

Part One

The Basics



EXPECTATIONS



REALITY

Chapter 1

Why Host a Party

A Note for Advanced Readers: If you're ready to host your first party right now and want to get started immediately, skip ahead to *The Challenge* at the end of this chapter. Or, if you're still not sure about this whole "cocktail party" thing, keep reading. You'll learn about what happens at my parties and a few not-so-obvious reasons to host something like this.

When was the last time you made a new friend?

Maybe you do the same things with the same people every weekend. What else are you going to do? Maybe you've accepted the mindset of "I'm getting older. That's just how it is."

But another way to think is, "I'm getting older. Now is the best time to make a few new meaningful relationships."

It's never too late to make new friends. There are people out there just like you: awesome, smart, motivated people who are a little lonely after work. Or they're bored of their same routine. They want to meet new people too.

Making Friends as an Adult is Hard

It's hard to meet new people. It's even harder to make new friends and build relationships.

Science backs this up. I read about a study that found most American adults haven't made a new friend in over five years.* Another study showed that nearly half of U.S. adults report feeling lonely and left out. It has reached, they say, "epidemic levels."†

Perhaps you still keep in touch with friends now from various parts of your life, but you wish you had an easy way to see them more often. Maybe you want to connect with certain people in your career, but you don't want it to seem awkward. Or maybe you just want to make some new friends, like millions of others, and you want more out of life.

Well, heck yes. You can do all of those things. But it stinks that no one, and I mean NO ONE, teaches adults how to make new friends in a straightforward, practical manner – until now.

Over the past few years, I've heard from tons of people who shared similar frustrations. That was the case for a woman who came to one of my parties and was so inspired that she now hosts her own. I wrote this book to give people like Lindsey (and you) a roadmap to create new connections.

Lindsey's Story: A Decision That Changed Her Life

Lindsey Martin is a shy thirty-one-year-old. Originally from Texas, she's now been living in New York City for ten years. Her life changed when she made the decision to host her first party.

Lindsey owns and runs a digital marketing company. Her job requires a lot of screen time and she has little face time with her audience or customers. She found herself craving

* Zoya Gervis, "Why the average American hasn't made a new friend in 5 years," *New York Post*, May 9, 2019. <https://nypost.com/2019/05/09/why-the-average-american-hasnt-made-a-new-friend-in-5-years/> or www.party.pro/footnotes

† "Many Americans are lonely, and Gen Z most of all, study finds," CBS News, May 3, 2018. <https://cbsnews.com/news/many-americans-are-lonely-and-gen-z-most-of-all-study-finds/> or www.party.pro/footnotes

human connection and wanting to make new friends that would inspire her. She decided to throw a party where she could meet some of her readers and clients.

Lindsey started by hosting women's networking events. At the first one, she was nervous and felt like she had no idea what she was doing. But she followed the formula from an early draft of this book and did it anyway. Her first party was a success: more than fifteen guests came and many of them met new friends, received job leads, or found a workout buddy. People kept telling her how fun her party was and asking when the next one would be.

Today Lindsey's events are so popular that she has to limit the number of attendees. Others think of her more often, too. People invite her to birthday parties and gym workouts. Her social calendar is overflowing with opportunities that excite her and make her feel connected. She also developed true friendships. She even met one of her best friends at one of her parties, and together they started a business club that meets every month.

Lindsey finds value from hosting parties. She loves the feeling of helping people. She also developed new business relationships that have brought her cool projects, like a big book launch campaign for a fashion icon. All of this came from investing time in a single skill: hosting parties.

Lindsey's hosting experience is not without challenges. As an introvert, she doesn't feel natural commanding a room. But this self-awareness reminds her that it is hard for people to meet others when they're shy. By stepping out of her comfort zone to host, she gives her guests a chance to meet new people while simultaneously boosting her own confidence.

