

MALI RISING FOUNDATION

HOUSE PARTY TOOLKIT



WHAT IS A HOUSE PARTY?

A house party is a quick and informal way to build support for Mali Rising's students. House parties are totally flexible – they don't even need to be in your house or a party! You could host a picnic at the park or cocktail hour at a local pub...but most people find it fun to have a gathering in their home or yard.

What matters is that you invite folks to attend, and tell them why you care about the work Mali Rising does to empower Mali's kids through education. You then leave them with an easy way to donate and/or get more involved with the work.

The format can be as formal or informal as you like. You can give a short introduction to the work, you can invite Mali Rising staff to speak to your friends, or you can show a short, inspiring video to tell the story...or all three!

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE HOUSE PARTIES?

Our overall house party goal this year is to host at least 10 house parties to raise a total of at least \$5,000 to purchase 500 textbooks for our students. We picked this goal because the need is HUGE and it is easy for your guests to understand – could you learn a foreign language or algebra without a textbook!? Your house party will help us double the number of textbooks we can deliver this year! See page 11 for more on the textbook need. However, if you want to raise funds for a different need, just let us know.

HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH A PARTY?

First, read through this toolkit to get a general vision of what you want to do. Next, let Merritt at Mali Rising know you are ready to plan your house party (at merritt@malirisingfdn.org). She can help you with all the details and make sure you feel confident.

WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT?

- A FAQ to help you as you plan your party.
- A fear-reducing Fundraising Primer
- A House Party Checklist to make it super-simple to host a great event.
- A sample agenda for your party, but feel free to edit this as you see fit.
- Sample email invite for you to personalize.
- Sample thank you email for post-party gratitude to your guests.
- Malian recipes, just in case you want to experiment with them for your party.
- A fact sheet on the need for textbooks in Malian schools

A HOUSE PARTY IS:

- Quick to organize
- Volunteer-driven
- Two-hours or less
- A fundraiser and a friend raiser
- Held in a home or community space
- Flexible
- Fun

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What kind of party should I host?

A. It is entirely up to you! People have hosted sit down dinners, casual Malian-inspired buffets, wine and cheese parings, or picnic outings. If your friends love dessert, just do dessert. If you have a cocktail crowd, fix a fun cocktail and offer up some cheese and crackers. Set up your party in a way that makes you happy and will make your guests happy.

Q. How big does my party need to be?

A. There is no “right” size for a house party. We suggest inviting at least 10 to 20 friends if you want a more intimate event, but some people like larger garden party type events. Successful house parties usually are on the order of 8 to 50 people...so you can see there is no one right size. Remember to keep COVID safety in mind for yourself and your guests.

Q. What if I don't know everything about Mali Rising's work!?

A. You absolutely do not need to be an expert! You can use this toolkit and our website to learn a little more if you are nervous, but what people will want to know is why you support Mali Rising personally. Often people focus on just one or two program areas that really speak to them and share why that matters to you personally – you're an ambassador, not an expert. If you want an expert, Mali Rising staff are available to attend parties in the Utah area. We can also send you printed materials or videos you can use to share information with your guests.

Q. Who pays for food and drink?

A. The host pays for the event (all food and beverage costs) and handles all RSVPs.

Q. Will guests get a tax receipt for their donation?

A. Yes! As long as your guests provide their email or alternative contact information when they make their gift, we will send a prompt acknowledgement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONTINUED

Q. How do I best promote my house party?

A. Sample email text is included in this toolkit if you would like to do your invites via email. That same text could be used on an online system such as Evite, which can help with tracking RSVPs and reminders. Social media is also a great way to reach out to people and build a little buzz for your party. Of course, a personal invite is always the most powerful!

Q. How will my guests and I make our donations?

A. We will provide several alternatives for your guests to donate including a QR code guests can scan to donate. You may also want to have a laptop set up to allow people to access the donation link. Of course, if people would like to donate via check that is great too – we will provide you with a pre-addressed envelope for checks. If people would like to donate cash, you may collect that yourself and then make one donation online for the event total – if you do this your guests will NOT receive acknowledgement of their gift because we will not have a record of the individual gifts.

Q. Can you send a speaker to my event?

A. Yes....if you are in the Utah area. Just contact Merritt at merritt@malirisingfdn.org or coordinate scheduling and we will be there. If you are outside of the area, contact Merritt for alternative ideas.

