



FREE ITEM IDEA BANK

10 Silent Auction Item Ideas

A practical, editable idea bank featuring 10 item categories and 70+ items to help you build a stronger auction. Find out what to ask for, who to approach, and what to check before saying yes.

How to Use This Idea Bank

One of the keys to a successful silent auction is having a good variety of items. Variety is what creates bidding momentum, because every guest needs to find at least one thing they genuinely want. A catalog that only speaks to one type of person only gets bids from one type of person.

This is a working list, not a reading list. Take it to your next committee meeting, assign categories to people, and use the check column before you accept anything. Anything in [square brackets] is for you to fill in.

You'll Find

- 1 The ten categories at a glance
- 2 An idea bank of more than 70 specific auction items
- 3 Who to ask for each category
- 4 What to check before you accept an item
- 5 A fund-a-need worksheet for donation items
- 6 A category balance worksheet
- 7 What to do when you cannot source enough

What Makes an Item Sell

Whatever category it comes from, an item that attracts bids usually has these six things:

- ✓ **It matches your actual audience.** Choose items based on what your actual attendees are likely to want. A great item means little if nobody in the room wants it.
 - ✓ **It is easy to redeem.** Clear dates, no complicated booking, and a generous validity window.
 - ✓ **It has no hidden catch.** If flights are excluded, say so in the description rather than at the checkout.
 - ✓ **It is something they cannot simply buy.** Access, experience and exclusivity outbid retail goods at the same value.
 - ✓ **It has a believable value.** Bidders need an anchor to judge their bid against, so state it plainly.
 - ✓ **It photographs well.** If you cannot get a good photo of it, you will struggle to sell it.
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Before You Accept: A 60-Second Check

- ☐ Do I know exactly what is included, and what is not?
- ☐ Is there a written validity window, and is it long enough to be usable?
- ☐ Does the item meet any safety standards it needs, with insurance cover in place?
- ☐ For memorabilia, is there a Certificate of Authenticity from a reputable dealer?
- ☐ For a donated service, has the donor agreed to be flexible on scheduling?
- ☐ Do I have a photo I can actually use, or can I get one?
- ☐ Do I know the fair market value, so I can set the starting bid and increment?
- ☐ Does this fill a gap in my catalog, or do I already have three like it?

OVERVIEW

The Ten Categories at a Glance

Use this to see where your catalog is thin. Most catalogs over-index on one or two categories and leave three or four empty, which is exactly what narrows your bidder pool.

#	Category	What it covers	Where it usually sits
1	Around the World	Travel and large-scale experiences	Anchor
2	Child-Friendly	Experiences and treats for younger guests	Entry to mid
3	Group Activity	Team experiences bought by groups and companies	Mid to anchor
4	Great Gourmet	Dining, cooking and tasting experiences	Mid
5	Stay Local	Nearby breaks, attractions and experiences	Entry to mid
6	Unique Memorabilia	Signed sports and entertainment items	Mid to anchor
7	Crowd Source Support	Services donated by your own community	Entry to mid
8	Take Art	Commissions, prints and photography	Mid
9	Include Donations	Fund-a-need items at a fixed price	Entry
10	Get a Little Help	Consignment items that fill your gaps	Anchor

Aim to have something from at least six of these ten. The categories you are missing are usually the ones your committee has no personal connection to, which is exactly why they need assigning to someone.

What to Ask For, and Who to Ask

Every item below is a real, specific ask. Vague requests get vague answers, so take the exact wording to the supporter rather than asking what they can spare.

Category	Items to ask for	Who to ask
1. Around the World	A week in a villa. A city break with a guided tour. A hot air balloon flight. A stay somewhere less traveled, such as Zanzibar. A safari package. A cabin upgrade on a cruise. Airport lounge passes.	Travel agents, tour operators, hotel groups, airlines, supporters with a second home, consignment suppliers
2. Child-Friendly	A behind-the-scenes zoo visit. A ride with the fire service. A day on the field with a local sports team. A themed birthday party package. A year of birthday cakes. A toy store voucher. A family theme park pass.	Zoos and aquariums, fire and police departments, sports clubs, bakeries, toy shops, party venues, activity providers
3. Group Activity	White-water rafting for eight. A paintball session for a team. A harmony singing workshop. A block of group yoga. An escape room booking. A private quiz night. A team cooking competition.	Activity centers, studios, escape rooms, outdoor operators, and the company representatives already in your room
4. Great Gourmet	A chef cooking dinner in the winner's home. A cooking class for six. A food safari across three restaurants with transport between them. A wine or whiskey tasting. A private table at a newly opened restaurant. A bakery masterclass.	Restaurants (newly opened ones especially, who gain promotion), chefs, cookery schools, wine merchants, delis, food producers
5. Stay Local	A weekend spa break within driving distance. Theme park family tickets. A museum or gallery membership. A race car driving experience. A dinner-and-stay package. A golf round for four. A brewery or distillery tour.	Anything within about an hour's drive: hotels, spas, attractions, sports clubs, breweries
6. Unique Memorabilia	A signed shirt or ball from a local club. A signed album or instrument. Framed film memorabilia. A signed and framed photograph. Match-worn kit. A signed book from a local author.	Clubs and their community foundations, memorabilia dealers, venues, publishers, artist management
7. Crowd Source Support	A car service or valet. A house deep clean. An afternoon on a supporter's boat. Bartending for a private party. A landscaping day. A photography session. An hour of legal, accounting or design advice. A month of dog walking.	Your own supporter list first: board members, volunteers, parents, and any member with a useful skill or asset
8. Take Art	A commissioned pet portrait. A family photography session. A framed print of a recognizable local view. A commissioned house portrait. A ceramics or glass piece. A workshop with a local artist.	Local artists, photographers, galleries, art schools, craft markets
9. Include Donations	Cover a set of bats and balls. Fund a jersey for one player. Cover an hour of field rental. Fund an hour of a counselor's time. Sponsor a meal. Fund a week of transport for one family.	Nobody. These are yours to set, priced at what they actually cost you
10. Get a Little Help	Hard-to-source items and anchor experiences supplied on a risk-free basis, returned at no cost if they do not sell.	The GalaBid shop, when your own procurement has fallen short