Most Networking Events Are Terrible

I've been to lots of terrible networking events. I'm sure you know the kind... I'd walk into a packed bar and stand there feeling like an outsider. The music was so loud that conversation was impossible. There was no easy way to meet people because nobody was

facilitating things or making introductions. I'd usually get a drink just to keep busy, then have forced "So what do you do?" conversations with a few random people.

I rarely made any exciting new connections at these kinds of events. Something about it was way too transactional and inauthentic. After an hour, I'd normally leave and swear off trying to "build my network" forever. These things were such a waste of time.

But it doesn't have to be that way!

What's Different About My Parties?

My party formula brings a totally different approach. It's definitely not a networking event, but compared to most casual gatherings with friends and colleagues, there's a *lot* of structure. For example:

- Everyone wears a name tag so it's easy to meet. (Chapter 5)
- You know who will be there beforehand. (Chapter 9)
- The party feels friendly and warm when you arrive. (Chapter 11)
- The host frequently facilitates introductions to help you start new conversations. (Chapter 12)

While you might fear imposing a structure like this onto a small party, I found that structure makes things easier. It liberates your guests from uncertainty. It lets them get comfortable and encourages them to chat and meet new people.

But my party formula is not so structured that it feels like a formal business meeting. Far from it. Here's a typical party:

Everyone comes into a room where the energy is high. I'm standing by the door and greet guests with a huge smile. They each get a name tag and another friend of mine shows them the makeshift bar area to fix a drink.

A few days earlier, I sent out a reminder message with short notes about many of the guests. That helps people recognize a few of the names on the tags to start conversations. There's a healthy air of curiosity among everyone to meet new people.

Soon I make a playful little noise to bring the room to attention. I ask everyone to circle up and then quickly lead a round of icebreakers to make newcomers feel included. These icebreakers happen fast. Everyone goes around the room and says their name, a little about what they do during the day, and something else interesting or fun about themselves. After the icebreaker, the room comes alive as new conversations form.

Guests pop around to meet a few different people. Thirty minutes later I lead another iteration of icebreakers. New people have arrived, and the room is getting more crowded.

Two hours fly by. Now, new friends who didn't know anyone when they arrived have met several interesting people whom they genuinely look forward to following up with. I warmly usher people out and some are surprised to get home before 10 p.m.

Attendees to my party are inspired by the people they met. They've never been to a cocktail party like that before. It reminds them that meeting new people feels great and they look forward to the next one.

The Benefits of Being the Host

At this point you're probably thinking: "Hosting something like that sounds great, but it also sounds like a lot of work. Is it actually worth it?" I'm biased, but the short answer is: YES! Here are three big ways that hosting cocktail parties will change your life:

1. Meet Awesome People

We know that approaching new people to develop a personal or business relationship can be intimidating. Even terrifying. I've avoided asking someone out for a friendly coffee or a drink because I was afraid of being rejected. I thought, *What if they say no?*

Then I found a solution: Invite them to my party. Compared to a dinner or a coffee meeting, a cocktail party is a fun way to get to know somebody. It is a small commitment and an easy invitation to say yes to.

After asking hundreds of people, I've consistently received a positive response to the question, "Can I invite you to my next cocktail party?" Everyone appreciates being invited to a party.

2. Boost Your Reputation

I don't know how to say this without it sounding like a power grab, so I'll just say it: Hosting parties makes you more popular. For me, cocktail parties have led to business opportunities (like new clients), introductions (like amazing friends), and invitations (like fun events).

The same thing will happen to you. Here's how it works: You'll get introduced to friends of friends as someone who hosts a great party. Everyone wants to know someone like this. Because you're the one who has the courage to bring people together, you'll start to build your reputation as a natural connector. You'll get introduced to interesting people – sometimes when you least expect it. It's one of the most surprising follow-on benefits new hosts tell me about.



3. Strengthen Relationships

Have you ever wondered what your old friends are doing? Or how about your acquaintances or colleagues at work to whom you say, “We should hang out!” but then never actually do? Hosting a party makes it easy to hang out with people like this.

