

THE SANDWICH PROJECT

Group Event Planning Guide

A Complete Reference for Organizing Sandwich-Making Events

This document is your official policy reference for all group sandwich-making events.

Please review and share this guide with everyone involved in your event.

Our sandwiches are distributed to children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals.

Food safety is not optional.

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1. Overview & Partnership Guidelines

Thank you for partnering with The Sandwich Project to fight food insecurity in our community. This guide consolidates everything you need to plan, prepare, and deliver safe, high-quality sandwiches for distribution.

Why This Document Matters

The sandwiches your group makes go directly to people who may be children, elderly, or immunocompromised. A foodborne illness from improperly handled food can be serious — even life-threatening — for these populations. That's why we hold every group to the same food safety standards, no exceptions.

What a Successful Event Looks Like

Every TSP group event follows the same core practices. Here's what we need from every event:

- All volunteers have reviewed this guide before the event
- All perishable ingredients are purchased centrally by one or two designated shoppers — not brought in individually
- The cold chain for deli meat and cheese is maintained at every stage
- Every sandwich is properly labeled and packaged per TSP standards
- Sandwiches are delivered at safe temperatures
- Any food that may have been compromised is discarded — when in doubt, throw it out

CRITICAL POLICY: CENTRALIZED PURCHASING

All perishable ingredients (meat, cheese) **MUST** be purchased centrally by one or two designated shoppers and kept refrigerated until the event. Individual volunteers should **NOT** bring in their own meat or cheese. When multiple people transport perishable items separately, there is no way to verify the cold chain was maintained. This is our #1 food safety concern.

2. Food Safety Policy

This section outlines The Sandwich Project's food safety requirements. These are **non-negotiable standards** that apply to every TSP event. Our sandwiches go to people experiencing food insecurity — many of whom are children, elderly, or immunocompromised. Maintaining safe food handling protects the people we serve.

The Two-Hour Rule

⚠ THE TWO-HOUR RULE

Deli meat and cheese must be kept at or below 40°F at all times, except for a CUMULATIVE total of 2 hours. This means every minute the product spends above 40°F counts — from the grocery store to your car, from your fridge to the counter, from the counter to the cooler. Once you hit 2 hours total, the food is no longer safe. Throw it out.

- **Never above 80°F:** If perishable items reach 80°F or higher at any point, they must be discarded immediately.
- **The clock is cumulative:** Time outside refrigeration adds up across every stage — shopping, transport, prep, assembly, and delivery.
- **Coolers maintain temperature, they don't create it:** Never put room-temperature or warm sandwiches in a cooler. The cooler will not make them cold. Sandwiches must already be cold when placed in the cooler.

Purchasing & Storage Rules

- **Pre-packaged meat ONLY:** Use only factory-sealed, pre-packaged deli meat. Do NOT use meat sliced at the deli counter.
- **Expiration dates:** Select packages with the furthest expiration date. Meat must have at least 7 days remaining until expiration at time of purchase.
- **Opened packages:** Once opened, deli meat must be used within 3 days. Do not use opened packages that are older than 3 days.
- **Sealed packages:** Even if unopened, do not use deli meat that was purchased more than 2 weeks ago.
- **Transport from store:** Bring a cooler with ice packs to the grocery store. Go directly home. Refrigerate immediately.

Preparation Timing

- **Deli sandwiches:** Make deli sandwiches the same day as your event. They must reach a host or recipient within 24 hours of being made — no exceptions.
- **PB&J sandwiches:** Can be made further in advance since they do not contain perishable ingredients, but should still be made as close to delivery as practical.

During Preparation

- **Clean and cover counters** before beginning. Use clean tablecloths or sanitized surfaces.
- **Separate peanut butter from deli:** If making both types, keep PB&J ingredients and work areas completely separate from deli ingredients.
- **Hair tied back, gloves required:** Every volunteer must tie back hair and wear disposable gloves at all times during food handling.
- **Change gloves:** If you touch your face, phone, door handles, or anything other than food and food-contact surfaces, change your gloves immediately.
- **One loaf at a time:** Remove only enough meat and cheese from the refrigerator for one loaf of sandwiches at a time. Return unused portions to the fridge immediately.
- **Don't overfill the refrigerator:** Air needs to circulate to keep food cold. Leave space between items.
- **Assign roles:** Have some volunteers making, some packing, and some returning completed loaves to the refrigerator. Assembly-line style keeps food moving quickly.

