

**YOUR**

**IT'S FUN, FREE  
AND GREEN!**

**BIG AUSSIE**

**SWAP**

**PARTY  
SURVIVAL  
GUIDE**

Everything you need to know to host a successful Big Aussie Swap Party



Positive environmental actions, for everyone.



## 10 STEPS TO SWAP SUCCESS

The 10 top things you need to know to throw a Swap Party.

Any Swap Party, no matter what size or theme, can benefit from early preparation. For a larger Swap Party, think about planning at least 6 to 8 weeks in advance. To lock in a high-profile venue, you may need to start thinking about securing it more than 8 weeks in advance. Smaller scale parties will take a little less time but bear in mind some elements such as promotional activities and printing can always take a little longer than expected to organise and produce.

1. **Decide on the type or theme of your Swap Party**
2. **Choose and book a venue**
3. **Hire equipment for the day**
4. **Consider using an emcee or special guest**
5. **Promote your Swap Party**
6. **Plan the day with a 'runsheets'**
7. **Recruit and brief volunteers**
8. **Share the day on social media**
9. **Get feedback from participants, staff and volunteers, for an evaluation**
10. **Evaluate and share event success**

Planet Ark with input from councils across the country has written this guide to provide you with ideas and tips for hosting a successful Big Aussie Swap Party, based on our experiences and learnings. We have tried to make this useful to councils and community groups holding Swap Parties of any size.

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## WHAT IS A SWAP PARTY?

A Swap Party is an event where participants bring good quality items they no longer want and **exchange them for other items**. Participants exchange their items for **tokens** and once all the items are displayed, participants browse and swap the tokens for items brought by other people.

Swap Parties generally work best when participants are given specific times for the different elements of the event. This includes: An 'arrival and registration' time when participants hand over their items in exchange for tokens. During this time they can browse (but not take) the items brought by others; an 'opening' time, when the swapping begins and participants can take items and an end time when the event is wrapped up.

## WHEN TO HOST A SWAP PARTY

Planet Ark invites your council, community group or workplace to hold a Big Aussie Swap Party any time during National Recycling Week or a few days on either side of the week.

There's one golden rule for being part of the Big Aussie Swap: your event needs to be open to the local community. If you are holding a Swap Party with a certain theme, like women's clothes, or children's books and toys, it's fine for the Swap to be open to just the relevant segment of the community.

Swap Parties come in all shapes and sizes - your Swap Party does not have to fit a particular mould, or adhere to everything in this guide.

## WHERE TO HOST A SWAP PARTY

The size and theme of the swap and what is available locally will determine the type of venue for the Swap Party. You may want a smaller space for a women's clothes swap with a private changing area or something like a school or community hall for a Mums & Bubs event. Libraries or university campuses are great choices for a book swap. Swap Parties can also be successfully held outdoors maybe as part of a larger sustainability event or in a local shopping mall where there is plenty of foot traffic.

## GETTING STARTED

After making the decision to host a Swap Party it's a good idea to organise an initial meeting with all relevant council staff members who will be involved in the organisation and promotion of the event. This is a good opportunity to allocate roles and responsibilities, collaborate on creative ideas it's also an opportunity to discuss:

- Picking the right venue and time
- Choosing the type of Swap Party
- Promoting the event
- Managing the event on the day







## THEMED SWAP PARTIES

Depending on who you're targeting, different types of Swap Parties may be more suitable for your participants. For example, if you were engaging more with the school community, you may wish to hold a toy swap or book swap. Another popular theme includes a clothes swap.

Whatever type of Swap Party you have, it's a good idea to give examples of what kind of items people can bring and be specific about what is acceptable in terms of quality and quantity.

## SWAP PARTY THEME IDEAS

- **Mums & Bubs** - kids clothes, maternity wear, baby equipment, toys
- **Fashion Bazaar** - clothes, shoes, bags, accessories. This could be targeted at women only or include clothes for men and kids
- **Books and Music** - books, comics, CDs/DVDs
- **Home Lovers** - household goods, soft furnishings, vintage wares
- **Home Grown** - a plant and produce swap



Your Swap Party can be as big or as little as you would like. It can also take any format that works best for you.

## SWAP PARTY EXAMPLES

Here are examples of different formats and timings for two different types of swap parties. These are examples only but may be useful to refer to when planning your event to suit your budget and resources.



### BOUTIQUE SWAP

The Boutique Swap is an event in an enclosed space such as a community hall, library or council chamber, with a limited number of participants eg 100 – 150, who may need to RSVP before the event. This type of event can be highly cost effective and can be tailored to specific audiences and items like women's clothes, kids toys and clothes or books, CDs and DVDs.

