Host a Security Party

ACTIVIST CHECKLIST

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This copy was made on November 6, 2026. We update our guides often as threats change and as better ways to protect yourself become available. For the latest version, visit **activistchecklist.org/party/**

Most activists intend to do digital security and never get to it. A security party fixes that. Gather 3 to 15 people for 90 minutes, work through a checklist together (Essentials, Signal, ICE watch, or doxxing), and lean on each other for accountability. You don't need to be a security expert. Sample agenda, invite template, and host tips included.

People often don't need more information. They need support. That's what a security party helps with. It's a gathering to help people take steps to increase their digital security together.

We wrote this guide because we've hosted many security parties and seen how effective they can be. We hope you will too!

A lot of folks intend to get around to digital security one day. But, without accountability and support, it gets put at the bottom of the to-do list. **Doing it together means it actually happens.**

(Tip: You can get started right now by sending a message to a few friends with a couple proposed dates and see which works best for them.)

Security matters for our community

- **The threats are real and we can do things to protect ourselves.** We see the surveillance of activists and the repression of movements growing in our current political climate. We're facing increasing pressure from law enforcement, ICE, right-wing adversaries, and tech companies that get government demands for data. There are concrete steps you can take that really do lower the risk, and they're easier to stick with when you take them together with other people.
- **Security is collective.** It's not just about your personal security. Ask yourself: "If my devices and data were in the hands of the government, is my security strong enough to keep the people in my network safe?" **We need to do this together for it to work effectively.**
- **Safer people take bolder action.** Helping folks feel protected gives them the confidence to keep showing up.

What is a security party?

A **security party** is a gathering where folks work through digital security steps together. It can be 3 people at a kitchen table or 15 people at an organizing meeting.

What it's not: It's not a training. It's not a lecture. It's not a security expert telling everyone what to do. The Activist Checklist guides[1] do the teaching.

One-off or ongoing: A single party is great. A *series* is even better. Most crews need more than one session to really dig in, and a monthly or quarterly gathering helps folks actually finish. Set that expectation from the start: nobody is supposed to finish everything in one night.

Why it works:

- We are much more likely to do these steps if we have accountability and encouragement.
- It's more fun with a crew.
- It's easier to ask a question when the person next to you is also figuring it out.

- Most of these steps take 5 to 15 minutes once you sit down and do them. "Sit down and actually do it" is the part that rarely happens on its own.

Who can host a security party?

Anyone can host a security party. **You don't have to be a security expert.** You just have to be willing to gather a few people together and work through the guides on this site.

Design your party

Who to invite

- **Your organizing group, as its own session.** If you can do it during normal meeting time, you'll have much better attendance. But a separate gathering works too.
- **Your organizing group, as a short time block during existing meetings.** You could add 10 minutes to the end of every meeting. Pick one checklist to gradually complete together over time.
- **Your friend group.** Anyone who is politically engaged can get together for this.
- **Your co-workers.** If you do paid work that is politically targeted, you might do this with your co-workers.

Size, time, and place

- **Size:** 3 to 15 participants is the sweet spot. For bigger gatherings, aim for about 1 tech-savvy helper for every 5 participants. For 10+, consider a "floating helper" whose only job is to check in with each person and keep things moving.
- **Time:** 90 minutes is a good default. (Anywhere from 1 to 3 hours can work.)
- **Place:** Someone's home is the warmest setting. A community space, library, or union hall also works. You could even host it at a bar[2]. Virtual works fine too.

Ingredients for a good gathering

- **Food helps:** Having snacks is more than enough. And if you have energy to host a potluck/meal, that's great too. (If you host a meal, make sure the security work starts at a clear time otherwise the hanging out can take up the whole evening.)
- **Music:** Since there are long periods where people are silently working, we've seen that quiet background music without lyrics can help people stay focused. (But check with your group, as this can be overstimulating/distracting for some folks.)
- **Power:** Make sure there are extension cords and extra chargers available.
- **Internet access:** Make sure the place you pick has fast, reliable internet access.
- **Do something fun afterward:** Get dinner, watch a movie, hang out. It gives you something more exciting than security to look forward to.
- **Get creative:** Bring your creativity about how to invite your guest list, how to make it fun while they're working (gold stars, anybody?!), and how to celebrate them getting their security tightened up!

Sample invitation

> Hey! I'm hosting a security party at my place on [DATE] at [TIME]. It's a chill gathering where we all work through digital security steps together on our own devices: locking down our phones, setting up Signal properly, setting up alternatives to Google products, that kind of thing. Stuff most of us have been meaning to do forever and haven't. Bring your phone, your laptop if you can, and your charger. I'll have [SNACKS/FOOD/ETC]. Let me know if you can come.

Host your party

Your role as the convener

- **Invite people:** One-on-one texts work best. Blasts to your group are great too.
- **Get RSVPs:** Have people message you if they plan to join. This helps people follow through.
- **Send a reminder** the day before. (You can add folks who RSVP to a Signal group.)
- **Lightly facilitate:** You don't have to do much leading. The structure is laid out below. Folks mostly just need the accountability.

Pick a checklist

Pick a checklist to focus on. This is where you'll encourage folks to start. Some of the best options are:

- Security Essentials[3]: This is what most people do for their first security party.
- Signal Security Checklist[4]: Signal is only as secure as the way we configure it and use it.
- ICE Watch Security[5]: For crews doing ICE observation, rapid response, or adjacent work.
- Doxxing Defense[6]: For crews doing public-facing work and worried about right-wing bad actors.

