

# *The Ultimate Guide to Running a Successful Concession Stand*

Learn How to Make Your Stand:

- Easy to run
- Easy for volunteers
- Profitable!

Presented by:



In partnership with:



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## **Introduction**

The goal of this guide is to help you run a concession stand as easily and profitably as possible. We'll do this by helping you answer basic questions and lay the plans that will enable you to get the most out of your concession stand operation.

Here are essential questions to consider when you are asked to run your organization's concession stand:

1. How many locations will we operate (at the same time)?
2. How will we staff our stand?
3. Where will we locate our stand?
4. What hours will the stand be open?
5. What items will be on the menu, and how should we price them?
6. How much inventory should we purchase, and what variety of items?
7. What are our storage needs?
8. What equipment will we need?
9. How will we handle the money before, during and after the stand is open?
10. How will we transport our inventory between the store, our stand, and our storage facility?

We'll help you answer these questions and present options to consider, depending on how big or small you want your stand to be.

In addition to helping you organize your planning, we'll also look at how to get the most out of your volunteers.

At the end of this guide are several checklists and forms that you can share with your staff to help ensure success.

***Now let's get started! –***

## 1. How many locations will we operate (at the same time)?

The type of stand you set up depends largely on the layout of the fields and the facility where games are played. Some locations have multiple fields spread out like a soccer “prairie land”; others are organized as more contained soccer complexes. The layout and park rules will help you.

First of all, consider whether to have one central location or multiple locations. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

### Single Location

#### Advantages

1. One location to stock
2. Easier to handle \$
3. Able to make bigger impression
4. Possible to expand menu to hot food

#### Disadvantages

1. Could limit number of customers
2. Possibly lower revenue
3. Requires more room to set up

### Multiple Locations

#### Advantages

1. Go to where the customers are
2. More customers = more \$
3. More portable and can be put up or moved easily

#### Disadvantages

1. Less control over \$
2. May have to restock more often
3. Could isolate volunteers

### *Questions to ask:*

1. Will I have a dedicated location every week?
2. How many volunteers will I have, and how much supervision will they need?
3. How difficult might it be to manage the money?
4. Do we have the funds to invest in tents?
5. What will the facility allow us to do or not do?
6. Who do we need to contact prior to the season and/or before setting up the concession stand?

## 2. How will we staff our stand?

The set-up of your stand and your profit goals will dictate your staffing needs.

You'll probably be working with volunteers who have a wide variety of personal and professional backgrounds. Whoever your volunteers are, make sure that you:

- Are clear and consistent in how you work with them
- Emphasize that the stand would not succeed without their help, and that you appreciate their efforts
- Express to them your reliance on their *active* participation

Set up specific areas of responsibility before people show up to the stand. Jobs that need to be identified include:

- Stocking and restocking
- Stand maintenance and upkeep
- Cash management
- Stand set-up and tear-down
- Inventory purchasing

When you have multiple volunteers, it's important to be clear on who is responsible for what job. If possible, have a preseason meeting to work out these assignments so there are no surprises when you open your stand.

### *Questions to ask:*

1. Do we have a list of volunteers and their skills? (For example, do you have individuals skilled in assembling equipment or running a cash register?)
2. Do we have "Rules of the Road" for our volunteers? (If not, see the "Summary & Checklist" at the end of this guide.)
3. Do we have a clear volunteer schedule and a process to alert volunteers of changes?

### 3. Where should we locate our stand?

The more people who see your stand, the more you'll sell and the more money you'll make. With this in mind, consider the following for your stand location:

- Intersections between fields where players and families cross throughout the day
- Pedestrian entrances and exits in parking lots
- Sites nearby public facilities such as bathrooms or shelters
- Sites nearby any landmarks, sculptures or any other physical objects that may attract people; this can include playgrounds, basketball courts, or skate parks that draw local residents as well as US Youth Soccer participants
- *Make sure that you are compliant with any park or local rules*

#### *Questions to ask:*

1. Where are the high-traffic spots?
2. If I was going to set up the stand with my own money, where would I go to maximize traffic?
3. Are there places near the fields where people tend to gather?

### 4. What hours should the stand be open?

Two good rules to follow:

1. "Snack time" can be *any* time. Be ready for customers any time during game or tournament hours.
2. Someone will *always* be hungry or thirsty (player, little sister, grandmother, etc.)!

The league or tournament schedules will be a major factor in determining what hours your stand can be open.

Many of your customers will be children looking for candy or snacks; but adults will also "hit the concession stand"—especially if you offer such things as coffee for early morning games or hot food during meal times.

Your hours of operation will also be determined by the level of volunteer support. Make sure that if you are open at "family time" hours (dinner time) that your volunteers understand in advance and are prepared.

