



The Dean Neasham

HOUSE CONCERT HOST GUIDE

Hi! First of all, I am so happy that you're interested in hosting a house concert. I'm excited we have an opportunity to experience this together.

This guide will take you step-by-step through the method by which we'll organize the house concert.

It's important that you read this all the way through

– *even if you've hosted a house concert before* –

so that we're all on the same page as we start planning together.

At the end of reading through the guide, if all the parameters seem good to you, then I'll have a short list of questions for you that we'll use to pick a date for your house concert.

I hope this will inspire you and get you excited for what is guaranteed to be one of the most unforgettable things we do all year. Ready?

#1: The "House"

You can stage this house concert in a living room, backyard, back patio, small house, big house, condo, apartment (or clubhouse), or at your church. The point is that **the "house" can be any space you have access to** where your friends can gather, sit, and enjoy a concert.

The only requirement for the space is that everyone in attendance must be able to gather in the same space, *seated*, for the entirety of the hour-long concert.

Pre- and post-concert mingling can of course spill into other rooms or areas of the property, but I ask that for concert time, **everyone is gathered close and seated**, together, directly in front of where I'll be set up to perform. I've learned that seating around tables for the concert works against the creation of the intimate experience I aim to bring to the audience, so I ask that there be **no table seating** for the performance.

It's fine if there aren't enough chairs for everybody – carpet seating in a packed living room or blankets on the lawn in the backyard can work great as extra seating options.

#2: The Date

I will work with you to pick a date for your house concert. This is fun and exciting, and it's also a bit hectic on my end, as I am always juggling schedules to make this work. Please provide me with 3 possible weekend dates you might be considering, with #1 being your first choice. Some weeknight house concerts are feasible, so don't hesitate to host on a weeknight.

#3: The Guests

To create the best possible scenario for a successful show, I ask that you have a **minimum of 20-30 adults** in attendance.

There are two reasons I ask you have this minimum number of people at the show: 1) Fewer than 20 people and the concert doesn't feel like the **exciting event** it should be; and 2) In my donation-based concert model 20 or more adults contributing to donations and purchasing merchandise is what starts making it a **financially viable** night for me.

In my experience, making sure there is a minimum of 20 people there usually means that the host will need to invite a good deal more than 20. The typical scenario seems to be that about **half of those invited tend to actually come** to the event.

So, invite double the number of people you'd like to have at the concert. If you're aiming for 20, invite 40; and so on.

If you aren't sure you'll be able to get 20 adults to come on your own, you might "co-host" the show with a friend who also has a group of people to invite, and increase your overall attendance.

If your space can hold more people and you want to have more, then great, the more the merrier. If you have an idea for something bigger, I can absolutely do it, and **I'm eager to hear what you have in mind.**

Adults only, please

Because the show has a lot of quiet parts, and because it's essential that I'm able to create and maintain an uninterrupted focus on the performance for the whole concert, **I ask that there be no kids in attendance during the concert.**

That said, if it's that rare kid who can sit silently and listen to music for an uninterrupted hour, like a little grown-up, that's okay. Every child is different, but I've found that age 10 generally seems to be a rough line dividing those able to display good concert etiquette from those who may end up causing a distraction.

If you're in doubt, it's best to err on the side of caution. Having someone create a disturbance mid-show can significantly affect the audience's experience, which can in turn significantly affect my income. As much as I love kids (SO MUCH), this is my job. **Thanks for your understanding and cooperation with this detail!**

If you have kids or if you have friends who want to come but who would be unable to come if their small kids couldn't come along, I ask that you arrange to have a responsible adult take charge of the kids in a physically and acoustically separate space during the concert.

This could be a babysitter or a parent willing to volunteer for the duty, and they should take the kids to another room in the house – *a place that is sonically isolated from the performance space* – and keep them there for the entirety of the concert portion of the event. This works great, and of course the kids are more than welcome to hang out with everyone before and after the performance!

Also, if you think you'll have some sitting-quietly-and-listening kids in attendance, I've still found that a minimum number of **20 adults** is what makes for a viable event, so make sure to count the kiddos as "extras" when putting together your guest list.

#4: The Invitation

Invite a bunch of your friends! **I will provide you with some precise language that I'll need you to include in your invitations**; but besides that, I want you to have fun telling your friends why you want them to come to the awesome event you're hosting.

The language you should use in the invitations will read something like this:

This will be a donation-based concert. Please come prepared to make a donation to the artist at the conclusion of the show.

I do not specify a suggested donation amount for my house concerts.