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT

If you are unsure whether the cold chain was maintained, if meat looks or smells off, or if you're not confident the food is safe — throw it out. It is always better to waste ingredients than to risk making someone sick. Our recipients trust us with their health.

3. Shopping & Ingredient Guidelines

All ingredients should be purchased centrally by one or two designated shoppers — not by individual volunteers. This ensures product consistency and maintains the cold chain from store to event.

Recommended Products

The following products from Costco have been tested and meet our portioning and quality standards:

Ingredient	Recommended Product	Serves	Approx. Cost
Turkey	Kirkland Turkey Breast 3-pack	~40 sandwiches	~\$15.99
Ham	Kirkland Ham 2-pack	~26 sandwiches	~\$12.49
Cheese	Adams Reserve New York Cheddar (sliced)	~16 sandwiches	~\$7.99
Bread	Nature's Own 100% Whole Wheat	~10 sandwiches/loaf	~\$4.49
Peanut Butter	Standard creamy peanut butter (large jar)	Varies	Varies
Jelly	Standard grape or strawberry jelly (large jar)	Varies	Varies

Per-Sandwich Requirements

Deli Sandwich	PB&J Sandwich
2 slices bread	2 slices bread
2–3 oz / 2–3 slices of turkey or ham (follow package serving size)	1½ tbsp peanut butter per slice (both slices)
2 slices cheese (1 on each slice of bread)	1½ tbsp jelly on one slice
No condiments	No condiments
1 individual zip-lock sandwich bag	1 individual zip-lock sandwich bag

Approximate cost per deli sandwich: Turkey ~\$1.48 | Ham ~\$1.27

For detailed quantity planning, **use the Sandwich Shopping Planner tool** provided by The Sandwich Project to calculate exact amounts based on your group size.

4. Making PB&J Sandwiches

Follow these steps exactly for every PB&J sandwich your group makes.

Before You Begin

- Clean and cover all work surfaces
- Ensure all volunteers have hair tied back
- Ensure all volunteers are wearing disposable gloves
- **Keep PB&J ingredients separated from deli ingredients** if making both types

Assembly Steps

Step 1: Prepare Your Workspace — Wash hands thoroughly. Put on disposable gloves and tie back hair. Lay out slices of bread in pairs. Do NOT use end pieces (heels).

Step 2: Apply Peanut Butter — Spread 1½ tablespoons of peanut butter on EACH slice of bread (both slices get peanut butter). Use only peanut butter — no other nut butters or alternatives.

Step 3: Apply Jelly — Spread 1½ tablespoons of jelly in the center of ONE slice (on top of the peanut butter). Grape or strawberry jelly only.

Step 4: Combine — Press the two slices together. DO NOT cut the sandwiches.

Step 5: Bag Individually — Place each sandwich in its own individual zip-lock sandwich bag. Press out excess air before sealing. Seal tightly.

Step 6: Package into Loaves — Place individual sandwich bags into a loaf-sized bag. Press out air and secure with a twist tie. Do NOT use knots or rubber bands — twist ties only.

ALLERGEN WARNING

PB&J sandwiches contain peanuts. They must be labeled with the PB&J label that includes the "Contains Nuts" warning. Never prepare PB&J and deli sandwiches on the same surface or with the same utensils without thorough cleaning between.

5. Making Deli Sandwiches

Deli sandwiches require strict temperature control. Review Section 2 (Food Safety Policy) before beginning. The Two-Hour Rule applies to every step of this process.