#### *Questions to ask:*

1. When should the stand be open?
2. Are there peak times when we should staff up more?
3. When are the volunteers available?

## 5. What items will be on the menu and how should we price them?

Many or most of your customers will be children of various ages, so set up your stand to meet their needs and level of understanding. This includes keeping the menu simple and the pricing clear.

Purchase products that can be priced the same across categories. For example, non-chocolate candy 25¢/50¢/75¢; chocolate items at \$1.00; water at \$1.00; and sport drinks at \$1.50. In general, set the price of items to be twice as much as what you paid for them. When in doubt, round up to get to your price points for categories such as candy or water. Sam's Club does a good job of showing you your margin structure for particular items when you shop in their stores.

Create a menu and pricing options that can be added quickly by your staff and that smaller children can understand. Value combos, like the fast-food chains, will keep lines moving and will bring more profit: for example, "Candy Bar + Bottled Water = \$1.50". Clear signage will help communicate this to your customers, and make it easy for them to make the decision to buy.

Make sure that your products are on display so customers can see the choices. Food companies make colorful packaging for a reason, so have it work for you. Make sure you clearly label the price for each displayed item.

You should choose a strategy for pricing and menu options and stick to it. Constantly changing the menu—especially for regular league play—will complicate your work and can confuse customers. Remember: Your sales and profits will come from making the purchase decision easy for your customers!

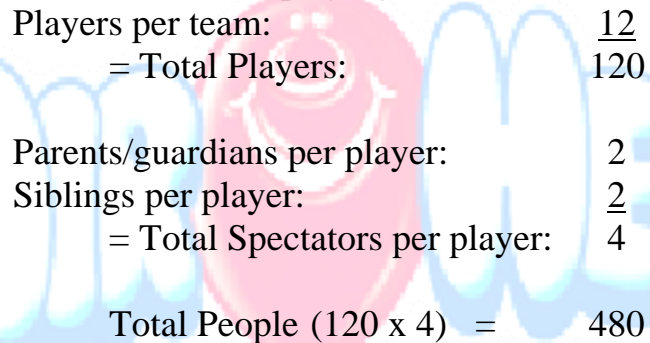
### *Questions to ask:*

1. What will be on the menu (candy, granola bars, sport drinks, water, hot food, etc.)? The greater the variety of items, the more complex to manage.
2. Will we sell in one location or multiple locations?
3. How will we restock inventory at each location?
4. What price points should we set?
5. What will we offer as "value menu" items (if any)?
6. Who is responsible for making clear signage for the menu board and pricing?

## 6. How much inventory should we purchase, and what variety of items?

At the start of the season it will be a challenge to balance your inventory with what people are actually buying. After a few weeks you should start seeing some trends that will help you base your purchases on past sales results. If your stand was in operation last season, consult with the volunteers or administrators who staffed it then, if possible, to understand what worked and what didn't. The "Inventory Control Worksheet" following this guide will help you track what products sell best and how to adjust your menu.

Often you can use statistics from your league office to estimate your inventory needs early in the season. For example, you can estimate the number of potential visitors to your stand through a calculation like this:



Number of teams playing:	10
Players per team:	<u>12</u>
= Total Players:	120
Parents/guardians per player:	2
Siblings per player:	<u>2</u>
= Total Spectators per player:	4
Total People (120 x 4) =	480

After a few weeks of tracking team and player totals, along with your sales history, you can begin to gauge how much candy, snacks and drinks you may need on average "per player" (i.e., including their family members and friends).

Don't worry: Your season is more than a week long, so you'll have time to get your purchasing cycle down. And don't forget that recording this information will help you in the next season, even if you fill a support role then.

### *Questions to ask:*

1. Can we learn anything from the experience managing inventory last year?
2. Did we ever run short of any big-selling item last season? If so, what was it and why did we run short?
3. Did we have any significant leftover inventory at the end of last season?
4. How many players/teams do we expect each week this season?
5. Will any other special events take place nearby at the same time?

## 7. What are our storage needs?

Your storage needs will depend largely on whether you plan to sell products that are sensitive to heat or cold. Use good judgment: occasionally a customer may complain about lukewarm coffee or soda, but nobody wants a game or tournament spoiled by illness caused by foods stored improperly. Depending on the products you choose to sell, you may do fine with coolers or the bulk boxes that some products come in (such as those sold in Sam's Club stores).

Weather is a big factor in storage decisions, as well. Again, as you purchase products for your inventory, be mindful of any potential for spoilage or melting.

The most basic concession stands have items that are not sensitive to heat and that can be stored anywhere. Drinks, non-chocolate candy and granola bars generally hold up well in warmer environments.

Be cautious about storing your inventory on-site at the games. Depending on the facility, there may be people outside of your organization who could get access to your products. If you plan to store your inventory on-site, make sure that you have discussed security and access with park administrators.

