
Event Planning Guide

Are you looking for ways to bring science activities to large groups of kids and families? One idea is to host an event that incorporates ZOOM's fun, hands-on science activities. Inside this guide, you'll find tips for getting started. See Host Events in the Resources section of the ZOOMsci Training for printable event activity sheets, signs, and an evaluation form.

1 Organize a Committee

Recruit fellow youth leaders, parents, and volunteer scientists or engineers to join your committee.

2 Host a Planning Meeting

Address the items below to plan the scope of your event, where to host it, which activities to select, and how many materials to collect.

- Discuss your desired outcome (e.g., that children will have fun doing science activities and will be more interested in science, both in and out of school).
- Identify your target audience. Who will be attending the event?
- Estimate the size of your event. What is the ideal number of attendees?
- Select a date.
- Decide how long the event should last.
- Determine whether morning, afternoon, or evening is best.
- Research and identify other events that may conflict.
- Create a list of possible venues.
- Determine how many volunteers you will need to facilitate activities and staff the event.
- Identify where you will find your volunteers.
- Set a budget to cover the cost of such things as activity materials, tablecloths, and T-shirts for the volunteers.
- Identify sources of funding.
- Plan how you'll promote your event.

3 Select a Venue

You can host an event just about anywhere—afterschool programs, science or children’s museums, schools, libraries, and youth and recreation centers are all possible locations. When choosing a venue, consider the following:

- Number of people the site can accommodate
- Parking facilities
- Handicap accessibility
- Bathroom facilities
- Access to electricity, water, and phone lines
- Access to tables, chairs, stanchions, sign-holders and other furniture or materials for the event (available on-site or rented off-site?)
- Insurance (provided by venue or you?)
- Other diversions to occupy visitors if the activity stations get too crowded
- Venue staff (security staff and parking attendants available?)
- Weather forecast for the day of the event

4 Create Your Event

The key to leading a successful event is creating smooth traffic flow. You can do this by carefully planning your materials and then setting them up appropriately on each table. By doing so, you’ll find you have more time to interact with kids as they try activities. As you create your event, consider these five elements: **activities, event space, activity stations, testing zones,** and **activity station facilitators.**

Activities

Fun, hands-on activities are the heart of ZOOM. ZOOM has identified eleven activities that work well at events and are fun for the whole family.

- **Gumdrop Dome**
- **Hovercraft**
- **Thaumatrope**
- **Super Golf Tower**
- **Puff Mobile**
- **Hoop Glider**
- **Straw Kazoo**
- **Film Canister Rocket**
- **Drops on a Penny**
- **Paper Tower**
- **Cup Tower**

Find printable handouts for these activities in the Host Events area of the Resources section of the ZOOMsci Training. Many are available in Spanish. You can use any of these activities or use your own activities from previous events. When selecting activities, consider the following:

- Can kids do the activity in 10 minutes or less?
- Is the activity age-appropriate?
(ZOOM activities are typically written for kids ages eight to eleven. Be sure to have extension ideas for the activities that both younger and older children will enjoy.)
- Is the outcome interesting and will kids think it's fun?
- Do the required materials fit your budget?
- Can kids take home their project or will that cause safety concerns?
- Is there enough variety among activities to engage a range of visitors? (With large crowds, we suggest offering at least four different activities.)

Note: ZOOM activities are available for educational purposes only, for sole use in free of charge, "in person" institutional and educational settings. This means that ZOOM activities may not be used under any circumstances for commercial purposes, and the activities are to be provided free of charge to the public.