Before You Begin

- Verify all meat is factory-sealed, pre-packaged (NOT deli counter sliced)
- Verify expiration dates — minimum 7 days remaining
- Confirm all ingredients have been properly refrigerated
- Clean and cover all work surfaces
- Ensure all volunteers have hair tied back and gloves on
- **Designate a "fridge runner"** — someone responsible for getting ingredients out and returning finished loaves to the refrigerator immediately

Assembly Steps

Step 1: Manage Ingredients from the Fridge — Keep ALL ingredients refrigerated. Remove only enough meat and cheese for ONE loaf of sandwiches at a time. Return unused portions to the refrigerator immediately.

Step 2: Prepare Your Workspace — Wash hands thoroughly. Put on disposable gloves and tie back hair. Lay out slices of bread in pairs. Do NOT use end pieces (heels).

Step 3: Apply Cheese — Place one slice of cheese on EACH slice of bread — that's two slices of cheese per sandwich. No condiments of any kind.

Step 4: Apply Meat — Place 2–3 ounces (2–3 slices) of turkey OR ham on one side — follow the serving size on your package (thicker cuts typically say 2 slices, thinner cuts say 3). Use turkey or ham ONLY — no other meat alternatives.

Step 5: Bag Individually — Close the sandwich and place in an individual zip-lock sandwich bag. Press out excess air before sealing. Seal tightly.

Step 6: Package into Loaves & Refrigerate Immediately — Place individual sandwich bags into a loaf-sized bag. Secure with a twist tie only — no knots or rubber bands. Place the completed loaf bag in the refrigerator IMMEDIATELY. Do not let completed sandwiches sit on the counter.

SPEED MATTERS

The entire assembly process for deli sandwiches should be as fast as possible. Meat should go from fridge → sandwich → bag → fridge in minutes, not hours. Assign roles: some people assemble, some people bag, some people return loaves to the fridge. Assembly-line style is the safest approach.

6. Labeling Requirements

Every loaf bag must be labeled using the correct TSP-issued label before transport. Labels are provided by The Sandwich Project — use ONLY these labels. Do not create your own.

Deli Sandwich Labels

Each deli label must be completely filled out:

- **Type of Meat:** Write "Turkey" or "Ham"
- **# of Sandwiches:** Write the number of sandwiches in the loaf bag
- **Wore Gloves:** Check this box — if you cannot check it honestly, the loaf is not safe to donate
- **Kept Refrigerated:** Check this box — if you cannot check it honestly, the loaf is not safe to donate
- **Initial:** The person who assembled the sandwiches must initial
- **Prepared On:** Write the date of preparation

PB&J Sandwich Labels

Each PB&J label must be completely filled out:

- **# of Sandwiches:** Write the number of sandwiches in the loaf bag
- **Wore Gloves:** Check the box
- **Kept Refrigerated:** Check if applicable
- **Initial:** The person who assembled must initial
- **Prepared On:** Write the date of preparation

Note: PB&J labels include a "Contains Nuts" warning. Deli labels include a "May contain nuts, or have been produced in a kitchen containing nuts" notice. These warnings are critical for allergen safety.

LABELS = ACCOUNTABILITY

Labels serve a dual purpose: they provide essential food safety information for recipients AND they create a chain of accountability. If a label is incomplete, the loaf should not be accepted for distribution. Every field matters.

7. Transport & Delivery

Getting sandwiches safely from your event location to the delivery point is the final link in the cold chain. This is where many groups make mistakes.

Deli Sandwich Transport

- **Use coolers with ice packs:** Every cooler must have ice packs. No exceptions.
- **Fill coolers completely:** A full cooler stays cold longer than a half-empty one. Pack sandwiches snugly.
- **Sandwiches must already be cold:** Coolers maintain temperature — they do NOT cool down warm food. If sandwiches are not already refrigerator-cold, do not put them in the cooler.
- **Deliver within 24 hours:** Deli sandwiches must reach the distribution point within 24 hours of being made.
- **Keep coolers closed:** Every time you open a cooler, warm air gets in. Minimize opening.

