

RETREAT GUIDEBOOK

Complete checklist for
your next camp or retreat

1

PLAN
AHEAD



2

GET
AHEAD



3

STAY
AHEAD

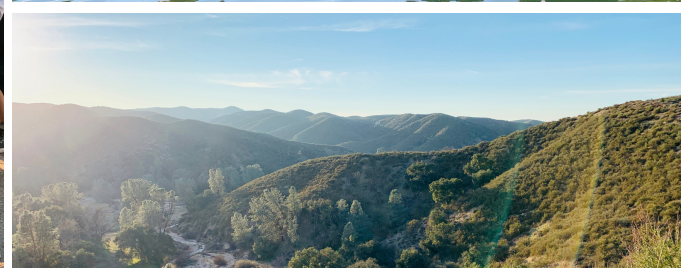
2020 GRANITE RIDGE

INTRODUCTION

& HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

So, You're Planning a Retreat

With years of retreat-planning experience, we know what goes well, and what doesn't. Let us help you create a memorable and formative experience for your entire group!



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

- **Use it as a starting point.** This checklist takes a very 'big picture' approach as it takes you from point 'A' to 'Z' of your retreat planning. It's not designed to exhaustively cover every possible detail but to instead cover all of the key areas of planning to ensure you don't miss any critical component.
- **Use it as an actual checklist!** Print out this guide so you can visually track your progress as you check off each item! This also will allow you to take advantage of the "Notes" area in each section which can help keep all of your insights, reminders, and ideas about each stage together in the same place for you to reference later.
- **Use it in stages.** This guide helps you through the three primary phases of planning: the start (generally 12-6 months out), the middle (generally 6-1 month out) and the finale (generally the last month). Following the steps provided for each stage will help you plan ahead, get ahead, and stay ahead, even helping you prep for next year!

1. PLAN AHEAD

6-12 months out

Spiritual Preparation

KEY VERSES

Proverbs 16:3, Proverbs 15:22,
Matthew 11:28, 1 Peter 5:7

You may be tempted to jump right into logistics first, but it's important to recognize the difference between planning details and spiritually preparing for your retreat. ***A retreat can have logistical failures but still have an incredible impact on people's lives***, so take time - starting now - to prepare spiritually and pray that your retreat will have an eternal impact on both your team and attendees.

- Pray for God's will to be done
- Pray for your attendees
- Pray for your logistics
- Pray for your attendees
- Pray for yourself

Notes:

Vision

Before jumping into retreat planning mode, it's critical to clearly define the central goals of your retreat. What are the needs of your attendees? To experience spiritual renewal? To connect and grow closer? Different goals require different decision along the way (for example, nicer accommodations cost more, but may be worth it depending on the demographic of your group), so it's important to start here!

- Clearly write down your central retreat goal/objective.
- List and prioritize what is most important (teachings, connection, affordability, nature).
- Pray about and select a theme that focuses on your goal.

Notes:

1. PLAN AHEAD

6-12 months out

Budget

Retreats often entail managing a large budget which can be intimidating (especially for those new to it), but it doesn't have to be! Just follow these steps, and this part of your planning can be a breeze. Do this early so you can set the right prices, track costs, and not be surprised by the unexpected. Here are the key steps:

1. Start with your venue cost ($\$/\text{per person} \times \text{estimated number of attendees}$)
 2. Evaluate each category listed in the simple budget below and determine how much you will spend for each.
 3. Add it all up – this is your total budget. Divide the total by the number of attendees you expect (and plan for lower attendance than you expect) – this is your per person cost to charge. If your organization is sponsoring part of the retreat, make sure to factor that in – this will reduce your total budget and per person cost.
 4. Have a spreadsheet to faithfully record every expense (and a place for receipts). Compare regularly to your original plan. And that's it!
- [CLICK HERE](#) to download our sample spreadsheet.

