



# Holding a Tournament

There are many sports and games that can be used as a tournament fundraiser. Some examples are:

- Softball
- Kickball
- Corn hole

## Fundamentals

- Pick a date and location.  
**Important:** If using a park or other public location, contact city officials to confirm availability and complete any necessary permits.
- Set a goal for how much you would like to raise. This will help you determine your entry fee.
- Set SMART goals. Your goals need to be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and timely to help guide your efforts. Examples of good SMART goals for your tournament are:
  - Certain number of registrants
  - Certain amount of money raised
- Assemble a planning committee to help with PR & marketing, recruiting, hospitality, volunteers, etc..
  - Rotate members of the committee through the years so that people don't burn out and others can bring fresh ideas to the event.
  - MP support is the lynchpin, they need to be onboard to get others onboard.
- Choose a theme and tournament name.
- Build a budget. Set a budget and keep careful track of it so you know what the tournament is costing you as planning progresses. The last thing you want to do is get to post-tournament stage and learn that the race has cost your nonprofit money.
- Obtain sponsors for snacks, beverages, prizes, and entertainment.
  - Update the Northwestern Mutual Sponsorship Package template to fit your event.

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- Map out and practice welcoming guests to ensure the check-in process, check-out process, food, and service are not confusing or disappointing.

### Promote Your Event

- Put tournament details on your ALSF fundraising page.
- Use Northwestern Mutual's EventBrite account to create registration for tournament participants. Contact Jodi Nolte at [jodinolte@northwesternmutual.com](mailto:jodinolte@northwesternmutual.com) to request access.
- Promote your tournament via social media using Hearsay and use the Northwestern Mutual email template to invite participants.

### Tournament Details

- Select your game and then decide the type of tournament you want to hold:
  - **Single elimination:** Once a team loses, they are eliminated from the tournament. The winner continues by playing the next match against the winner of the other match.  
*Note:* Using this method, half of the teams will be eliminated during the first round.
  - **Double elimination:** After losing two matches a team is disqualified. Once the first round is over, the winners go to one column and losers go to a second column. In the second round, winners play against losers.
  - **Round robin:** All team must play against each other, and the team who has the most winning matches is the tournament winner.
  - **Round robin + single elimination:** This is called a playoff. All teams play against each other. Based on the number of wins, several top performing teams are chosen to enter the playoffs. For example, of twenty teams, the top six are chosen for the playoffs. Using single elimination play, the game is played until the winner is crowned.
- Provide equipment for every player. For example, for a corn hole tournament you need to provide:
  - Boards
  - Bags
  - Score board
  - Tape for marking pitching boxes
- Tournament rules. Use official rules for the type of game you are playing at the tournament.

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- Setup the tournament. It is recommended to setup the court and all necessary accessories one day prior to the tournament.
  - Boards and bags, or bats and balls.  
*Tip:* Have backup equipment in case of equipment failures.
  - Scoreboards. Setup behind players and outside of playing field.  
*Tip:* For corn hole, the number of scoreboards needed is equal to the number of active games.
  - Brackets. Prepare and print the tournament brackets.
  - Form teams. This is only necessary if you allowed individual players to register and players did not register as teams.

### Start tournament

- Explain the rules. Dedicate at least 15 – 30 minutes before starting the tournament to explain the rules to each player.
- Introduce tournament referees. Dedicate 5 – 10 minutes to introduce the tournament judges and explain their role during the tournament.
- Choose who is going to play the first round. You can draw from a hat or flip a coin.
- First throw. Each referee should flip a coin to decide which team goes first.
- No delays. Make sure that at any time somebody is playing.
- Award the winner. When the tournament ends, announce the winners and award prizes.

### Post-event

- Thank participants and send out surveys. During the week after the tournament, email all of your participants thanking them for taking part in your event, inviting them back next year, and letting them know when registration will be open. You should also include a link to a post-run survey to get feedback about what they liked, disliked, and what they'd like to see done differently. This feedback is crucial, especially for a new tournament!