PB&J Sandwich Transport

- PB&J sandwiches do not require coolers, but should be kept in a clean, dry container
- Protect from heat and direct sunlight
- Handle bags gently to avoid crushing sandwiches

How Sandwiches Get Where They Need to Go

Depending on logistics, your sandwiches will follow one of two paths after the event:

- **Option A — TSP driver pickup:** A TSP driver comes to your event location to collect the sandwiches. Have all labeled, packed coolers ready at the agreed-upon time and location.
- **Option B — Volunteer delivery:** A volunteer from your group drives the sandwiches to a nearby host for overnight storage, or directly to a recipient the same day. Coordinate the drop-off time and address with your TSP contact before the event.

Regardless of the path, sandwiches must stay cold and arrive at their destination as quickly as possible. The clock is ticking from the moment they were made.

At Drop-Off

- All loaf bags must have completed, legible labels
- **Sandwiches missing labels, with incomplete labels, or that feel warm will be rejected**
- Count the total number of sandwiches being handed off and confirm the count with the driver, host, or recipient
- Communicate any concerns about the cold chain to your TSP contact immediately

If Sandwiches Are Going to a Host

Some sandwiches are stored overnight at a host location before being distributed. If that applies to your event:

- **The host will inspect sandwiches on arrival:** They check that labels are complete, bags are sealed, and deli sandwiches feel cold.
- **Immediate refrigeration:** The host refrigerates all deli sandwiches at 40°F or below right away.
- **Inspection before distribution:** Before handing out sandwiches, the host checks each one for smell, appearance, and temperature. Anything that looks or smells off is discarded.
- **Leftovers:** Deli sandwiches not distributed within 24 hours of being made must be discarded. PB&J sandwiches may last longer but should be evaluated for freshness.

Communication & Reporting

- Let your TSP contact know how many sandwiches were made, how many were delivered, and if any had to be discarded
- Report any issues — broken cold chain, missing labels, warm sandwiches, or anything that felt off
- **This feedback helps TSP improve the process for everyone.** No one gets in trouble for flagging a concern.

8. Quick Reference Checklist

Use this checklist before, during, and after your event to ensure compliance with all TSP policies.

Before the Event

- ☐ Designated shopper(s) purchased all ingredients centrally
- ☐ All meat is factory-sealed, pre-packaged (NOT deli counter)
- ☐ Expiration dates checked — minimum 7 days remaining
- ☐ Cooler with ice packs used for grocery transport
- ☐ All ingredients refrigerated immediately upon arrival
- ☐ This guide distributed to all volunteers
- ☐ TSP labels printed and ready

During the Event

- ☐ All surfaces cleaned and covered
- ☐ All volunteers have hair tied back
- ☐ All volunteers wearing disposable gloves
- ☐ PB&J and deli prep areas separated (if making both)
- ☐ Only one loaf's worth of meat/cheese out of fridge at a time
- ☐ Completed deli loaves returned to fridge immediately
- ☐ Gloves changed after touching non-food items
- ☐ No end pieces (heels) used
- ☐ Correct portions: 2–3 oz meat (per package serving size), 2 cheese, 1½ tbsp PB per slice, 1½ tbsp jelly
- ☐ Sandwiches NOT cut
- ☐ Individual zip-lock bags, air pressed out
- ☐ Loaf bags sealed with twist ties only (no knots/rubber bands)

Before Delivery

- ☐ Every loaf bag has a completed, correct TSP label
- ☐ All label fields filled in (meat type, count, gloves, refrigeration, initials, date)
- ☐ Deli sandwiches are refrigerator-cold before going in coolers
- ☐ Coolers packed with ice packs
- ☐ Coolers filled completely for maximum cold retention
- ☐ Delivery will occur within 24 hours of preparation (deli)
- ☐ Any questionable food has been thrown out

After the Event

- ☐ Total sandwich count confirmed with driver, host, or recipient
- ☐ Any discarded sandwiches noted with reason
- ☐ TSP contact notified of final count and any issues
- ☐ Workspace cleaned and sanitized
- ☐ Leftover supplies properly stored or disposed of
- ☐ Coolers cleaned out and dried for next use

REMEMBER

When in doubt, throw it out. It's always better to waste food than to risk the health of someone who is already vulnerable. Thank you for taking food safety seriously.