A FEAR-REDUCING FUNDRAISING PRIMER

Mali Rising Foundation staff are here to help you with everything you need to get over the fear of fundraising! Reach out to Merritt at merritt@malirisingfdn.org or 801-810-4525. Here are a few key points to help you out, but feel free to call with any questions or concerns:

- We have various printed materials and videos available if you would like them at your event.
- It may be easiest to focus on raising funds for textbooks (see page X for a primer) because this is an easy need for your guests to understand, and at just \$10 a piece most guests will feel like they can participate by sponsoring one or more books. We can even identify a specific school and/or grade for your books to go to so your guests can feel connected with the impact of their gifts.
- However, if you are passionate about another aspect of our work -- for example, girls' education, teacher training, or school construction -- by all means focus on that! We can break those down into fun sponsorship levels for your guests too.
- We can set up a personalized donation webpage for your party and then create a scannable QR code for you to give your guests. This will make it super easy for them to donate AND you will immediately be able to see your total donations raised! "Old-fashioned" methods like cash or checks are also welcome, of course.
- If you are in the Utah-area, Mali Rising staff are happy to attend your event and help with the presentation. No matter where you are, we can help you prepare.
- Terrified of the ask? Consider telling a short story about why YOU are inspired to give and end with something like this: "Our goal tonight is to raise \$500. This will provide 7th grade students at a remote village school with 50 science textbooks. I'm donating the first \$100 to get us started. Will you join me by making your own donation of \$50 to add 5 books to our delivery?"

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT HOUSE PARTY

4 TO 6 WEEKS OUT

- Pick a location, date, and time.
- Set your fundraising goal. A goal really helps motivate people to donate when they can see the finish line in sight. Mali Rising staff can help you set your goal if you are nervous. A good way to think about your goal is to break it down into the number of textbooks you want to deliver. A textbook is \$10, so if you think each guest or couple could donate \$20 and you have 15 guests/couples, your goal might be \$300. Alternately, if you have 10 guests/couples but you think each could donate \$100 your goal would be \$1,000.
- Email Merritt at merritt@malirisingfdn.org and share your date, location, and goal for your event. We can start a discussion about how staff can best help you out. Let us know what you would like in terms of materials so we can get them to you.
- Create your invitation list. Remember, not everyone will be able to make it so you'll want the list to be larger than your actual attendance goal.
- Send your invites out (see sample language on page 9). Use email, Evite, or the good old mail – use whatever is easiest for you and your guests.

2 TO 3 WEEKS OUT

- Plan your menu or beverages, if applicable. Want to make a Malian meal? See the recipes on page 10.
- Send quick follow up reminder to anyone who hasn't yet RSVPed. If possible, phone calls are a great way to really connect at this point.
- Make sure you have everything you need in terms of materials (brochures, giving links, etc.) from Mali Rising.

1 WEEK OUT

- Do shopping for food and drinks or other party fun you may need.
- Send a reminder to your confirmed guests with any last details (parking, etc.)...and this is a good time to send one last invite to anyone you still haven't heard back from.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT HOUSE PARTY CONT.

ON THE BIG DAY

- Prepare any food and beverage.
- Greet your guests and have fun.
- If you are speaking, practice what you will say once or twice – enough to feel a little more comfortable but not so much that you are robotic. Remember: these are your friends and you can't go wrong!

AFTER THE PARTY

- Send a personalized thank you to your guests. Sample text is provided on page X. If you'd like to use beautiful Mali Rising notecards, let us know and we'll provide them.
- Let us know how it went! Email us with any information such as how many attended and your total amount raised. If you have feedback to help us improve this toolkit, we would welcome that too.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR YOUR PARTY

Remember, each party is unique so change this general outline as you see fit!

- 6 - 6:30 PM** Greet your guests and give them some time to socialize over drinks.
- 6:30 PM** Briefly welcome your guests and remind them that evening is a fundraiser for Mali Rising. Let them know you'll be sharing more in a bit.
- 6:30-7:05 PM** Let the crowd continue to mingle and pass food or appetizers if applicable.
- 7:05 - 7:25 PM** Call your guests to attention and share with them your reason for hosting the house part to raise money/awareness for Mali Rising. This could be a short personal story about your connection to the cause. If there is a Mali Rising staff person in attendance you can introduce them to your guests. If not, you may want to show one of our videos (see links provided by Merritt) or talk a bit the need for textbooks (see page 11). Ask if there are any questions.
- Finally, ask your guests to donate. You can point out how they can scan the QR code or point them to the website. You may want to describe your donation goal for the evening to help people understand the group effort. If you are donating yourself or providing a matching gift, this is a great time to mention that. Make sure your guests know giving is not required, but is very much appreciated.
- 7:25 PM & ON** Have a great time bonding with your guests! Circulate to thank people. If you set up an official goal with Mali Rising, you may be able to check your donation page and report out your success to your guests by the end of the evening.

SAMPLE INVITE & THANK YOU

Feel free to edit these samples or start from scratch with your own message. We also have a few fun graphic invites available if you want to print and mail an invitation.

