

A close-up photograph of a nacho appetizer. The appetizer is served on a wooden skewer and consists of a tortilla chip base topped with melted cheese, a dollop of white sauce, shredded cheese, and a slice of jalapeño. A green pennant flag is stuck into the top of the appetizer, with the word "TOUCHDOWN!" written in white capital letters on it. The background is blurred, showing other similar appetizers.

TOUCHDOWN!

# BIG GAME

Party Planning

# Avoid These Party Mistakes

On one level, Super Bowl parties are a breeze. After all, whether your guests are there for the football or the commercials, the entertainment is already taken care of.

No one has to worry about a dress code and silverware is not required. But that doesn't mean issues can't arise along the way. Here's a look at common party mistakes and how to avoid them.

## TIMING

Don't put all of the food out at one time. Spacing helps keep things new and exciting, and you can also save the dessert (and coffee) until last — in order to signal when the party should be winding down. Start with a tailgate mentality, meaning a couple of hours early while the pre-game analysis is still on television. Then move onto the main courses as you near kickoff. Continue with other food and drink options in waves, with a wide enough variety that anyone can find something to love.

## THE FOOD

Don't serve anything that's hard to eat. If it requires a knife and fork, it's not ideal for a Super Bowl party. Finger-friendly foods allow everyone to keep their eyes on the TV, so



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they won't miss a single snap or hilarious commercial. Avoid new recipes. Even if you have the culinary skills to pull it off, most guests will gravitate toward simple foods that they know and love. Save the interesting stuff for smaller, more intimate dinner parties.

## DRINKS

Be sure to stock up on ice. If you think you have enough, you probably need more. Buy plenty of non-alcoholic beverages, making it easy for some-

one to play the role of designated driver. Juices, tonic water and sodas also make great mixers for anyone who wants something a little stronger. Encourage everyone to bring whatever additional drinks they want, and keep the contact information for local taxi companies and ride shares handy in case someone overdoes it.

## SEATING

This is always a very long game, thanks to all of the

added entertainment and commercial content. No one wants to stand that long, including the host. Make sure there is plenty of seating, even if you need to bring chairs in from other rooms — or borrow furniture from a neighbor or friends. If someone loans you something, remember to make sure they are on the guest list.

## PREPPING

The best parties require advance planning, and this one is no exception. You can't get it

all done on the morning of the Super Bowl. There are simply too many moving parts. You'll forget something or — worse — be too tired after frantically running errands through the morning to enjoy the big game. All that should be left by the time Sunday rolls around is arranging the food and drinks, then switching on the set. Make one last sweep of the house to make sure everything is presentable, and then begin welcoming friends, family and neighbors.

# Be a Great Party Guest

Being invited to a Super Bowl party seems easy enough: You can watch the big game without any of the stress and worry associated with hosting a huge get together.

Visitors have responsibilities too, however. You shouldn't simply show up, eat and drink until you're content, then vanish after the winner raises the Lombardi Trophy during the post-game celebration. Instead, here are a few tips on how to be a great party guest.

## ARRIVE ON TIME

Showing up fashionably late may be acceptable or even encouraged in other situations, but Super Bowl parties have a pre-announced kickoff time. Arrive afterward, and you'll disrupt a group that's now intently watching for the next big play or the next can't-miss ad. In fact, the best guests ask about arriving early, in case help is needed with prep. And if, for some reason you can't make it, let the host know as soon as you can.

## DON'T BE EMPTY HANDED

Great party guests make contributions to the event, even if it's just an additional



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bottle of liquid refreshment or extra paper plates. Better still, bring a side dish. Super Bowl parties aren't designed to show off five-star skills. Simple appetizers and finger foods are the order of the day. Make sure it's something that can be served at room temp, or with a quick spin in the microwave, since the host's kitchen will be packed with other guests.

## BE READY TO TALK

Don't be a dud. Come prepared to hold conversations with fellow guests and not just about whatever's happening on the field. Think of a few suitable topics on the way over. Consider the people who are hosting and who they'll invite, then formulate some questions about what's happening in their lives. Avoid controversial topics like

religion and politics. And don't leave before saying this: "We've had a wonderful time; thanks for inviting us."

## SHOW SOME MANNERS

Don't eat while filling your own plate. If you touch something while deciding, it's yours. Don't put it back. Be respectful of others who are watching by staying away from the TV screen, and mak-

ing sure to pause conversations when something notable is happening — whether it's a key replay or a trailer for that highly anticipated new movie. Don't double dip from the main bowl. Instead, put some extra salsa on your own plate. Help clean up while the game is still in progress, and be sure not to overstay your welcome. Offer to help clean up before you leave.

# Party-Proof Your Home

Let's face it, accidents happen — especially at parties, and even more, perhaps, at Super Bowl parties.

They're lengthy affairs, with lots of guests watching something that can get very exciting. Next thing you know, drinks are spilling, pizza is falling to the floor, and home decor might get bumped off a shelf. Here's how to party-proof your home for the big game this year.