Compare the numbers: Coffee meetings are one-on-one and take about an hour. Dinner parties often have four to eight guests and can last an entire evening. But a 2-hour cocktail party lets you connect with fifteen people all at once. In the time it takes to watch a movie, you can improve your relationships with a room full of people. It is the most efficient and effective way I’ve found to strengthen many different connections.

The Strength of Weak Ties

You’ll be exposed to new opportunities – ones you maybe can’t even imagine – when you host parties. Research shows that most people find out about new jobs and opportunities through “weak ties”—the people we see occasionally, perhaps only once or twice a year.

Sociologist Mark Granovetter coined the term in his 1973 paper, *The Strength of Weak Ties*. According to *Wired*, Granovetter noted that “people were nearly three times as likely to have found their job through a ‘personal contact’ than through an advertisement, headhunter, or other ‘formal means.’”*

* Jonah Lehrer, “Weak Ties, Twitter and Revolution,” *Wired*, Sept. 29, 2010. www.wired.com/2010/09/weak-ties-twitter-and-revolutions/ or www.party.pro/footnotes

Referencing the same study, *Business Insider* reported that “acquaintances are more likely to know something you don’t. They represent social power—and the more acquaintances you have, the more powerful you are.”*

Your Guests Will Benefit, Too

This party formula works because it benefits everyone who attends. You’ll give real value to the friends, acquaintances, and colleagues you invite when you help them meet new people. Creating new connections is one of the most impactful and generous things you can do for another person.

A few guests from one of my parties later shared the direct ways they benefitted by attending:

- Amy Ling Lin, owner of several nail salons, met a consultant who she then hired to help grow her sales.
- Ben Fisher, a product designer and Shopify consultant, was invited to an immersive classical music concert after he met the organizer. He called it the highlight of his year.
- Richard Murray, a financial advisor, landed a big new investment account.

Who knows what connections your guests will make at your parties! I’m still waiting to introduce two people who fall in love and get married. Maybe you’ll pull it off before I do.

