

# Writing Tips from Ellen Cassedy

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## Book Party: 5 Steps to Success



A book party is an enjoyable way to get out the word. Follow these five steps and you can't go wrong:

### 1. The plan

**Ask a friend to host.** The emotional support is priceless, and you won't have to worry about cleaning up your own place. Instead you can focus on getting ready to present your book.

**Choose a convenient time.** Ours was Sunday afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

**Don't be afraid** too few people will come. Plan to go ahead regardless. A book party is great practice for talking about and reading from your book, and the contact with supportive listeners – no matter how many or how few – will supply you with energy and confidence for doing more.

**Don't worry** that *too many* people will come. If some guests have to stand, that's fine – and exciting!

## **2. The invitations**

**Send out email invitations** three or four weeks in advance.

- Subject heading: "Invitation to a book party."
- Keep it short. Include date, time, address, directions, and a link like this: "Books will be available for purchase at the party. If you if you can't make it, you can [order the book here](#)."
- Provide a brief description of the book, including a short blurb.
- Ask people to RSVP. This will help you plan the food. And once people have said they're coming, they're more likely to do so.

Divide up your list into batches to avoid spam filters.

**Also use Facebook, Twitter,** and local listservs to spread the word. (Rather than put the address of the party on these public notices, ask those interested to email you for directions.)

**Cast a wide net.** Don't be shy. Invite friends, neighbors, coworkers, family. Remember that sending out these notices is a way to let people know about your book, even if they don't come to the party.

**Don't panic** when you receive a flood of "Sorry, I can't come" messages. Those who *can't* come may tend to let you know right away. Those who *can* come may take longer.

**Follow up** with a reminder one week before the party.

### 3. At the party...

**Eat and greet.** Serve simple food and drinks. Dips, crackers, cookies, wine, water. Let people mill about before and after your talk. Introduce people to one another. It's a party!

**Plan a 20-minute program:** After 30 to 40 minutes of shmoozing, have a friend give a brief, informal introduction.

**Talk and read.** Try improvising a podium using a plant stand or resting a box on top of an end table. Briefly describe your book and how it came to be, then read a short selection. End on a particularly striking note.

**Q & A:** Take about four questions.

### 4. On to the signing!

Set up a small table with a stack of books for sale. How big a stack? Not so big as to be embarrassing, but enough to let guests know they're expected to

buy. While you sign, a friend can collect the money, cash or check. Be prepared to make change.

## **5. The end**

**After everyone leaves**, sit around and nibble leftovers while savoring a job well done.

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Ellen Cassedy is the author of *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2012). To see all of her Writing Tips, visit her website at [www.ellencassedy.com](http://www.ellencassedy.com).