What to Check Before You Say Yes

Each category carries its own way of going wrong. These are the checks that prevent an awkward conversation with the winner three weeks after the event.

Category	What to check before you accept
1. Around the World	Confirm every travel detail is arranged, and state plainly what is not included, such as flights, transfers or taxes. Agree a validity window generous enough to be usable, and note any blackout dates in the description.
2. Child-Friendly	Confirm in writing that the item meets relevant safety standards and carries the necessary insurance cover. Note minimum ages and any adult supervision requirement.
3. Group Activity	Confirm the minimum and maximum group size, and how far ahead the winner has to book. Pitch these directly to company representatives, who often have authority to buy for corporate hospitality.
4. Great Gourmet	Ask the donor up front how they handle cultural, dietary and religious restrictions. A menu that cannot flex narrows your bidder pool before bidding even opens.
5. Stay Local	Little to check, which is the point. These are your hassle-free items, with minimal logistics and travel expense, so keep several in every catalog.
6. Unique Memorabilia	Insist on a Certificate of Authenticity from a reputable dealer. If no one on your team can personally verify the item, the COA is doing all the work.
7. Crowd Source Support	Confirm insurance cover for any volunteer-provided service, and agree schedule flexibility in writing so the winner can actually redeem it.
8. Take Art	Match the work to your audience. Niche or divisive styles limit bids to a handful of guests, or none at all. Recognizable local scenes are the safest sellers.
9. Include Donations	Price these at what the thing genuinely costs you, and say exactly what the money buys. Vague causes raise less than specific ones.
10. Get a Little Help	Confirm the return terms and the deadline for sending unsold items back, so the risk-free arrangement stays risk-free.

Donation Items and the Leaderboard

Most of the room will not win anything. Donation items give every one of those people somewhere to put their money, at a price they choose, without needing to outbid anyone.

- ✓ **Name the thing, not the cause.** "Covers an hour of field rental" raises more than "supports our programs".
- ✓ **Price to your real costs.** A donation item priced at what the thing actually costs you is easy to explain and easy to say yes to.
- ✓ **Build a ladder here too.** Give people an option at \$25 and an option at \$500, exactly as you would with auction lots.
- ✓ **Run a donation leaderboard.** At a live event, track progress toward a target on screen. Visible progress is what pulls the second and third donation out of the room.

Your Fund-a-Need Ladder

Fill in what each item genuinely costs you, then set the ask:

What it funds	What it costs us	The ask
[e.g. a set of bats and balls]	[\$]	[\$]
[e.g. a jersey for one player]	[\$]	[\$]
[e.g. an hour of field rental]	[\$]	[\$]
[e.g. an hour of a counselor's time]	[\$]	[\$]
[e.g. a week of transport for one family]	[\$]	[\$]
[]	[\$]	[\$]

PLAN IT

Balance Your Catalog

Count what you have against the ten categories. Any category sitting at zero is a group of guests you are not speaking to.

Items secured so far

1. Around the World: [] 2. Child-Friendly: []

3. Group Activity: [] 4. Great Gourmet: []

5. Stay Local: [] 6. Unique Memorabilia: []

7. Crowd Source Support: [] 8. Take Art: []

9. Include Donations: [] 10. Consignment: []

Total items secured: [] Target: []

Categories still at zero: []

Who is chasing them: []

Watch How She Sourced Auction Items



PRO TIPS

Sourcing Tips That Get More Yeses

- ✓ **Assign categories to people, not items to lists.** Give each committee member two categories to own. Nobody chases a list that belongs to everyone.
- ✓ **Start with your own supporters.** Ask your board and volunteers before approaching anyone cold.
- ✓ **Make the ask specific.** "Would you donate a cooking class for six?" gets an answer. "Anything you can spare" gets silence.
- ✓ **Promote the unusual ones early.** A less traveled destination or an unusual experience needs explaining before the night, on your website and social channels.
- ✓ **Sell access, not objects.** A day on the field beats a signed ball at the same value.
- ✓ **Offer to collect the item.** Taking the logistics off the donor turns a maybe into a yes.

Fill the Gaps in Your Catalog

Source what you can, and let GalaBid cover the rest. Hard-to-find items come from the shop on a risk-free basis, and everything runs alongside your own items in a single campaign:

- ✓ Winner booking and item fulfillment handled for you
- ✓ Auctions, raffles, donations and ticketing in one campaign

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