Retreat or venue price	_____
Additional activity costs (optional)	_____
Transportation costs	_____
Snacks / extra food	_____
Speaker	_____
Supplies (nametags, signs, etc.)	_____
Scholarships	_____
Other	_____
Margin +10%	_____
TOTAL	_____

Notes:

1. PLAN AHEAD

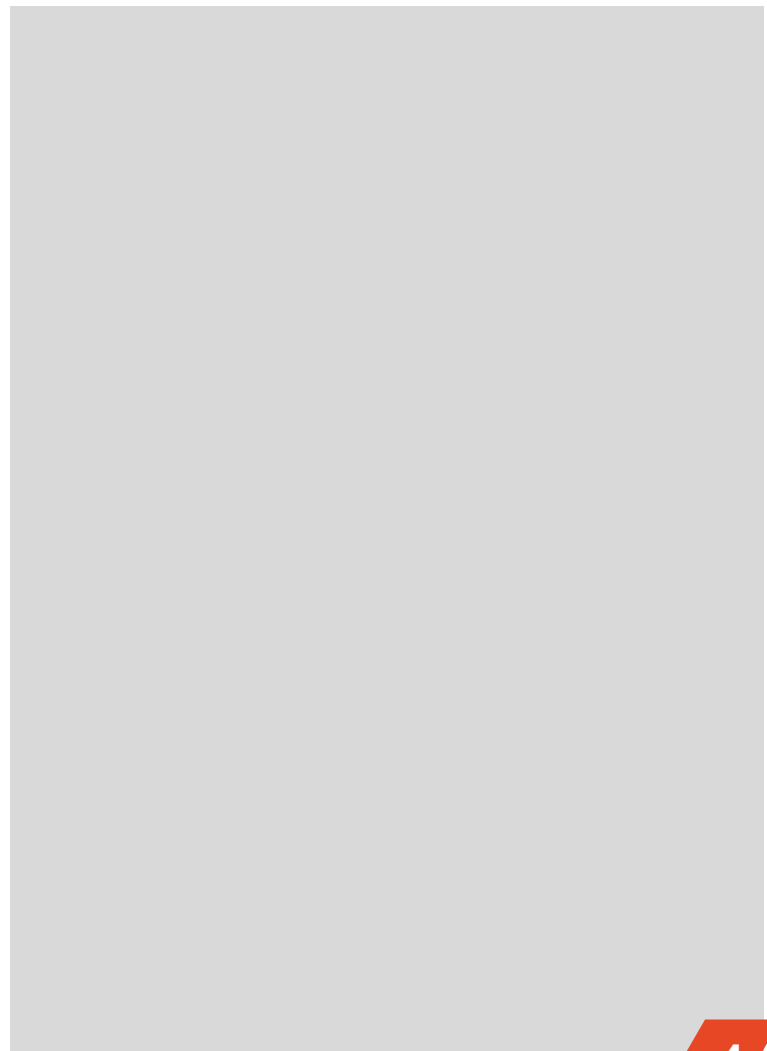
6-12 months out

Build Your Team

The amount of work it takes to plan a retreat (even a small one!) is truly impressive! It can be overwhelming if you do it alone. That's why it's so important to assemble a team to help carry the load. And don't feel bad asking for help; delegation isn't a way of getting out of work. Delegation is how you empower team members to use their gifts and it also frees you up to use yours more effectively! You'll also need people to help onsite as part of your retreat (for such positions as greeting/registration, cabin leaders, worship leader, A/V person, etc.), so it will be important to think through those positions as well.

- Think through and list every single area where an additional person may be needed (registration, activities, small-group leaders, etc.)
- Assign a name to every item (including yourself). Leave no item unassigned!
- List how you will thank your volunteers (thank you cards, emails, gift-cards, etc.)
- Contact your volunteers early and make sure they are committed.
- Don't forget you are as much of a team leader as a retreat planner. Use this opportunity to encourage and be a great example to the team.