Sample agenda (90 minutes)

Adjust to be shorter/longer based on your needs.

- **[10 mins] Welcome and settle in.** People arrive, grab snacks/food, chat.
- **[10 mins] Intros & Principles**
  - **Intros:** Let's go around and do brief intros: Name, pronouns, what brought you here, and one thing you want to learn or feel better about by the time we finish tonight.
  - **Principles:** We're here to take real action on digital security, together. A few principles for tonight:
    - **Start where you are.** No shame about what you have or haven't done before, or the tools you're currently using. We're all learning.
    - **Security is collective, not individual.** Even if you think your devices are already secure enough for your risk tolerance, ask yourself: Am I confident my devices are secure enough not to put anyone else at risk?
    - **Ask for help, and ask before you help.** Speak up when you're stuck. And when you're helping someone else, *ask before touching their device.* Walking them through it builds their confidence and keeps them in the driver's seat.
    - **Celebrate progress.** Call it out as you finish something (even small)! It helps everyone feel momentum.
  - **Wifi:** Share Wi-Fi info for folks working on laptops.
- **[60 mins] Work time**
  - **Everyone pulls up the relevant checklist** on their phone or laptop. Optionally you can print a couple copies of the checklist, or put the top level items on a flipchart/whiteboard.
  - **Have everyone pick the action they will start with.** Do a quick go-around so everyone knows what they will do first. Folks can start at the top (the checklists are already prioritized), or they can start with the item that feels more relevant or easiest for them.
  - **Light chatter is fine.** Knowing it's okay to talk helps people to feel free to ask questions. If conversations are getting distracting, encourage folks to refocus a bit.

    - **Check in on folks.** Spend a minute with each person to see if they need support. (Or, if you prefer, you can ask a tech-savvy buddy to play this role.) Encourage folks to celebrate out loud when they finish something.
- **[8 mins] Celebrations:** Have each person go around and share one or more of the following:
    - One thing they got done (or made progress on).
    - Something that they learned or something that surprised them.
    - How they're feeling now that they've done this.
- **[2 mins] Closing**
    - Encourage folks to think of themselves as ambassadors now. We're most secure when most people in our organizing networks have taken these steps. Find a few opportunities this week to talk to people about what you learned.
    - (Optional) Consider starting a Signal group and having everyone set a promise for what they'll do on their own time in the next week. Use the group to report back, celebrate progress, and ask questions.
    - (Optional) Ask if anyone else might be interested in hosting another security party.

Virtual gatherings

- You can use the chat for questions and answers.
- You may want to have folks come off mute occasionally for quick check-ins. This may interrupt people, but it helps keep the energy up.

Tips for a successful gathering

- **Don't try to finish everything.** Some steps take 5 minutes (turning on disappearing messages). Some will eat an hour (migrating to a password manager). That's fine. Finishing isn't the goal; actually starting is.
- **When something breaks, skip it.** An app will have updated, a 2FA code won't arrive, a phone will be too old for the latest iOS. Give yourself permission to say "let's come back to this one" and keep the energy moving.
- **Watch for the over-eager expert.** There's sometimes one person who shows up with a lot of opinions. Gently redirect: this isn't a training, and we're here to work on whatever feels doable right now. Pointing people to you and your helpers as the folks to ask can help keep things on track.
- **If you don't know the answer, say so.** You don't have to be the expert. "I don't know, let's look it up together" is a perfectly good answer.
- **If someone is really stuck, suggest switching to a different checklist item.** Momentum matters more than finishing in order.
- **Keep removing shame.** Many folks worry they're doing something wrong if they're not already using the "most secure" tool. Nothing builds confidence faster than acknowledging that their existing setup is a real starting point.

Tell us how it went!

Please let us know how it went! Use our contact page[7]. We want to hear what worked and what you learned so we can improve this guide for other hosts.

Resources

This guide builds on the CryptoParty[8] tradition. Folks have been gathering to help each other with digital security since 2012, and we owe a lot to the organizers who figured out what works. If you want to go deeper, these are the resources we've found most useful.

More on hosting security parties:

- The CryptoParty How-To[9]. The canonical community-maintained guide. Still the best single reference.
- CryptoParty: The Good Parts[10]. Lessons from 42+ NYC events. Short and funny.
- 7 Tips for Hosting a CryptoParty[11]. Practical and tactical.

If you want to step into more of a trainer role:

- How to Give a Digital Security Training[12] — by Matt Mitchell (CryptoHarlem).
- Level Up Guide - How to be a better trainer[13]
- Security Education Companion[14]
- Holistic Security Trainers' Manual[15]

Keep learning with these related guides

Security essentials

Core security practices every activist should follow.

Signal security

Secure your Signal messaging app for safer communications.

ICE watch digital security

Digital security for ICE watch and rapid response networks.

Doxxing defense

Protect yourself from doxxing and online harassment.

VPNs for activists 14 min read 16 · Security update checker 17 · How to use Proton safely 15 min read 18
Remove link tracking 3 min read 19 · Is Signal secure? 4 min read 20
Is Apple Intelligence reading my Signal messages? 5 min read 21

Links

1. activistchecklist.org
2. theguardian.com/us-news/2026/apr/16/big-tech-breakup-parties
3. activistchecklist.org/essentials/
4. activistchecklist.org/signal/
5. activistchecklist.org/ice/
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13. level-up.cc/you-the-trainer/be-a-better-trainer/
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15. holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/trainers-manual
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21. activistchecklist.org/signal-ai/