The reasons for this are twofold:

- 1) In my experience, I do better financially at shows where people can donate what they are moved to in the moment, without any previous expectations.
- 2) Perhaps more importantly, if you have a friend who is cash-poor but a lover of music, it's important to me that they be able to enjoy the evening without feeling any pressure. While it is true that this is how I make my living, **sharing music with people is the most important thing.**

Occasionally I have hosts who prefer not to ask their guests for donations and prefer instead to pay an up-front guarantee for the show. Either way is fine, and I've done both ways many times. If this approach interests you, please let me know and we'll discuss the fee structure for scheduling a non-donation show.

Other invitation items

You may want to let your guests know you'll have drinks and snacks for them if that will be the case, or perhaps you'd like to ask everyone to bring a little something to share. This is entirely up to you, and is not a requirement for hosting a house concert.

Please be sure to ask your guests to RSVP in your invitations.

I've discovered that when guests are asked to RSVP, there is a much better turnout rate as opposed to a "come by if you can" approach.

#5: The Concert

So you've invited everyone, RSVPs are in, and you're ready for the show – here's how it goes down!

- I will arrive one hour before guests are scheduled to start arriving, in order to set up my equipment and do a soundcheck.

- Guests arrive at the time you and I have decided together that the event will begin. This is usually in the evening – but it could also be the afternoon if it’s a weekend. As guests arrive, **we all hang out and mingle for about an hour.**
- Then, after an hour of pre-concert hanging out, everyone gathers in the performance space, people find their seats, the host (that’s you!) gives a brief introduction, and then **I perform for about an hour.**
- As soon as I’ve played the last note of the concert, you get up front next to me with a vase or basket or box of some kind to make the **donation announcement.** It should go something like this:

“Thank you all for coming. I hope you enjoyed this as much as I did. I want to remind you that this is a donation-based concert. Your donations will all directly benefit our artist, and will show him our appreciation for this amazing experience he brought us. I’m going to leave this vessel right here and encourage you to give generously. Thanks again!”

- After that, we all hang out some more until the guests start heading home.

A note on the donations

It’s really important to me that we’re able to make it so **these concerts are possible for anyone to host**, and the way I do that is by doing the shows on a donation basis. But since the donations are how I earn my living and pay my expenses, it’s obviously super important that I have my host’s full enthusiasm behind that aspect of the event.

I can coach hosts on their donation speech, and I will make a point of going over this with you as we’re getting set up on the day of the concert. I’ll even give you a little cheat sheet of things to remember to say in case you get nervous and forget in the moment.

I’ve discovered that the success of the donations has a direct relationship to the enthusiasm of the speech the host gives at the conclusion of the concert.

I've also discovered that guests are always really receptive and super happy to be a part of supporting the unique and memorable event they've just experienced. It's kind of a big love-fest by the end of the night.

A note on the flow of the event, and an example schedule

I believe **it's really important that the pre-show mingling time is really right about an hour**. If it's shorter than an hour, then people don't have enough time to get comfortable; and if it's longer than an hour, then the focus of the event starts to get fuzzy.

It's one of the most fun nights of the year to be sure, but it's important to remember that fundamentally this isn't a party; it's a concert.

Let's say you want the performance to start at 7:30. In that example, here's how the schedule would go:

5:30 – I arrive and we do our setup

6:30 – guests arrive

7:30 – concert begins

8:30 – concert ends

And then of course we can all hang out afterward for as long as you'd like!

... and that's how we will organize an awesome house concert.

All these details – from the invitations, to the set-up, to the flow of the event – service the singular goal I have for this event: to create with you a truly unique and special night – an intimate concert experience, where magical memories and meaningful connections with your community will be made through music.

It's going to be awesome!

Questions for you

If all of the parameters I've outlined in this house concert host guide seem good to you, and you'd like to host a house concert, then the next step for you is to answer the list of questions on the following page.

Please answer ALL seven questions completely. Thanks!

- 1) In what city and state do you live?
- 2) What is the space you have in mind for the concert? (e.g., inside your house, an outdoor space, etc.)
- 3) Do you want to host a donation-based concert as described above, or do you want information about paying a guarantee for the show instead?
- 4) Do you think you'll be able to get a minimum of 20-30 adults to come? What is the total number of people you might expect to come?
- 5) Do you anticipate there will be children at the event? If yes, will you be able to provide a separate, supervised, sonically isolated space for them to go to for the entirety of the performance.
- 6) What is the best **email address** and **phone number** at which to reach you efficiently?

I can't wait to do a house concert with you!

-Dean