A short and sweet event works best for a Boutique Swap. Tailor the time of the event to suit your attendees, e.g. a kids event may work better during the day whereas a women's clothes event might work better in the evening.

Boutique program could look like :

- 1 hour before Swap opens - arrival, registration and browsing (eg 11am-12pm or 6-7pm)
- Swap opens – swapping, announcements, recycling/environmental information (eg 12-1pm or 7-8pm)
- 1 hour after Swap opens – event closes

#### Tips:

- Running a longer or all day event may have the issue that early birds may be disappointed if there are not enough items to swap
- Towards the end of the event if there are still many items left you may choose to give them away to attendees

### THE 'BIG' SWAP

The 'Big' Swap is a larger public place event perhaps held in local shopping mall or community space. Somewhere where you're more likely to get big crowds and lots of foot traffic.

You could add an information stall to this event, recycling collections for printer cartridges, mobile phones, batteries etc.

Find out more at:

[cartridges.planetark.org](http://cartridges.planetark.org)  
[mobilemuster.com.au](http://mobilemuster.com.au)

Think about having an emcee, entertainment or support from local businesses.

Use Planet Ark resources to advertise the event and attract local media. This includes:

- An adaptable media release  
[recyclingweek.planetark.org/media/media-releases.cfm](http://recyclingweek.planetark.org/media/media-releases.cfm)
- Text for Council newsletters etc  
[recyclingweek.planetark.org/councils/text.cfm](http://recyclingweek.planetark.org/councils/text.cfm)

This event could be slightly longer if you have other elements to the event other than just a Swap.

#### Tips

- Have enough tables and racks to display items well
- The more volunteers to help on the day the better
- Good signage and pre-event advertising are a must to get the word out





## PLANNING YOUR SWAP PARTY

### BUDGET

Depending on the size and theme of your event you may need to consider the following when planning your budget:

- Event infrastructure – eg. trestle tables, stalls, stage, audio equipment
- Exhibition fees – eg. for commissioning an exhibition on recycled art
- Venue hire – eg. if the venue is not on Council property
- Advertising and materials – eg. street banners, press advertising, signage
- Waste services – eg. general waste and recycling service
- Catering – eg. drinks or snacks if it's a more intimate event
- MC hire – eg. for professional services
- Entertainment hire – eg. for a band
- Staffing – eg. staff working after hours

**Get the most of your budget and Swap Party by brainstorming creative ideas with colleagues, prioritising publicity and planning your party early.**

### TIPS TO REDUCE COSTS

- Engage local media early to save on advertising costs, utilise Planet Ark's media releases and national publicity for National Recycling Week [recyclingweek.planetark.org/media/media-releases.cfm](https://recyclingweek.planetark.org/media/media-releases.cfm)
- Use Planet Ark's free adaptable posters and signage to help promote your event: [recyclingweek.planetark.org/bas/event\\_resources.cfm](https://recyclingweek.planetark.org/bas/event_resources.cfm)
- Engage local community groups like the Lions Club, Surf Life Saving, CWA or other charity organisation to help get volunteers for the event and raise funds for them by charging a gold coin or note donation at the door
- Co-host the event with a local business who may be able to provide a space, volunteers or catering for the event



‘Rock, Paper, Scissors’, ‘pick a number’ or drawing names from a hat are fun and fair ways of deciding who gets to keep an item if more than one person wants it.



## RUNNING THE SWAP

### SWAP PARTY RULES

It's important to set some ground rules and make them clear to participants and staff so that **expectations are managed**. Some rules involve what participants can bring, how many items will be accepted, the duration of the party and what happens if two people want the same item.

Send the rules and parameters for your Swap Party around to staff and volunteers before the event. It can be useful to have a printed rule sheet on hand at the table where items are handed in, to help explain the system to punters. A generic Swap Party Rules sheet has been produced by Planet Ark and is available for download at [RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org/CouncilSwap](https://www.recyclingweek.org.au/planet-ark/councilswap). This can be printed and displayed at the event.

### AVOIDING LEFTOVERS

Carrying out a few key steps helps to ensure the swap process runs smoothly and that all goods have a place at the end of the Swap Party:

- **Limit the number of items** people can bring, this helps to reassure that people don't bring an excessive amount and use the party as a way to offload junk
- **Specify that people bring quality items only** and reinforce this by letting them know that their items will be checked

- After the party dies down, **consider giving the items away** without exchanging for tokens. This works well for larger swaps in open public spaces as passers-by can join in, browse for items and take them away for free
- Have a backup plan for leftover items by contacting local charities like Vinnies or the Salvation Army to let them know you will be **donating leftover items**. Ensure charities that the items will be of quality and think about post-party operations such as **transporting the items** to the charity

In previous years, the City of Sydney has used the above rules and in all cases, the organisers have been left with just a small carry bag worth of items, which they have donated to charity.

