

Restaurant and Local Company Ask Sheet

The in-person ask, on one sheet - when to walk in, who to ask for, what to say in the first two sentences, what each kind of local company commonly gives, and a leave-behind page a manager can act on after you have gone.

Templates & Letters · ultimatedonations.org/resources/restaurant-local-company-ask-sheet

An in-person ask is a different craft from a letter. You get one short conversation with someone who is working, and the whole thing is decided by how quickly you can say who you are, what you want, and when you need it. This sheet is that conversation, prepared: the timing, the opening sentences, what each type of local company commonly gives, and the one page you leave behind so the answer does not depend on anyone's memory.

Use it alongside the [donation request letter workbook](#) for the written version and [how to ask a company for a donation](#) for the wider walkthrough. The rest of the library is at [free fundraising resources](#).

Before you walk in

Five minutes of preparation decides the outcome, not the conversation itself.

- **Know the one thing you are asking for.** A gift certificate, a tray for a volunteer meal, a dessert for a prize table. One named item, not "anything you can do".
- **Know your date and your deadline.** The event date, and the day you need the item in hand.
- **Know who to ask for.** The manager, by name where you can find it. The person at the counter almost never decides, and putting them on the spot is unfair to them.
- **Know your group in one sentence.** Who you are, who you serve, and what the money pays for.
- **Bring the leave-behind.** One page, printed, with your phone number on it.
- **Check what the program actually gives.** If it is a chain, look it up in the [donor directory](#) first - we track 4,000+ companies, and each page describes what that program has historically offered and where to check its current status.

When to go

Type of location	Go	Avoid
Restaurant	Mid-afternoon, between lunch and dinner service	Any meal rush, and the hour before opening when prep is running
Cafe or bakery	Early afternoon, after the morning trade	The morning rush, start to finish
Retail store	Mid-morning on a weekday	Weekends, holiday trading periods, and the hour before closing
Grocery or pharmacy	Mid-morning on a weekday, asking for the store manager	Evenings and weekend afternoons
Salon, gym, or studio	Mid-morning, when the front desk is quiet	Immediately before a class or an appointment block

If you have caught someone at a bad moment, say so first and ask when to come back. That question alone earns a lot of goodwill, and it is why a second visit usually goes better than a first.

The first two sentences

Everything hangs on these. Say them out loud once before you go in.

Hi - my name is [Your Name], and I am with [Organization Name] here in [Town]. We are holding [Event Name] on [Event Date] to raise money for [the specific thing it pays for].

I wanted to ask whether [Company Name] would consider donating [one specific item] for it. We would need it by [Deadline Date], and I have everything on one page here.

Then stop talking. The silence after an ask belongs to the other person, and filling it with more detail is the most common way a yes turns into "let me think about it".

Three things worth saying if they are true, and never if they are not: that your group is local to this location, what the funds pay for in concrete terms, and that every donor is thanked in writing and named in your event program. Promise nothing else. What you offer in return has to be something you control and will actually deliver.

What each kind of company commonly gives

Match the ask to the type of company and you spare the manager from declining something they never had.

Type of company	Commonly asked for	Worth knowing
Restaurant	A gift certificate, a dessert or catering tray, a prize-table item	Certificates are the easiest yes; food for an event date needs more notice than groups expect.
Cafe or bakery	A coffee basket, a cake, a certificate	Often decided on the spot by an owner who is on the floor.
Grocery store	Product for a basket, a certificate, water and snacks for volunteers	Ask for the store manager; many stores have a written local process.
Hardware or garden store	Product for a raffle basket, materials for the event itself	The materials ask is the one groups forget, and it is often the easiest.
Salon, gym, or studio	A service certificate, a class pass, a product bundle	A dated certificate needs its terms and expiry stated in writing.
Local chain location	A small in-kind item, or a pointer to the corporate process	Ask the manager what they can decide locally - the honest answer saves you a wasted letter.

The leave-behind page

One page, printed, handed over at the end of the conversation. Fill this in before you go.

Line	What to put on the page
Organization name	The legal name, as it appears on your paperwork
Who you serve, in one sentence	The school, team, troop, or community group and the people it is for
Event name and date	Both, large enough to read at a glance
What the funds support	Concretely - the equipment, the trip, the supplies
What you are asking for	The one specific item
Deadline to receive it	A date, not "as soon as possible"
Tax status	Your 501(c)(3) status and EIN, or an honest description of your group
How the donor is thanked	Only what you will actually deliver

Line	What to put on the page
Your name, phone, and email	The person who walked in, not a general inbox
Where to drop it off or when you will collect	Whichever you have agreed

Leave it even when the answer is yes, and especially when the answer is "let me check". The page is what a manager acts on three days later.

The tax-status line is informational, not legal advice - state your group's situation honestly and check anything you are unsure of with your board or a qualified advisor.

After the visit

1. **Write it down before you drive away.** Company, who you spoke to, what you asked for, and what they said, in the [donation request tracker](#).
2. **Follow up once.** A short call or a visit after a couple of weeks of silence, and only once.
3. **Collect what was promised.** On the day you said, by the person you said. A manager who set an item aside and waited for nobody remembers it.
4. **Thank them in writing.** Even for a no. The [donor thank-you kit](#) has the wording, and the note for a declining company is the one that makes next year's visit warm.

For the patterns that show up most often when asking restaurants specifically, see our guide to [restaurants that donate to fundraisers](#).

Common questions

How do you ask a restaurant to donate to a fundraiser?

In person, away from a meal rush, asking for the manager by name if you know it. Name one specific thing, say when you need it by, and leave a single page with the details and your phone number. A manager who has to hunt for your information is a manager who decides later, which usually means never.

What is the best time of day to ask a local company for a donation?

Mid-morning or mid-afternoon on a weekday, between the rushes, when the person who can say yes is on the floor and not in the middle of service. Ask when they would like you to come back if you have caught them badly - most will tell you.

Should you ask a chain location or its corporate program?

Both are worth trying, and they are separate asks with separate answers. A local manager can often decide a small in-kind item on the spot, while larger items usually route through a corporate process. The company's page in our directory describes how its program has historically handled requests.