## MAKE MORE ROOM

The first step with party-proofing is maximizing the space you have for the event. Start by clearing walkways of excess clutter, then rearrange furniture to create a space to gather in the center of the room. Provide as many different options for seating as is possible, including sofas, recliners, loveseats, bar stools and even folding chairs if needed. Bean bags are a great option for kids, too. Store any items that are particularly treasured or easily broken. Finally, clear away every-day clutter like mail, laundry, newspapers and magazines so there's plenty of counter space for more important things — like wings!

## PROTECT YOUR HOME

Consider positioning throw rugs or runners in high-traffic areas to protect the carpet underneath from dirt, excess wear and tear, and spills. Table cloths placed under your appetizers and drinks can shield your hard surfaces from stains, dings or condensation rings. The disposable versions make cleaning up a breeze. Use plastic cups rather than breakable glass. If and when someone manages to create a mess anyway, remember to blot carpet spills with cold water first. You'll be back to the game in no time.

## DON'T FORGET THE PETS

Parties can get pretty loud. Super Bowl parties are even louder. Guests become engrossed in the action, or find the commercials and conversation hilarious, and they forget to use their inside voices. This can become particularly stressful for pets who may be nervous around that level of noise or simply timid with strangers — and then they might create their own messes. Consider limiting your furry friend's access to areas where people aren't congregating, and make frequent visits together outside. Check on them frequently, providing their favorite treats during the game. Then get them something special afterward.



# Don't Forget Younger Guests

Invitees might ask a friend or babysitter to watch their children before going to more upscale gatherings, but Super Bowl parties are informal affairs where children are a regular presence.

Some younger guests might not remain engaged with the action on the field, especially with a contest as long as the average NFL championship. Best to have some alternate activities, so you and your other guests don't miss a snap.

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The Super Bowl typically starts in the early evening, but there's still plenty of time during pre-game programming to have some outdoor fun. And what better day to organize a touch or flag football game? This will provide an outlet for the extra energy every kid has, while allowing everyone to enjoy some fresh air before crowding inside for the pro action. Invite them to wear their favorite team's jersey for an added sense of rivalry. Scavenger hunts, hopscotch and cornhole contests are great options for those who aren't into gridiron games.

## FOOTBALL-THEMED FUN

Hang a hula hoop or lay it

What comes next?

The grid contains the following items from left to right, top to bottom:

- Row 1: Basketball, Football, Soccer ball, Basketball, [?], Soccer ball, Soccer ball (in a vertical column on the right).
- Row 2: Soccer ball, Baseball, [?], Baseball, Soccer ball, Baseball, Soccer ball (in a vertical column on the right).
- Row 3: Bowling ball, [?], Football, Bowling ball, Soccer ball, Football, Football (in a vertical column on the right).

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the classic piñata. Buy or print out football-themed coloring-book pages, or copy the activities on this page. Get Super Bowl stickers for use in bingo games. Do a little pre-game research and play Super Bowl trivia; older children can be in charge of asking the questions and keeping score. Then there's a classic: Flick football, where kids create triangles out of folded paper and try to make field goals between one another upright fingers.

## FOR THE NON-FAN

Don't like football? That shouldn't bring the party to a halt. Board games can provide hours of fun for small groups of non-fans. You can also roll dice for special treats. Pick a word that the children can't say during the game, preferably something common — or even the word football. Have kids do a cartwheel every time they accidentally say it.

## FUN PRIZES

Some games are just for fun. But if you decide to keep score, offering a neat prize will only add to the festive atmosphere. Gift bags of team-related stickers, notepads, mini helmets and other items are always a big hit. Some stores sell Super Bowl-themed candies that make great prizes, too. But recognizing the victors in your Super Bowl party games doesn't have to cost money: Winners can also have first dibs in the food line or get exclusive rights to a bean bag in a choice viewing position.

## Copy the football.

	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4
1									
2									
3									
4									

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on the ground, then have the kids take turns trying to toss a football into it. Update the old

Pin the Tail on the Donkey game with helmets from the participating teams. Create a

papier-mâché version of the same helmets and fill them with treats for a cool twist on

# Making the Right Invitations

Before the party planning, before party-proofing your home, before buying chips and drinks and ice, you'll need to determine who should attend.

This decision-making process isn't as easy as it sounds. There are issues of space, and whether different work or friend groups will get along. You might also have to consider which teams are on the field. Here's a quick guide to making the right invitations to your big-game party.

## HOW MANY?

Even if you'd like to invite all of your friends, family and neighbors, they might not be able to cram into the available space. You also have to consider noise and parking issues for those who live nearby. If you're an apartment or condo dweller, the guest list should probably be restricted to no more than 10. Those who live in single-family homes could host twice as many guests, but might want to limit it to fewer — depending on your square footage, and the size or number of televisions.

## WHO'S IN?

Close friends, family and co-workers are always the safest bet. Invitations can get trickier after that, however.