Notes:



2. GET AHEAD

1-6 months out

Sessions, Speakers, and Worship

Whether your retreat goals are to provide an atmosphere of rest and connection or one of spiritual growth and teaching, your main sessions are a central component of your getaway. Your sessions are the focal point of your time away, so it's important to get it right! There are three key areas to prepare, and each has several tasks to consider.

Overall Sessions:

- Determine the number of sessions, topics covered, and length.
- How many breakout sessions (if any)? How long? Which campers?
- List any supplies/decor to incorporate the theme.

Speakers:

- Decide on your speaker.
- Communicate early and often about what topics, session length, etc.
- Communicate expectations openly (compensation, travel logistics, housing, availability for questions, etc.)

Worship Team:

- Decide on your worship team, your leader, and the focus of the worship.
- Clearly communicate the length, type, and number of sessions.
- Communicate expectations openly (compensation, travel logistics, housing, availability for questions, etc.)

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

2. GET AHEAD

1-6 months out

Retreat Schedule

Without the right balance of activities, rest, and sessions, your attendees won't get the best experience. Take the following steps to develop the right balance:

- Start with a rough draft and set the fixed, non-movable parts (arrival, meal-times, etc.)
- Add in activities and free time. Remember, free/personal time can achieve great "results" for fellowship, reflection, and connecting with God.
- Include transportation time too/from meals and sessions. Give people time to linger and fellowship.

Notes:

Task Management

Retreat planning requires managing a lot of details. Whether you're naturally gifted at handling logistics and small details or not, it's crucial to have a good system in place to track and manage them all whether using paper, spreadsheets, or a software (Asana and Trello both have free options).

- Pick a task-management system.
- Enter all major tasks (and sub-tasks) with reminders so you don't forget anything.
- Assign tasks to your team and ensure they have access and a deadline.
- Stick to your system!

Notes:

2. GET AHEAD

1-6 months out

Get Sign-Ups!

All the planning in the world isn't worth much if no one comes to the retreat! While intimacy is a factor in some retreats, these events are often a way to do needed outreach, so here are the two most important things to do and a few key checklist items to do.

1. Promote early and often. It often takes hearing about something multiple times for most people to act on it. They might be interested in the retreat but quickly forget about it as they go about their daily lives. In order to 'break through' to them, they need to receive your message multiple times (some studies say it needs to be 7 times!). So promote actively!
2. Use as many communication 'channels' as possible. Because people need to hear about signing up so many times to act, use as many different communication 'channels' as possible. For example, consider using Facebook/Instagram posts, announcements, bulletin inserts, slides, flyers, postcards, emails, banners on your homepage, creating a Facebook event and inviting people that way, phone calls, intentional in-person promoting, etc. You can't use too many!

Notes:

- Brainstorm a list of all the possible channels you want to utilize for communication.
- Create a promotional calendar of when to use each communication item. (social media on weekdays, bulletins on Sundays, etc.)
- Create a spreadsheet of all potential attendees, their contact information, if they have paid or not, and any other relevant information.
- Use Canva.com or similar site to create an appealing flyer. Attach this as a PDF to outreach emails.

2. GET AHEAD

1-6 months out

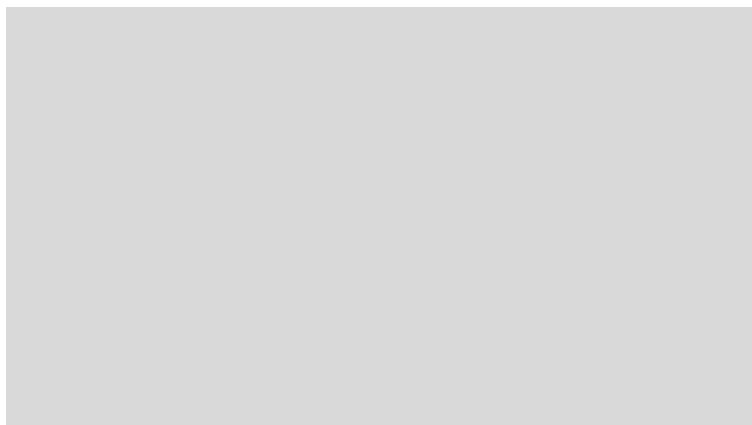
Paperwork...

