
Tips for Holding a Screening and House Party



If you liked *The Story of Stuff* and the message it conveys, we invite you to share it with your community by showing the film at a house party (or at a classroom, church group, neighborhood association or other event).

A house party is a party at your house or a friend's house that you can use as an opportunity for education and activism. The more of us who see *The Story of Stuff*, the better chance we have of transforming our culture of consumption and waste into a culture that prioritizes social and ecological well-being. And we know from making the film that if it's going to have an impact, it has to be fun. So, let's party! Here are some tips for holding a house party to screen *The Story of Stuff*.



Planning your house party

If you're holding a house party, good planning will make it less stressful for you and more fun for everyone. Depending on when, where, and how you organize the gathering, you may need to modify these steps. Here are some ideas:

- **Think about your goals:** OUR goal is to get as many people as possible to see *The Story of Stuff* in hopes that we can inspire people to act, and then, of course, to change the way our society extracts resources, makes stuff, consumes it, and lets it go. If you liked the film, we guess that is your ultimate goal too.

But having a clear more immediately achievable goal will help to make your house party or event effective and give you that party afterglow once the guests have gone. Do you want to inspire your guests to start thinking about current methods of production and consumption? To join a campaign or start a new community project? To find connections between an existing local campaign and global issues? To figure out how to prioritize values other than consumption during the holiday season? Do you want to raise money for a campaign or program geared toward sustainability?* Do you want to collect signatures to convince your town council to legislate for Zero Waste? Or maybe you just want to see the darn movie! Whatever the case, giving it a little advance thought will help the party run smoothly and will help inspire your guests to take action when the party's over.

- * We consider fundraising by or for like-minded educational and non-profit groups at events where *The Story of Stuff* is shown to be perfectly legit, just let us know because we like to hear how *Story of Stuff* is being used.
- **Choose a date and time:** Be sure there are no major conflicts on your chosen date such as large community events, demonstrations, other film screenings or organizational meetings. Give your guests two-to-three weeks' notice, and allow yourself the time to make it happen.
- **Make an invitation list:** Your party can be a gathering of close friends and family; a gathering of neighbors, co-workers, and colleagues; a public event; or a mix of all of the above. Remember, one goal of the party is to generate discussion; having people with diverse perspectives is a way to ensure a lively debate!

Two to three weeks before the party

- Mail [Invitations](#)
- Reserve any necessary space or equipment
- Make sure you have the movie in a viewable format. Will you be showing a small crowd on your computer screen? Projecting it onto a wall? Download the movie or order a DVD, whichever format works for your space and equipment.
- If you're interested in discussing specific issues—like how to get toxic flame retardants out of household products, or how to promote local green jobs—call an organization working on these issues in advance. Ask them what upcoming opportunities there are to get involved. Request brochures, petitions, fact sheets or other material to be sent to you for distribution at the meeting.
- Look over the [House Party Activities](#) and [Discussion Questions](#) we've dreamed up and make sure you'll have whatever materials you'll need. Better yet, dream up your own activities!

One to two weeks before the party

- Plan your menu and get the snacks, drinks and supplies. Sometimes local businesses are happy to make donations of food or supplies to non-profit events, but they often need requests weeks in advance.
- Begin to prepare your own presentation, if you'll be giving one, and think about how to best facilitate any activities you might do.
- Make copies of any fliers, sign-up sheets and any other materials you want to provide.
- Make follow-up calls to ensure people who received your invitations and ask if they'll be coming.

The week of the party

- Make one last follow-up call to people who said they'd attend and those who said they might.
- Do a trial run of the DVD or downloaded movie to make sure it works. This will give you time to borrow a DVD player and TV if needed.

The day of the party

- Clean the house—or don't, depending on how much garbage you want to have for your activities. (Seriously—some of the activities we've dreamed up involve scavenging in garbage cans and collecting STUFF around the house. If you plan to do these activities, make sure your guests will only go through the stuff you feel comfortable about. You may want to close off some rooms and open others, for example...When you look at the [House Party Activities](#), you'll see what we mean...)

Supply checklist

- Name-tags and markers if your guests don't know each other
- Clipboards and pens for the sign in sheets so you have their contact information to follow up with people afterwards
- *Story of Stuff* materials (the DVD, fliers, discussion questions, and fact-sheets)
- Envelopes for donations if you plan to fundraise for an organization, project, or cause.
- A basket or jar to collect donations.

The Party!

- As guests arrive, welcome them and ask them to put on nametags. Of course, if the group is very familiar with each other, nametags won't be needed.
- If you're fundraising, you may decide to collect donations at the door or do a specific donation appeal at some point during the party. If you decide to take donations at the door, put out a jar with pens and envelopes and remind people about the donations as they arrive.
- Allow a good 15 to 20 minutes for mingling, introductions, and snacking.
- As the host, welcome everyone to the party, thank them for coming and give a brief introduction to why the party is being held, what the movie's about, any things you want them to keep in mind while watching the film. If you're doing a discussion activity that requires a before-and-after, do the before part now.
- Welcome everyone to grab some food and get comfortable where the movie will be shown. Allow some time for people to chat and settle in, and then, without further ado, show the movie.
- After the movie, people will want to talk. Allow people to get up, get more food, send some text messages to each other, use the bathroom, and all that. Then guide them into a discussion and some activities.

- The discussion may take care of itself, or you may want to draw from the list of **Discussion Questions** we've provided. Likewise with the **House Party Activities**. Remember, extraction, production, and consumption are serious subjects, and—surprise!—they're also subjects that SOME people find just a little dull or overwhelming. Anything you can do to lighten the discussion and make it fun without diminishing its importance—and the importance of taking action—will help achieve of our shared goal of changing the world.

Wrap-up and follow-up

- Thank everyone for coming and encourage them to host a *The Story of Stuff* house party of their own and to refer friends to the website.
- Take out the recycling, composting and the trash. And think about where it all goes, eh?
- If you're a thank-you-note-type-of-person, send thank-you notes or emails to everyone who attended your party. Or give folks a call a month down the road and ask them what they've done since the party to change the culture of consumption. A little friendly encouragement can go a long way.