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Significant others are usually a great idea, but an unknown plus-one might become isolated from the rest of your guests. As host, you could end up having to cater to a self-conscious stranger rather than enjoying the game with your buddies. Avoid inviting supervisors, since your relationship with them is typically limited to your job — and this is supposed to be fun.

(Your friends might also inadvertently embarrass you, which could have workplace implications.) Be aware of any lingering personal issues among your guests, and invite around them.

## WHO'S PLAYING?

With lots of food and drinks, a boisterous crowd and those celebrated commercials, the Super Bowl can

be about everything but the game. But that doesn't apply if your team is playing, or if one of your guests is a childhood fan of the opposing squad. Suddenly, this isn't a place to network or chit chat, but instead a serious watch party that happens to have cool appetizers. You might not want to invite people who are only there for the commercials, and you might want

to limit the number of significant others and children to those who are actually interested in the final score. Actually, you might not want to invite that buddy who's pulling for the other team, either. It's one thing to watch him Hoover up all of your free hors d'oeuvres; having to endure his victory dance after a crushing loss is quite another.

# Order Enough Food

For many people, a great Super Bowl party involves piles of pizza and chicken wings.

How much do you need to order, though? It depends on who's coming.

## PART OF THE FUN

Having more food than you need is a longstanding Super Bowl party tradition in America. It's part of the fun.

Even health nuts often splurge for one day while they cheer on their favorite team, then get back on the healthy, veggie-and-workout bandwagon the next day.

Making sure your party includes ample amounts of good food — the most classic being pizza and chicken wings — should be at the heart of everyone's Super Bowl party plans.

## RULES OF THUMB

A good rule of thumb when ordering pizza is to buy three slices per adult and two slices per child. Some people will eat more; some will eat less. That guideline results in a good workable average for a meal, though.

Most large pizzas have eight slices, so you can do the math to see how much to order. For 10 adults and five children, you'd need at least four pizzas. If you're expecting 20 adults, you'd need eight pizzas to feed them all.

If you want to get extra



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nerdy, look for online calculators that tell you how much to order. You can enter details about the size of the pizza and how many people you're expecting, and the website will tell you how many pizzas are recommended.

For chicken wings, it's a good idea to order 10 wings for adults and 6 for children. If they're boneless wings, though — which come with more

meat on them and less waste — you can probably drop that down to seven wings per adult and four per child.

Keep in mind that the Super Bowl lasts longer than a meal, and your guests may come hungrier than average.

The typical Super Bowl broadcast lasts three to four hours, or even longer if you watch all the pre- and post-game content with your

friends. You may want to order quite a bit more than these guidelines.

## ORDER EARLY

Because of the widely publicized supply-chain disruptions this year as the economy continues to recover from pandemic conditions, it's a good idea to place your order well ahead of time.

Many restaurants report

being short on staff recently, too, and Super Bowl Sunday is one of the busiest days of the year for pizza and wing establishments.

To make sure you don't end up empty-handed on game day, call ahead to place your order. You'll want to make sure your favorite restaurant is ready and able to keep your party guests happy on the big day.

# The Big Cleanup

If it's a close game, the Super Bowl can become so engrossing that food and drink mishaps become almost inevitable.

You're not safe from a spill when the game is a blowout either, since everyone will be up and about enjoying various distracting conversations. Either way, you'll have to deal with the usual remains from a huge gathering once the game ends. Here's how to prepare for and execute the big clean up that inevitably follows.

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

Buy extra all-purpose cleaner, of course, but also air fresheners and stain-remover pens. Keep a stack of darker towels handy, since they don't show stains. Stash paper towels in every room with a TV, then you'll be prepared for any spills. Empty the vacuum cleaner bag. Stock up on trash bags. Keep one eye on the score and the other on the garbage bin so you're always ready to replace the filled bag with a new one as needed. If possible, place smaller trash receptacles throughout the house, for convenience. Serving your party favors in waves keeps things interesting, but it also allows time for cleaning up as you go.

Use disposable chafing dishes and recyclable plates and flatware, since they're so much



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easier to deal afterward.

## DON'T WAIT

Check for spills, empty classes, abandoned plates or other issues once a quarter. That will cut down on post-game cleaning — and it also might help you get to stains soon enough to keep them from setting. Five or 10 minutes spent straightening up during a commercial

you've already seen, or one of those endless replay timeouts, really adds up by the time the final whistle blows. Prepare a handy bucket with emergency supplies that can be quickly carried to any room.

## THE AFTERMATH

Begin by opening the windows; the space could probably use from fresh air. Collect

and dispose of everything that can be thrown away or recycled. Begin in the room that's the farthest away from the kitchen, working your way back. Even with a commitment to recyclables, you might still end up with a sink full of dirty pots, pans, dishes and glasses. Don't be tempted to save them for the morning. First off, most of us have work or school on

the Monday after the big game, meaning "the next morning" will actually mean "sometime tomorrow evening." Secondly, even if you wake up early and begin diligently scrubbing everything, you'll have made it far more difficult because the remaining food and liquid will be dried on. At the very least, leave it all in soaking water. Always clean the floors last.