



**Part
5**

Safety in the Physical Space: The Venue

Acknowledgements

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The location, structure, and amenities of a dance venue greatly impact the safety and enjoyment of all participants. The following is a list of factors to consider when a site for a dance, music, or song event is needed. These items are generally non-controversial, and are not related to personal interaction. They don't require educating the community. Rather, use this as a checklist of concerns for leaders to be aware of and consider addressing. Not everything will apply to every group or event, and this list is especially aimed at dance events. Take what is useful. It is always good to maintain clear and friendly communications with the venue/site managers!

This is not an exhaustive list. We welcome additional ideas.

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Location and accessibility

- **Public transportation:** Are there bus lines or subway stations nearby?
- **Neighborhood, parking, and signage:** General safety, street lighting, and adequate parking? Is it easy to find? Are there any safety concerns if someone were to wander around a bit trying to find the event? Are there concerns about safety of vehicles left unattended? Some events include an expense in their budget to hire a security guard to watch the parking lot if the neighborhood is considered risky.

Structure and amenities—questions to consider when you initially visit a venue

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance**
 - Wheelchair-accessible parking space(s) available?
 - Ramp or lift for entry?
 - ADA bathrooms? These should be on the same level as the dance floor, unless there is elevator access.
- **Drinking water:** Let attendees know what to expect. What hydration will be available (or not)? What do they need to be responsible for bringing themselves?
- **Flooring:** Damage, slickness, obstructions, exposed nail heads, etc.? Sprung wood is best; wood over cement is hard on feet and knees.
- **HVAC:** Heat and cooling available? Do windows open? Can fans help ventilation and circulation of air?
- **Lighting, electrical capacity, and outlets:** Sufficient to meet needs? Make sure to consult with experienced musicians or sound techs to make sure the electrical capacity can accommodate the kinds of bands you plan to have.
- **Acoustics:** Are there echoes? These may be remedied with sound panels, banners, curtains. Dead spots? Solutions may involve adjusting how speakers are aimed. Can you measure decibel levels? There are government regulations regarding safe levels. Here are the U.S. [OSHA guidelines](#) for safe maximums.
- **Cost vs. capacity:** Is the venue affordable? Is the space adequate for band, dancers, caller, and sound system?
- **Storage:** Is there a secure space to keep your event materials (entry table items, such as cash box, flyers, etc.; sound system components) or will you need to transport all your stuff each time?

- **Kitchen availability:** Stove, refrigerator, sinks, fire extinguishers, etc.?
- **Chairs:** Does the venue have chairs? How many? Where are they stored? If not, do you have a way to provide chairs and/or seating options?
- **Hygiene:** Does the venue have sufficient bathroom and handwashing facilities for your expected group size? Are soap and towels provided and well-stocked, or will you need to bring your own supplies?
- **Sanitation, garbage cans, etc.:** Are there adequate garbage facilities? Make sure you know where to put trash and recycling. What is your group's responsibility vs. the venue's responsibility? Know expectations and requirements for cleanup and closing procedures that your group will need to manage. Know where to find materials for cleaning up spills and breaks (e.g., broken water bottle or potluck dish).
- **Staffing:** Does the venue require that a staff person (from their staff) be present? Do they require (or do you need) security personnel at the building or parking lot? Consider expenses for these people.

Event preparation

- **Insurance:** How will you ensure compliance? Insurance should be updated if venues are added. In addition to required liability insurance, consider insuring against your costs if you have to cancel. See below for more details regarding emergency planning and cancellation policy.
- **Equipment setup and safety:** How will you manage electrical cords, speaker stand location, etc.?
- **Local noise ordinance compliance** (especially in residential neighborhoods and late at night): What are the applicable ordinances?
- **Staff and volunteers:** How will you designate roles and responsibilities and individuals?
- **Food safety:** Allergies, especially tree nuts and peanuts. How will you note potential allergens? Label all food ingredients in case of allergies or other dietary restrictions.
- **Fragrance-free:** Consider making your event(s) fragrance-free. This is a health requirement for many potential attendees. It applies to hand soap in bathrooms, hand sanitizer, dish soap, etc. provided by the venue or the organizers as well as personal hygiene products of attendees. See additional guidance in the bonus guide later in this toolkit.
- Observe compliance with **trash/recycling/composting codes** of different municipalities and venues.

Contingency plans

- Store **contact information** for building managers on-site and off-site in case of a building emergency, such as broken pipes, lights or hot water not working, alarm going off, keys not working.
 - What is your template for a **cancellation policy**? In an emergency (or questionable conditions), there should be a clear policy to follow, rather than the evening's host needing to formulate a policy under pressure.
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Medical needs/emergencies

- Does the building provide a **first aid kit? Defibrillator**?
 - Where are building **evacuation procedures/diagrams** in case of emergency?
 - Does the building have a **fire alarm system**? When was it last inspected? Are fire extinguishers charged and available per local codes?
 - Establish procedures for potential **natural disasters/dangerous weather conditions** (wildfires, floods, tornadoes, blizzards, ice storms, earthquakes, etc.)
 - **Have an emergency plan:** Consider how far in advance the band, caller, and dancers may need to set out in your decisions about cancellation timing.
 - **Predictable cancellations:** blizzard warnings
 - **Last-minute cancellations:** e.g., if the building has a pipe leak and the dance can't happen. If there's a short-notice cancellation, will someone be able to put a sign up at the venue safely? Can the venue manager do that?
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Medical and emergency-related considerations from the organizational side

- Keep instructions readily available regarding **what to do if someone collapses** at the dance.
- **Locate defibrillator(s) (AED[s])** at the venue and identify individuals trained on how to use an AED (or at a minimum, what to do if someone has a heart attack, beyond calling 911).

- Make sure your event host or manager knows where **emergency contacts/procedures** are posted or available (perhaps with the first aid kit), including location info for EMTs so they will know
 - how to get to the hall
 - where to park
 - what building to come to (if part of a campus)
 - Know who in the community is a **medical professional**. Have a sign at entry saying “If you’re a medical professional who would be qualified and willing to assist in a medical emergency, please identify yourself to the organizers for the night.” Or ID emergency volunteers for the evening during early announcements.
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Additional Resources:

- <https://www.facebook.com/gareth.kiddier/posts/10219575769852513> has a good discussion of potential hazards.