### *Questions to ask:*

1. Will we serve hot or cold food? (If so, how will you maintain adequate food safety?)
2. Who will handle leftover inventory after each day or tournament?
3. What are the arrangements to move inventory from overnight (or more extended) storage back to the field the next day or for the next event?

## 8. What other equipment will we need?

Equipment needs will depend on whether you: (1) operate a single or multiple locations, and (2) serve hot and/or cold food.

For a single location, we suggest a 10x10ft canopy tent that can be put up and taken down in minutes. Adding folding tables and chairs will make your stand practical, effective, and attractive to customers. As of this writing (February 2007), [www.SamsClub.com](http://www.SamsClub.com) offers tents at \$109 and 6ft folding tables for \$45.

Your set-up for multiple locations can be as simple as a card table; a large, colorful umbrella can provide shade while also attracting people to the stand. We suggest using the same style and color umbrella at each of your locations: this will help people identify your stands as the place to go for refreshments!

For most products, simple coolers for cold drinks and shade for candy is adequate. The requirements for hot or cold foods are more substantial. Depending on what you serve, you may need refrigeration (more than just a cooler full of ice). Hot food will require charcoal or propane grills, roller grills or steamer trays. The goal is simple, but the challenge is not: to keep cold food cold, and hot food hot. Make sure that each member on your team takes an active approach to meeting this goal.

Other basic equipment needed:

Cash box	Bug spray
Calculator(s)	Tape
Latex gloves	Permanent markers
Chairs	Menu boards
Garbage cans	Antibacterial gel
Rope or bungee cords	Paper towels
Wasp/bee/hornet bait or repellent	First aid kit

***Questions to ask:***

1. Based on our menu, what other equipment will we need?
2. Will we serve hot food? If so, what will we need to prepare and keep it hot?
3. When are the busy times likely to be, and what time will hot food need to be ready?

## **9. How will we handle the money before, during and after the stand is open?**

Assign the responsibility for each day's "cashbox supervisor" to one person: it will be their job to start the day with the cashbox count (see list below), draw change from the cashbox for the cashiers serving customers, and count the day's final total receipts (cash or checks received). Note that the cashbox supervisor is in charge of the cashbox, even though others working as cashiers are returning change to customers on transactions.

The specific responsibilities of the cashbox supervisor include:

1. Having enough small-denomination bills and coins to make change on transactions early in the day.
2. Removing excess cash from the cash box to reduce chances of theft chances.
3. Reconciling the receipts in the cashbox to the remaining unsold inventory.
4. Making sure all receipts are delivered as instructed to a bank, or to an accountant or other person authorized by the league to handle league funds.

It's important that your volunteers know the cashbox supervisor, and that they are trained to report immediately any questions or concerns about errors to that person.

### ***Questions to ask:***

1. Do all volunteers know the cash handling policy?
2. Does the cashbox supervisor understand his/her responsibility?

## **10. How will we transport our inventory between the store, our stand, and our storage facility?**

Most of the time, you'll need to pack each day's remaining inventory into your SUV or minivan for use the next day or at the next event. Be sure to list this remaining inventory, and compare it to the inventory amounts you started the day with. This will help you determine what you need to purchase, and how much, for the next day or next event. It will also show you which products have sold well and which have not.

Concession stands operated in multiple locations require more coordination because product is not dropped off in one place. In this case, cell phones or walkie-talkies are very helpful in managing all aspects of your operation, including the storage and transport of inventory.

### ***Questions to ask:***

1. Who is responsible for securing unsold inventory at the end of the day?
2. Where do they plan to store it (house, car, basement, carport, etc.)?
3. Who is responsible for returning the inventory to the stand for the next day or next event?
4. Who will purchase replacement inventory?
5. How will they get paid back for the purchases they make?

## Summary & Checklist

The success of your concession stand will depend greatly on clear communication with your volunteers. Your job as the concession stand manager will be much easier and more enjoyable—and your sales results greater—if your volunteers clearly understand their individual roles and responsibilities.

Finally, here's a checklist to help you achieve the best results possible—hopefully while each member of your team feels the satisfaction of their contribution to those results!

1. Do the volunteers understand where they should report, and when?
2. Do I have each volunteer's confirmation of their shift times, and a phone number where I can reach them?
3. Do the volunteers know who to call if there is an emergency?
4. Does each volunteer understand his/her role and responsibilities?
5. Have I asked volunteers to bring extra coolers, chairs, garbage bags, or other supplies?
6. Do the volunteers understand the menu and pricing?
7. Have I trained the volunteers on the handling of money at the stand?
8. Do the volunteers understand our customer refund policy (if any)?
9. Do the volunteers understand our policy on helping themselves to the products sold at the stand?
10. Do any of the volunteers have special needs?

***Good Luck, and Happy Selling! –***