### TOKEN SYSTEM

Tokens are given to participants in exchange for the items they bring in. Swappers then redeem their tokens to claim other items.

1 token = 1 item, unless you have a number of small items you might want to bundle for the value of 1 token. On our BAS event [resources page](#) you can print out tokens and table signage for free.



## EVENT MANAGEMENT AND EQUIPMENT

Here's a handy checklist to consider when planning your event:

- Tables** - and lots of them to display items well and a registration desk for arrivals and token collections. Think about table clothes for visual appeal and marquees for outdoor swaps
- Clothes racks** - clothes can be browsed more easily on hanging racks and avoids having to tidy up piles on tables. Racks can be categorised and labelled.
- Bags** - many people will have bags which they have brought items in. However it may be handy to have a collection of reusable bags if needed. Put a call out for reusable bag donations.
- Emcee and spokesperson** - it's a good idea to have a host to get the party started, make announcements, add humour and keep things on time. This could be a colleague or local personality. Maybe involve the Mayor to kick off the vent and swap an item.
- Staff & Volunteers** - ensure you have enough people on the day and they're well briefed on the Swap Party rules and their roles and responsibilities
- Forms** - make sure any venue hire application forms, risk assessment and WH&S requirements are completed well ahead of the event date
- Waste & recycling** - plan ahead for dealing with event waste, having enough clearly labeled recycling bins and general waste bins. Download our recycling signage at [businessrecycling.com.au/research/signage.cfm](https://businessrecycling.com.au/research/signage.cfm)



## COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Planet Ark makes it easy for you to promote your Swap Party by providing ready-made pieces of artwork and media templates, which help get you started with the process. However, it still pays to plan your promotional activities well in advance to maximise coverage and exposure. Planning early will also give you time to think of ideas which don't necessarily cost a lot in budget, but may require some time to put together.

## MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

Use Planet Ark's media release template and build on it by thinking of creative ways to publicise the Swap Party. Pitch your stories to the local media early. For example, is there a local celebrity you can involve? If so, you can ask them for a quote to include in the press release, donate an item, or even better – invite them to participate on the day.

Attract media interest by highlighting some of the unique and wonderful items people can hope to find.

## CROWD CONTROL

Swap Parties are usually crowded at the beginning of the party. Some swaps can be extremely busy in the first 15 mins and tend to peter out soon after. A Swap Party has a similar vibe to a sale, ensure your staff and volunteers are briefed to manage a crowd of people presenting items and tokens. Because of the fun nature of Swap Parties, people are generally in great spirits and are self-moderating on the day. Nonetheless, it's a good idea to **ensure your staff and volunteers are briefed to expect and manage a crowd of people** presenting items and tokens.

## REGISTER YOUR EVENT

We need to know your event is part of National Recycling Week and don't miss out on people searching for local events on our website. Register your Swap Party at [recyclingweek.planetark.org/councils/bas.cfm](https://recyclingweek.planetark.org/councils/bas.cfm) or call us on 1300 733 712. For Councils, other NRW related events, like MRF tours, workshops etc can also be listed on the site.





## SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE DAY

Share the Swap Party on social media using the hashtags: #BigAussieSwap #SwapParty and #NationalRecyclingWeek. Using Facebook Live or Instagram Stories is a great way to showcase the event along with good old photos. Please tag us on Facebook or Twitter @PlanetArk or on Instagram @OurPlanetArk.

## AFTER THE EVENT

Soon after the event, hold a debrief meeting with any stakeholders to evaluate outcomes while the event is still fresh in your mind.

Some information that is important to capture from the day may include:

- how many participants attended
- what new knowledge did participants gain from the event?
- how many visits did your website receive about the event
- how many tokens were given out

Plus any feedback, quotes from staff, volunteers and participants from the day, either formally or informally captured.

You can also benefit by publishing a follow up story using your communication channels to provide feedback to the public and stakeholders about the success of your Swap Party.

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR EVENT

We would love to hear how your event went, please email us at [recycling@planetark.org](mailto:recycling@planetark.org) and give us your feedback. Send us photos and any media you may have received.

Most of all we hope you have fun and your community engage in the Swap Party and become aware of environmental benefits.

**Happy Swapping!**