goal

### Setting a Fundraising Goal

We will work with you to set a fundraising goal for your house party. Having an amount in mind will help you inspire guests to give.

Here is what your house party can help make possible:

- **\$500** Sponsors one new writer for a ten week workshop, including publication in our anthology and opportunity to share her words at our reading
- **\$1,000** Hosts a community reading for 200 people
- **\$3,000** Underwrites a full ten-week workshop

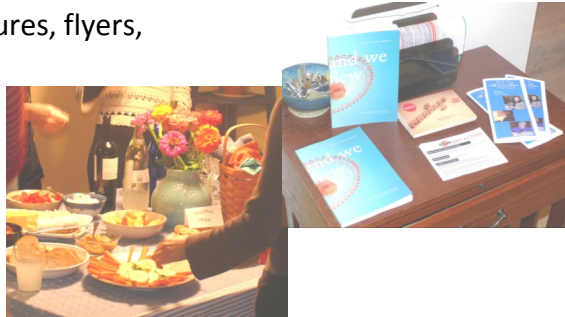
When setting a goal you should think through the following:

- Number of guests invited
- Number of guests likely to attend
- The likely gift amounts of the people you have invited
- The amount of your own gift

**Organizing Your Space**

Think about seating. What’s the best place for the reading? Avoid solitary chairs. Seating in clusters facilitates conversation.

We will provide the basics about Write Around Portland, including brochures, flyers, anthologies (to display and sell) and remittance envelopes. Consider having a small space to display books and information.



**Hosting**

Write Around Portland staff are available to attend your party. Volunteers and/or workshop participants may also attend. We are all there to help. Put us to use.



As host, we rely on you to introduce your guests to staff and participants. An introduction from you can lead to more personal connections and make the party more successful.

# Guest List

	Phone/Email	Follow-Up Call	RSVP	Thanked
1				
2				
3				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

**Use an Excel or Word document  
you'll be able to use a print  
or both.**

There are lots of ways to invite folks. You'll know which way will work best for your friends and family.

Whether you use our template or make your own, all invites should include: your name, your address, date, time, a line asking people to bring their checkbooks or credit cards so they understand that the event is a fundraiser and a link to our website for regrets donations and .

### Paper Invitations

We have paper invitations we can personalize and print for you. Handwriting notes to your guests leads to better turn out!

### Email Invitations

We have a sample jpeg with an image as well as text that we can personalize for your house party. Because email invitations can be lost in the ethernet or junk folder, phone follow-up is particularly important.

### Online Invitations

Evite.com and Facebook.com are two ways to create online invitations. One advantage is the quick and easy RSVP mechanism built into the invitation. And, reminders are just a click away. One disadvantage is there's no guarantee everyone will view the invite.

### Follow-up

No matter how you send invitations, reminder phone calls are the best way to get people there. Schedule time the week before the party to call folks who have said they are coming and those who haven't gotten back to you yet. If you get someone on the phone who can't attend, be ready to ask them to make a gift anyway.

### Activities

We can invite Write Around Portland participants to read. The power of their voices speaks to our mission like nothing else. Three readers is usually the right number.



We can also facilitate a short free write for your guests to experience firsthand what happens in our workshops. We'll make it fun and inspiring.

Either of these activities provide an introduction to

Write Around Portland and set the stage for a fundraising ask.

### Food

Simple appetizers and finger foods are great so you can avoid having to worry about forks and knives. *There is no need to buy expensive food or spend a lot of time preparing fancy dishes.* Foods like hummus and veggies, cookies, brownies and/or cheese and crackers are perfect for this type of event.



### Beverages

Most hosts serve wine (if appropriate for their crowd) and a non-alcoholic beverage like sparkling water. Standard hosting wisdom says that a bottle of wine for every three people is plenty.