

How to throw a great Glow Party

A black light party is a real treat for any age. It is super special for the 10 – 16 crowd, college age kids and adults can enjoy full blown blast or a private glow party for just a couple. You don't need a ton of supplies to throw an effective glow party but in some cases, the more the merrier.

LIGHTS OUT

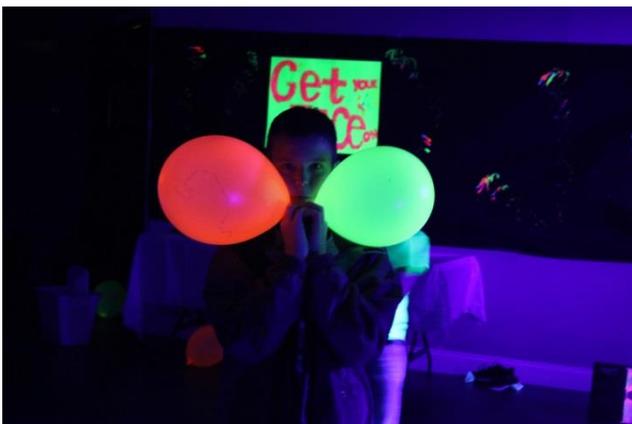
Start with the space. The key to the space is during for the party, there should be no lighting other than the black lights. Turn off any room lights, close any doors. If there are windows, cover them with dark drapes. Hang dark curtains in front of any entry ways that don't have doors. Better than drapes, put black poster or construction paper on the windows. Dig out your old black light posters (or get new ones – it's a party!). Hang the posters and black paper around your space. Leave some white/light walls showing.

DECORATIONS AND ACCESSORIES

To maximize the effect of black lights at your party, you want to decorate with things that glow under UV light. White crepe paper streamers, glow balloons, posters and black light poster paint. On a budget – hang some different lengths of white TP around (test it first for “glow worthiness”) Use black light poster paints to paint pictures, streaks, patterns, hand prints on the black paper that you've hung on the walls and windows. Maybe paint some starry dots on the paper window coverings. Paints come in a good set of colors. Let your imagination run wild. Also look for glow-in-the-dark chalk

Decorate with any other UV glow items you can get your hands on. Break out the old glow-in-the-dark Frisbee and hang it. Those glow in the dark stars and other objects that get put on walls and ceilings in kid's bedrooms are ideal – they don't fade when the lights go out – the black lights keep them glowing. Use white plates, cups and plastic-ware. There are even some foods that are UV reactive: hard boiled eggs are very popular. Whatever you decorate with, make sure to test it under a black light before committing to something that will come out lackluster. To find tons of things that glow, do a search on Amazon or eBay using the term “uv reactive.”

By the way, one of the best uv reactive items you can access easily is highlighter pens. Yellow and orange glow the strongest but pink and other colors come up well – test before getting a bunch but in bright uv light, they are very effective.



WHAT TO WEAR

In a word, white fabrics are the thing. But not necessarily the whole thing. Apparel at a glow party should glow but it should also add fun and whimsy. A white T-shirt decorated with glo paint (get washable paint or let the shirt be sacrificial). Break up all white spaces with either different colored glowing accessories or pieces that don't glow can be more fun than being a glowing comet. White shirt and pants broken up with a wide black belt looks good. Short sleeves with white head band and wrist bands – add a black belt, white shorts and white sneaks with day glo laces and you've got a look. Add some glow paint accents and wow! And clothing doesn't need to be white to be effective – most jeans have enough white threads to look pretty cool in black light. A dark shirt with white embroidery looks good.

Take a trip to a place like Party City. They have tons of UV reactive gear like hats, sunglasses (the big Elton John type), Hawaiian leis and such. Try UV reactive wrist bands, necklaces, "jewelry," finger rings (toe rings?), scarves, gloves – you get the idea.

Here's a cool idea: Those yellow safety vests can be purchased for little cost. Wearing one is an option (they glow like crazy!) but cutting them up as arm bands, collars, bits of strips, shapes and designs attached to clothing, walls, etc. looks pretty amazing.

Typically, humans don't have UV glow skin (if you do, consult your physician!). You have three choices here. Leave some unadorned flesh as an area to break up glowing clothing – like knees between the hem of a pair of shorts and the top of that last white pair of tube socks in the back of the drawer. Or, cover it up with clothes, scarves or other accessories – stuff that glows or doesn't, depending on the effect you are creating. The third option is body paint.



FACE AND BODY PAINT

The first word about body paint is SAFETY! Get body paint that is non-toxic, easily washable and from a reliable (safe) source. Good glow body paint isn't cheap, costing \$5 - \$10 for a 10ml bottle. That's not much but a little goes a long way. And, unless you're trying to re-create the blue people from Guardians of the Galaxy or Mystique from X-Men, less is more. For youth, a little accent strip on a cheek, a bit on forearms and the backs of hands or a couple of dots or circles on knees generates good effects and leaves plenty to go around. For a "couples only" party, the sky is the limit when it comes to location and quantity. There's even a great game about before and after results of smearing each other's different colored paints with close contact...