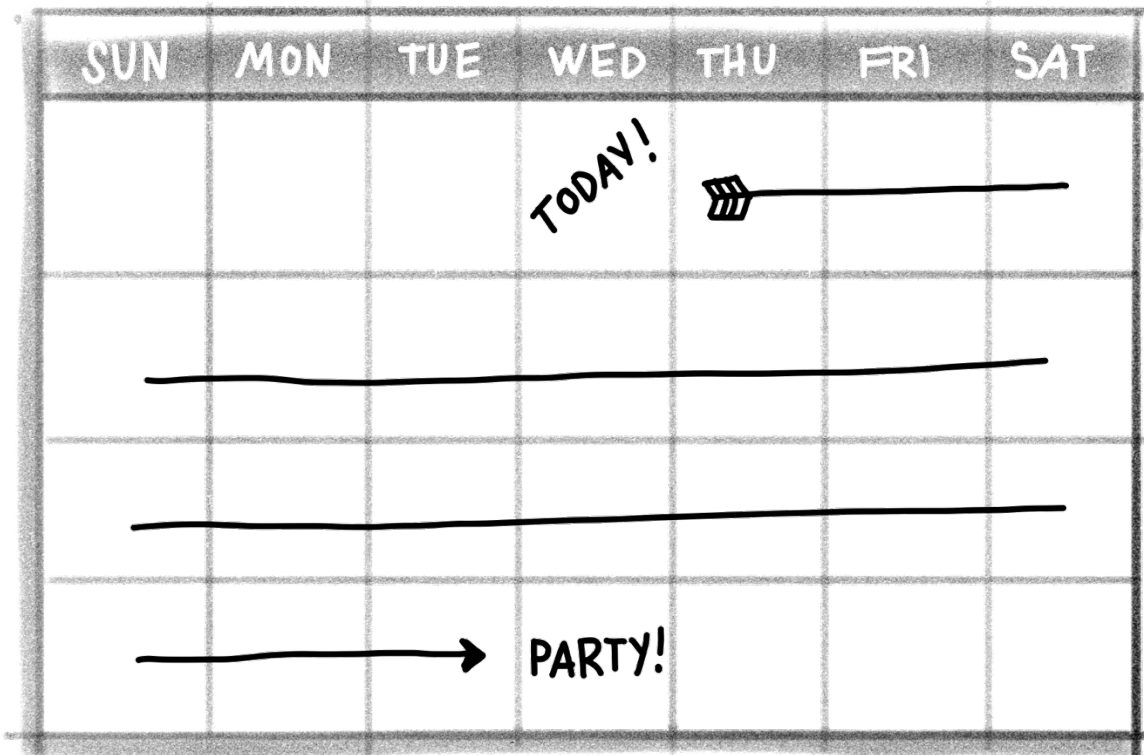
The Challenge

* Aimee Groth, “Gladwell On Why We’re Connected To More Powerful People Than We Think,” *Business Insider*, July 14, 2011. www.businessinsider.com/malcolm-gladwell-tipping-point-connectors-2011-7 or www.party.pro/footnotes

Before we get into the nitty gritty of party hosting and exactly how to do it, I want you to take up my challenge. It's simple:

Commit to hosting your first party three weeks from now.

Pick a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday night. Set the date and put it in your calendar. You'll learn why these days work best in chapter 2. For now, simply make the commitment and let your party-hosting adventure officially begin.



Pick a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday night three weeks from now and save it on your calendar.

A Message for Skeptics

Perhaps you're still a bit skeptical. Some people wonder what will happen if nobody shows up, especially on a Tuesday night. They worry that their party will be boring, people will leave early, and then their friends will think less of them. *(This will not happen, I promise.)*

Some feel too introverted to face such a daunting task. They think that hosting a party takes too much work, it is too much stress, or they're too busy to do it during the week. They worry it will be expensive and cost hundreds of dollars. *(It won't.)*

Just thinking about this challenge and who you should invite might make you feel vulnerable.

Look, I've felt all of those things, and I understand where you're coming from. I also know that there comes a time to say, "Screw it," and just do it.

It's OK to be nervous about throwing a party. Use this book as an excuse to host your first one, then blame me if it goes poorly. Really. Say this when you invite people later: "I'm reading a book about how to host a happy hour. I've never done one before and now I want to try it out." Or say, "This guy Nick that I saw on the internet always posts about these 2-hour cocktail parties." This gives you some space to practice and an easy punching bag (me) if anything is a little awkward.

For now, just commit to hosting a small cocktail party for a few of your friends. Focus only on this first party using the examples in this book.

Parties aren't hard to throw. If you want to become a better host, you can. I felt like a total amateur at the start and so did everyone else I've helped. I've got your back now.

In the next chapter we'll dig into the details.

A Note about the Phrase "Cocktail Party"

The phrase "cocktail party" is the best that I've found to quickly describe the atmosphere that these events are meant to create. Cocktail parties have always been small events for people to get together and socialize in a fun way. The cocktails and snacks are only there to set the scene.

It's never been about the drinks—it's always been about the people.

In the first few years of hosting my gatherings, I didn't drink alcohol. I hosted cocktail parties but didn't actually know how to make a cocktail. And you know what? It didn't matter. People weren't coming to my events for fancy drinks. They still don't.

Throughout this book I'll use terms like cocktail party and event and gathering interchangeably. You could also call it a mixer, a get-together, a happy hour, or whatever term feels natural and appropriate to you. They all convey the same idea with the same purpose and results.



CHAPTER CHECKLIST

- Accept my challenge and plan to host your first party three weeks from now.
- If you want an accountability partner, email the date you picked for your first party to nick@party.pro. I'll try to check in with you along the way.