SAMPLE EMAIL INVITATION

Dear [Name],

Please join me for a party to support the students of Mali Rising Foundation. I'm passionate about the work Mali Rising does to bring life-changing education to kids in remote villages in West Africa, and I want to share the work with you.

When: [INSERT]

Where: [INSERT]

Refreshments will be served. Dress is casual.

You'll have the option to contribute to Mali Rising at the party using a check, cash, or online donation.

Please RSVP by [INSERT DATE]. If you're unable to make it but would like to show your support, donate online at malirisingfdn.org.

Hope to see you there!

[INSERT YOUR NAME]

SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for attending my house party in support of Mali Risings. Thanks to you, we raised a total of \$[INSERT]. That's a lot of textbooks for Mali's kids.

- A few of you asked me how you can stay involved, so here are a few suggestions:
- Follow Mali Rising on Facebook or Instagram to stay informed about our progress.
- Check out Mali Rising's new podcast -- Rising -- on Spotify.
- Volunteer at Mali Rising -- find options at malirisingfdn.org.

Thanks again for helping Mali's kids learn and grow,

[INSERT YOUR NAME]

WANT TO FEATURE MALIAN FOOD?

You do NOT need to do so, but some people find it fun to serve Malian food at their house party. If you decide to do this, one of the benefits is that the dishes lend themselves to big pots of food that are easy to prepare ahead of time. This page shares a few examples.

Mali is a big country with diverse people, so food habits vary around the country. In the southern area where Mali Rising's schools are located, most main dishes have a base of a starch (often fufu (mashed yams), rice, millet, etc.) covered in various stew-like sauces. The sauces are usually vegetable or peanut based, with chicken or goat where meat is available.

Traditionally, meals are eaten from a communal bowl using your right hand to scoop up a mix of the starch/grain and the sauce. Malians do this with grace; visiting Westerners tend to be a source of messy amusement for all when we try to do it.

You might not be up for eating with your hands, but you can certainly enjoy a taste of Mali at home. Try these recipes from our Executive Director's house party. Each was very popular. She failed to achieve pretty little candies with the sesame-honey sweet, but it still tasted divine. (She ended up with broken shards she served over ice cream. Not traditional but very tasty.)

- Poulet yassa -- This was the most popular dish of our Director's party. It is a tasty mix of chicken, onions, and lemons. She cut the onions in half and it was still a lot of onions. Serve with couscous or rice: <https://bit.ly/3k9yK1F>
- Tigadeguena -- Peanut sauce is a common, and very tasty, option in Mali. This recipe calls for chicken, but is easily modified it to be a vegetarian dish. Simply do not use the chicken but added more vegetables to the recipe (more sweet potatoes, carrots, etc.). Serve with couscous or rice to soak up the wonderful sauce: <https://bit.ly/3ELwPcS>
- Meni-menyong -- Sweets are not traditionally part of a meal in Mali (fruit is more common). It is tasty but isn't overwhelmingly sweet: <https://bit.ly/3LayR8Z>

In addition to this more traditional fare, Mali's food is influenced by the French, who colonized Mali for decades. Especially in the more developed areas, you'll see that influence in bread, sweet treats, and more.

WHY TEXTBOOKS?

This summer, Mali Rising supporters are coming together to provide much-needed textbooks for our students. Imagine learning algebra or a foreign language without a textbook – could you do it? Well, you shouldn't have to, and neither should Mali's kids. Together, this summer we will provide at least 500 textbooks for students in Mali Rising's schools. Learn more about why that matters so much.

THE PROBLEM

Many classrooms in Mali have no textbooks at all. Where textbooks do exist it is common to find three, five, or even six children sharing a book. One study found that on average, Mali classrooms had 1 book for every four children in the core subjects such as language and math (Government of Canada, 2019).

THE SOLUTION

Research shows that textbooks are a relatively low-cost/high-return investment for student achievement. One study showed that when classrooms have a textbook for each and every student, literacy scores increase by 5 to 20 percent! In fact, the Global Education Monitoring Report says that next to an engaged and skilled teacher, providing textbooks is the most effective way to increase learning.

YOU CAN HELP!

Your guests can provide a textbook to a school with a donation of just \$10. Textbooks last 6 to 8 years, so each book will help ten to twenty children learn and grow. Even one \$10 textbook makes a huge difference, and that impact can be multiplied:

- Donate a set of five textbooks, one book of each key subject -- French, grammar, math, English, natural sciences: \$50
- Gift textbooks in one key subject to an entire class of 50 students: \$500
- Deliver textbooks in one key subject to a whole school of 150 students: \$1,500

Whether your party can donate one book or 150 books, we will let you know where your books end up and how they are welcomed by the students and teachers.

Special note: Contact Merritt if you would like to direct your book donation to a particular school or grade. Class sizes and needs vary, so we can find a good fit for your interests and donation.