Face and body paint come in all kinds of colors – some have more "glow power" than others, and that's a good thing. A well planned and executed minimalist design will look way better than a bunch of paint smeared on for total coverage. Again, less is more in this case. A great choice is to hire one of those folks who do face painting at kids parties and coordinate to use glow face/body paint.



BLACK LIGHTS

When it comes to black lights, there are a couple of things to think about. The first is: how much? There's no right answer without a good idea of the size and scope of the space. Good black lights are expensive so unless you're planning on throwing some pretty frequent glow parties, have a huge aquarium room or are planning on lighting up a mineral exhibit at your museum, you're probably going to consider renting. For typical dance floor and wall coverage, rentals of good quality and sufficient lighting can run \$100 - \$300 give.

Here's some of the types of black lights with pros and cons:

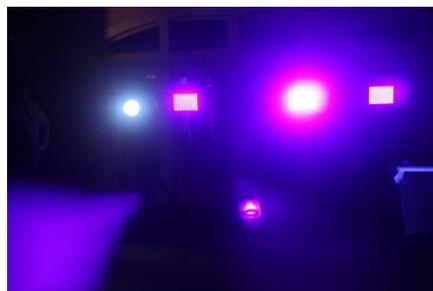
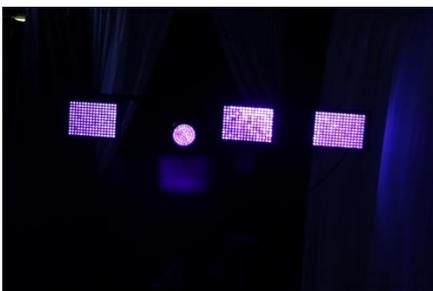
Fluorescent Tubes: Come in 18" to 48" lengths. You will need a way to mount them (on the cross-bar of a light rack, on the floor "pointing" up the wall or standing up against walls...) The short ones (18 and 24 inch) don't put out much light – good for lighting a poster when mounted right next to it. Even high powered 48" tubes don't put light out to great distances. It may take a dozen or more 48" tubes to make enough light around a dance floor for good effects.

Screw-In Bulbs: Good choice for budget parties. These can be purchased cheaply. Can be screwed into lamps. Screw them into the those aluminum reflector work lamps with clamp mounts that you get at big-box home improvement stores. They can be clamped almost anywhere and pointed. More watts is better but more expensive and it still takes a lot of them to get great results for a good sized room and dance floor.

LED Panels and Flood Lights: Expensive but worth it. Good quality LED UV lights put out a much higher strength light than the watts they consume. For instance, a 25 watt LED panel puts out about as much UV light as a 250 watt black light bulb. LED UV lights come in panels of hundreds of individual UV LEDs (192 is common) and are available as flood lights, spot lights and cross-overs (between flood and spot). There are smaller, intense round LED black lights that are tightly focused spot lights. They can be floor mounted or mounted on inexpensive light racks. Cheap LED black lights have low output or come in black light "colors" that don't cause much glowing.

High Power Incandescent: These lights tend to come with 400 Watt black light bulbs mounting in a housing with a reflector to make the light either a flood light or a spot light. They generate a lot of black light with excellent coverage. They are also expensive and use a lot of power (and make a bit of heat). They are heavy so they can be floor mounted or hung on heavy-duty light racks. You can't beat them for effect – everything from shoe laces to teeth glow like crazy. They must be handled correctly for warm-up and cool down or their output and life time will be severely reduced (minimum 10 minute warmup, minimum 15 minute cooldown after unplugging before plugging in again)

More Than Black Light: It doesn't have to be all glow. Add in a laser or a dance light (or two) to add a whole new vibe to the affair.



REVIEW

The keys to a great glow party are -

Enough Black Light, no other lights in the main event room

Black out windows and entry ways

Decorate like crazy with day glow painted black poster paper, balloons, etc. Splash and drizzle some glow paint on black construction paper or poster board – it looks great!

Use white or glow in the dark party accessories and apparel

Wear white or day glow clothing. Accent outfits with non-glowing accessories like belts to break up the glow.

Day glo face and body paint make it very personal. Use easy to wash off products of good quality. Make sure it is non-toxic. Don't use paint intended for posters or any other surface on hair or skin.

Test everything under a black light before the party – some things and fabrics don't glow the way you would expect.

The best lighting is the setup that works for you and your party and meets the balance of best effect vs cost. You want to have enough black light that the party room is completely lit by black lights. It's tough to have "too much." Common packages that are good all-around tend to come with a combination the 400 Watt flood and spot lights and a few LED panels with light racks.

ProCo Audio and Lighting has black light party packages that include lights, light stands and face/body paint. All you need is a dark room and some decorations. Contact us to put together the package that's perfect for you

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[facebook.com/procoaudio](https://www.facebook.com/procoaudio)

713-289-4338

info@procoaudio.net