Yes, planning a retreat also involves some paperwork. Because this can be a tedious process, it may be tempting to feel overwhelmed by it or to put it off too long.

However, we've found these two key steps will make it feel more manageable:

- List all the paperwork that needs to be completed by your organization. Here's what we ask for:
 - Certificate of Liability Insurance
 - Credit Card Authorization
 - Copy of Schedule
- We also ask for everyone attending the event to be registered online 2 weeks before arrival. Put this in the calander!

Notes:

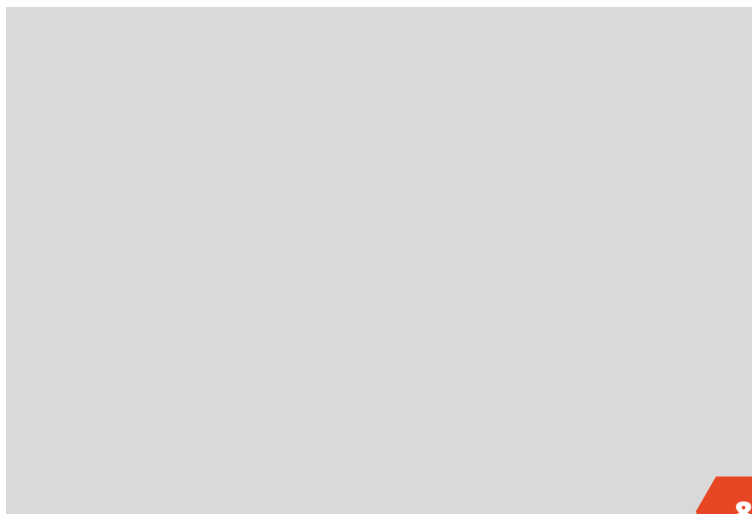


Extra Tips

Here are some extra tips that we have found can be easily missed and/or provide that extra thing to get a retreat from good to great.

- Brainstorm ways to make the event extra special (midnight snack, group games, board games, storytelling around the campfire, giveaway items to take home, etc.)
- Arrange transportation long beforehand and coordinate carpooling.

Notes:



3. STAY AHEAD

Final Month of Planning

Tech Needs

Unless your retreat will only be with a handful of people, you'll most likely be using technology for your sessions, and it's important to "get your ducks in a row" ahead of time regarding what you'll need.

- Prepare a detailed list of Audio/Video needs with your worship team and speaker.
- Correspond with us (or your retreat center) to see what equipment is provided for your meeting room.
- Assign ownership of items to someone to make sure all items are taken care of.

Notes:

Room Assignments

There are multiple approaches! For example, put friends together or split up "old friends" and pair them with new people. Be thoughtful as this makes a huge difference on a participant's experience! Room assignments aren't required, but it does make for a smoother and guided retreat experience.

- Make a detailed spreadsheet of available rooms and capacities (use our Facilities document for help), alongside all participants.
- Discuss with your leadership team if you want to pair friends together or strangers.
- Assign each person to a room!

Notes:

3. STAY AHEAD

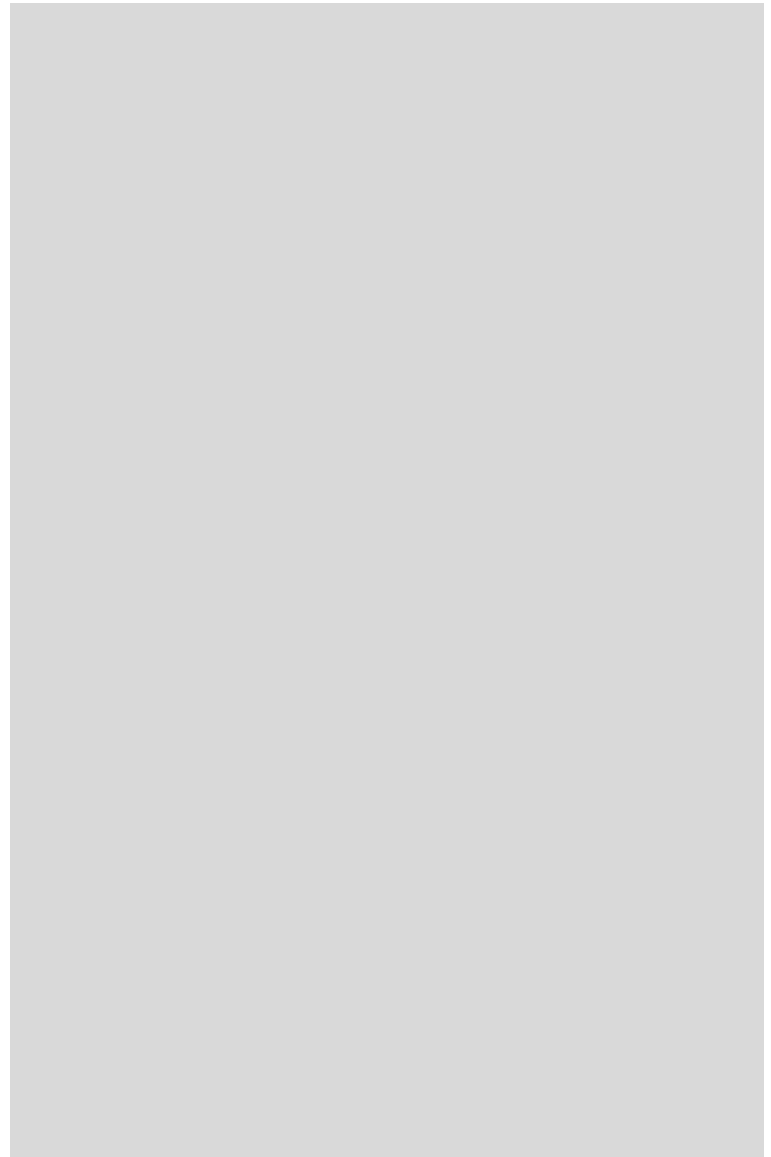
Final Month of Planning

Registration

Having a well thought out registration plan is vital for the success of your retreat. You need a smooth system that makes it easy for people to sign up and a good plan for when they show up. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Decide on a payment and registration system (online portal, spreadsheet, paper, etc.) and decide if day-of registrations/payments are allowed.
- Give clear instructions on how, when, and where they can register.
- Plan your on-site registration flow. Who will be in charge of what?
- Make a list of all the information you need to give your participants. The more you give beforehand, the easier it makes registration! Here is a list of all the information that most people need:
 - Driving Directions
 - Arrival/Departure Time
 - Contact Info
 - Retreat Schedule
 - Camp Map
 - Speaker bios, session topics, free time activities, meal times, etc.

Notes:



3. STAY AHEAD

Final Month of Planning

Expect the Unexpected

There are always a ton of little supplies and details to remember. The more you plan, the less you will be caught off guard during the day of the retreat. Here are some important (and easily forgotten) ones to be sure to pay attention to!

- Keep a running list of all important things to bring (scissors, tape, a/v equipment, signs, pens, printouts, thank you cards, name tags, supplies for games, giveaways, prizes, welcome packets, etc.)
- If possible, put someone else as the point of contact for incoming participants. This will free yourself to handle the bigger issues.

Notes:

Feedback

If you are planning to (hopefully) have your retreat next year, it is **crucial** to gather feedback from your attendees, have a debrief session with your team, and document things you've learned. DO NOT SKIP THIS PART. Here are some recommendations for how to do that.

- Create a google forms or print out physical surveys (if you want to get the most responses) rating different items on a scale of 1-5 with options for comments.
- Schedule a debrief with your leaders to talk about highs, lows, and improvements.
- Take detailed notes and keep in a known place to follow up next year.

Notes: