

# NCP ENTERTAINMENT

## MITZVAH TIPS

### 17 Party Planning Pointers On Creating The Best Bar / Bat Mitzvah

**1. Get Organized** - Regardless of the size of your celebration when you first start planning for the big day you're going to be swamped with information. You must get properly organized. Build yourself a Bar/Bat Mitzvah organizer using a large (two inch or larger) three-ring binder and insert section dividers for major areas such as Reception, Invitations, Hotels, Transportation, Guest List, Decorations and vendors such as Entertainment, Photography and Videography, Party Planning and Novelty Entertainment. Save this file. It comes in handy if you have younger children who will soon be having Bar or Bat Mitzvahs as well. This way, you won't have to start from scratch when planning your next affair. (For more information see "*Getting Organized*" under reference)

**2. Create the guest list** - Your next step is to create a master guest list. This will dictate lots of variables such as the size of your facility, catering budget and quantity of items you will need for centerpieces and party favors. Be sure to check your guest list for accurate spelling, complete address and phone numbers. Also list the children with their ages as this will assist when finalizing seating arrangements. It may be a good idea to order extra invitations. You never know when you or your child will be invited unexpectedly to another affair in which it would only be right to reciprocate the gesture.

**3. Know how much & what you owe** - Design a budget form to include such possible categories as the facility, catering (food, drink & linens), entertainment, photographer, videographer, room decor, invitations, benchers, kippot and novelty entertainment or party favors. Get solid estimates! Don't forget to include in your budget the behind the scene costs like the cake, hallah, stamps, clothing an entire family in suits and party attire, hair & beauty costs & bar/bat mitzvah lessons. Carry with you on the day of your affair the contracts for your entertainment, photographer, videographer, caterer, etc. You can also alleviate headaches by writing checks out the night before. Also consider Having a separate account set aside for the bar/bat mitzvah.

**4. Should I Hire A Party Planner?** - A party planner will be your advocate and guide in making smart decisions. They are familiar with options and suppliers. Their expertise can save you time and money. They'll share with you ideas of popular options; ie slouch socks which are nice to offer to the girls so they can dance comfortably, unique sign-in boards some of which if made with fabric can later on be transformed into pillows or even a memory quilt and other creative features. If you're considering a party planner remember every party planner works differently. Ask questions! What do their services include? Request references.

**5. Where should we have the party?** - Consider the time of day and time of year. What time shabbat ends or amount of out-of-town guests may play into this decision. Then consider where. Include your sight choices - your synagogue, area hotels, catering & novelty facilities or even your home. Dance floor size is very important. Make sure the facility can accommodate you with a large enough floor for everyone to be able to dance. Be sure to check accessibility of hotel and reception choice for your disabled or elderly guests. Be familiar on which caterers are permitted on site. Inquire whether the caterer provides the Bar/Bat Mitzvah cake. Also ask what is included in the sight rental. Much more will be necessary to do and acquire for an affair at your home however you'll save on the end of the

facility rental here.

**6. Shop around** - If you start planning when you get your date 2-3 years in advance, you'll have plenty of time to comparison shop. Make sure you know what you are getting and ask questions to be sure you understand procedures and policies thoroughly.

**7. Are they open?** - Your first question to the respective members of your party staff should be about the availability of your date. There's no reason to get all excited about someone that's already booked.

**8. Get references** - Any reputable photographer, decorator, caterer, band, or DJ will be able to provide you with appropriate references that you call to get an honest opinion. This information may prove to be very valuable in making your choices.

**9. Get samples and see them in action** -

**entertainment** - Some DJs and bands will allow you to see them at an actual party before you book them. If this is the case, take advantage of it! It's a great way to see how they run a party and how they interact with a party crowd. Or you may want to ask if your proposed entertainment group can come out to meet with you possibly in the convenience of your own home. Ask to see video of an actual event they had performed at. This in-home meeting is effective because it allows you to personally discuss the needs of your party.

**caterer** - Ask for a tasting of some of the caterer's dishes.

**photographer / videographer** - For photographer's / videographer's - make sure to see their work. They are helping you preserve treasured memories. Schedule a formal sitting with the photographer prior to the event. You may also want to take notes of these services so you can compare all of the details accurately.

**decorator** - Make it a point to see the decorator's creations. An expert decorator can transform and create an exciting look for your party site. They will highlight your child's interest, hobby or talents. A nice touch is to have the decorator place baskets of toiletries in the restroom of the reception facility for your guests convenience.

**invitations** - This is your guests first introduction to your event. Remember that budget when selecting an invitation. Order extra invitations for sign-in board, memory books and framing. Perhaps you can get the envelopes early and get started on addressing. Check the post office for stamps that could match envelopes for color or theme. Remember to budget for the calligrapher. Also a helpful hint is to number the back of the response cards in case a guest does not include their name. Order thank you notes at the same time you order invitations.

**10. Prepare lists for your vendors** - Take the time to prepare lists for the DJ/band, photographer / videographer and caterer (i.e. Alliyot honorees, which guests to photograph, candle lighting music and sayings, video montage, courses and timing, toasts and speeches, special dances, overall party agenda, etc. This way vendors can converse and coordinate details together so everyone is on the same page.

**11. Listen to your kids** - Planning this life event can be enjoyable for both you and your child. Make sure to include your child in these preparations. Your kids are a great source of information on what's new and hot on the Bar / Bat Mitzvah circuit. Let them share in the responsibilities of planning their special day. Have them accompany you when you meet with photographers, bands / DJs, caterers, etc. Let them write their own candle lighting ceremony or speech to give at the affair. Have them help with the invitation list. They'll feel more appreciative of your hard work if they experience some of the work for themselves.

**12. Can I make the decorations & save time & money?** - The decorations are an area where an

artistic family can really get into the creation of the celebration. Perhaps you want to emphasize the Mitzvah or a donation made in honor of your child. If you do the decorations yourself, remember to hire someone to set up and take down the decorations, so you can be a guest at your own party.

**13. Don't be afraid to be creative** - At age 13, kids are usually very self-conscious about how they dress, what they look like, and how they act. In short, they want to be just like their friends. Of course you want to make your child's day special, but you may feel apprehensive about doing some aspect of the affair differently in fear that your guests will not respond favorably. Consult your child on your ideas and who knows, you may set a new trend or two.

**14. Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better** - Just because the Goldman's across the street had an elaborate, glitzy, expensive affair doesn't mean you have to have one as well, unless that's what you want. Set yourself a budget, work within your means, and still have an outstanding affair. Don't succumb to people pushing you into extras that you know you can't afford. Most good bands, DJs, caterers, etc. should be willing to work with you and offer you a variety of options at different price levels.

**15. Arrange some quiet time** - On the day before your party, spend some quiet time by yourself or with your family to keep you from getting too unnerved. Also, on the days following the affair, you may find the need for some down time to bring you back to reality. Treat yourself to a day off - you deserve it!

**16. Don't forget your p's and q's** - While your party staff has had a pleasure serving you in the planning and execution of your affair, it's always nice for them to receive a special thank you by way of a letter or phone call following your affair. If you felt the service was outstanding, tipping is appropriate.

**17. Enjoy the affair!** - Mazel Tov! You have survived planning a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. You owe it to yourself to take the time to enjoy and savor all the hard work you've put into making this day so special for your son or daughter. After the affair, look forward to the many phone calls you'll receive about how your affair was absolutely fabulous. Thanks to your dedication, you have created special memories that will last forever.

**These tips may seem elementary but are sometimes easily forgotten when caught up in the demands of planning the affair. So, relax, stay calm, and look forward to enjoying a great simcha in your lives!**