Event Space

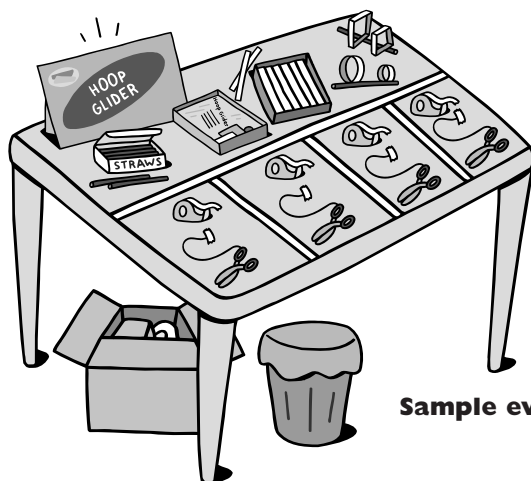
When preparing your event space, consider the following:

- Collect materials early.** ZOOM's activity sheets provide materials needed per child or group. Multiply by the number of kids you expect. Bring additional materials for activity extensions and unexpected crowds. Most supplies can be found at grocery, office supply, party, and craft stores.
- Set up multiple tables** of the same activity to avoid crowding.
- Position activity tables in high-traffic areas**, such as a main entrance, to attract crowds. Leave space between tables to prevent overcrowding.
- Arrange tables in U-shaped configurations** (using three or four tables). Facilitators can stand inside the "U" as they interact with visitors and restock supplies.
- For large crowds, set up stanchions** around the event area, to help control traffic flow.

Activity Stations

When setting up individual activity stations, consider the following:

- ❑ **Assign at least two facilitators per table** to guide children's exploration and to restock supplies as needed.
- ❑ **Set up each activity in its own area** with one or several six-foot tables; chairs or stools for the activity facilitators; and one activity sign per table.
- ❑ **Cover tables with colorful tablecloths.** For activities that involve water, use plastic tablecloths. Secure cloths with tape or clips so they won't move while kids are working.
- ❑ **Use masking tape to make "work stations"** on each table. This limits the number of visitors who can crowd around a table at one time and allows you to give instructions to a small group.
- ❑ **Create table signs** that identify the activity name or challenge. You can find printable signs for most ZOOM event activities in the Host Events area of the Resources section of the ZOOMsci Training. Print the signs on a color printer and mount them on poster board for display.
- ❑ **Create activity samples** to display on each table. These samples will attract kids' attention and provide models for visual learners.
- ❑ **Set out materials in several containers** so that kids can reach them easily.
- ❑ **Store extra supplies under the table**, so they will be readily available, but not in the way.
- ❑ **Place a trash container** under each table.
- ❑ **Photocopy activity handouts** on brightly colored paper and set them on the table in a basket or box. Encourage kids to take one home so they can continue experimenting.

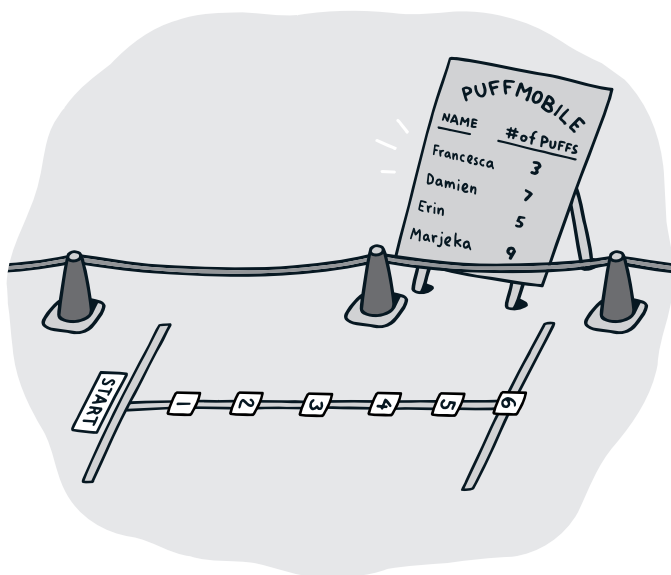


Sample event activity table

Testing Zone

Create a space where visitors can test the results of their designs. For example, if visitors build gliders from paper and plastic straws, set up a testing zone where they can measure the distance that the gliders travel. Testing zones will vary by activity, but here are some general guidelines.

- ❑ **Mark the area with a colorful Testing Zone sign.** You can print this sign from the Host Events area in the Resources section of the ZOOMsci Training.
- ❑ **Outline the testing zone with tape.** If you're measuring distance, create a start line and mark appropriate increments, such as one foot. If you're making a building area, indicate places to build and places to display final products.
- ❑ **Stock appropriate materials** on a table or work area near the testing zone.
- ❑ **Provide measuring tools.** For example, if the goal is to measure the distance a glider travels, tape one-foot increments on the floor. If the goal is to measure the height of a paper tower, provide yardsticks or rulers.
- ❑ **Set up a data-recording chart.** Use an easel and a large pad of paper to record children's first names and data results.
- ❑ **Encourage kids to change a variable** and try again after they test their designs. (A variable is an element of an experiment that when changed can affect the outcome in some way.)



Sample testing zone

Activity Station Facilitators

Your most valuable resource is your volunteers. Here is a checklist of things to keep in mind as you plan for their participation:

- ❑ **Invite scientists and engineers to volunteer**, in addition to your regular volunteer pool. Giving kids a chance to meet and work with professional scientists and engineers will make your event special. For ideas on how to find them, go to the Make Real-World Connections area of the Resources section in the ZOOMsci Training.
- ❑ **Assign two volunteers to facilitate each activity.** Consider asking responsible kids, in addition to adults, to staff tables.
- ❑ **Assign additional volunteers to welcome guests**, explain the day's events, answer questions, and be on hand as "floaters" to cover activity stations during assigned breaks and lunch time.
- ❑ **Train volunteers** by having them try out the activities before the event. Schedule a training one week prior to the event. At the training, provide snacks and drinks, explain the goals of the event, and invite volunteers to try the activities and share their ideas about ways to facilitate them.
- ❑ **Remind volunteers that facilitators who lead activities well:**
 - Are friendly and patient.
 - Encourage curiosity and exploration.
 - Ask questions to help kids notice things and share their ideas.
 - Let kids take the lead in handling materials.
 - Aren't afraid to say, "I don't know, but let's see if we can find out."
 - Have fun!
- ❑ **Show volunteers where each activity station will be set up** if you host the training in the same location as the event itself.
- ❑ **Provide volunteers with nametags** and matching T-shirts (or other identifiable outfits).
- ❑ **Create an event schedule**, complete with volunteers' assignments, break times, and meal times.
- ❑ **Schedule a day-of-event orientation** at least one hour before your event opens. At this orientation, give volunteers an overview of the day, assign them to their stations, provide schedules, and review bathroom locations, emergency exits, and other venue-specific information.
- ❑ **Thank volunteers.** At the end of the day, thank your volunteers for all their hard work.

NOTE: If your event is well publicized, attendance may be quite high. In this case, you may need to enlist the help of venue security and parking attendants, in addition to your volunteers. You may also need to check with your town or city to see if a police presence is required.

5 Connect to ZOOM

ZOOM is a popular children’s television show. Connecting your event to this series can generate excitement and bring people to your event. Here are some suggestions:

Use ZOOM colors

They are bright, fun, and used in all things ZOOM. The six colors in the ZOOM palette are orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and fuchsia. Here are some ideas for using these colors:

- Purchase colorful materials, like straws, paper, rubber bands, and paper clips.
- Use brightly colored tablecloths.
- Decorate signs and equipment with ZOOM colors.
- Have volunteers wear matching T-shirts in one of the colors.

Use ZOOM signs and handouts

Kids instantly recognize ZOOM’s colors and look. By displaying ZOOM signs on the tables and offering the reproducible activity instructions, kids will feel as though they are taking a part of ZOOM home with them.>

Note: The downloadable signs and handout PDFs may be printed out only as is without any modifications, and the copyright and other proprietary notices contained in these pieces may not be removed.

6 Evaluate

Find out what participants liked about your event and how you can improve it.

Customize and make copies of the Event Evaluation Form

(located under Host Events in the Resources section of the ZOOMsci Training).

Set up a table with copies of the evaluation form and pens.

Explain to children and their families that you need their help to improve your event and that their feedback is anonymous.

Place a box on the table for completed evaluation forms.