

# BBO Guide – Part 1

# Start Your Own Brown Bag Outreach!

Our Brown Bag Outreach isn't exclusive just for us! We got our idea from the "Backpacks & Brown Bags" ministry of Necia Freeman. We want everyone to get involved with the needy in their local communities. A brown bag type of outreach is a perfect way to start, and also has the potential to grow into something big!

Our program is simple and straightforward enough to get anyone well on their way to helping their local homeless. Below, we will cover the basics from planning, shopping, and some tips for while you're on your own route! There is also a set of downloadable resources that cover everything in our guide, including this guide itself!

Here are the Basics (with a team of 3):

- Shopping Time: < 1 hour
- Prep Time: 30 min. – 1.5 hours
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Here are the sections to our 3-part guide:

- Part 1: The Stuff
- Part 2: The Prep
- Part 3: The Outreach
- Appendix: Resources

## Part 1: The Stuff

### THE Brown Bag

Here is the list of item types that we include in each of our brown bags, and the specific item we personally use for our own outreach. Feel free to substitute as you wish. The items we chose were based

on efficiency and price (see shopping section below).

- 1 lunch bag: Generic brown paper bags, size 6#
- 1 sandwich:
  - 2 bread slices: Oroweat Country Buttermilk Bread
  - 2 ham slices: Kirkland Signature Sliced Extra Lean Ham
  - 1 cheese slice: Kraft American Cheese Singles
- 1 sandwich bag: Generic non-zipper plastic sandwich bag
- 1 chip/snack: Pringles On-The-Go or Frito-Lays Variety Pack Chips
- 1 candy: Kirkland Signature Funhouse Treats Assorted
- 1 napkin: Generic disposable paper napkin
- 1 set of condiments:
  - 1 mayonnaise packet: First Street Mayonnaise Packets
  - 1 mustard packet: First Street Mustard Packets
- 1 invitation card: Custom printed from Microsoft Word (template below)
- 1 beverage: Kirkland Signature 8 oz. Mini Bottled Water
- Anything extra that gets donated or you want to add

## Shopping

We like to be as efficient as possible, so that means shopping for all

our items in the least number of stops. We also want to be as efficient as possible with the quantity of items we buy. We try our best to use all the items we buy at each week's outreach (save for a few bulk items, of course).

This guide preps for 48 brown bags, which works out perfectly with the quantity of items we buy as you will see. If you go with a different brand, the quantities will of course be different and you will need to adjust accordingly. If you want to buy in bulk and separate the items for each week, you can do that too. Make it your own!

We purchase all of our items at Costco Warehouse and Cash & Carry/Smart & Final.

## The Bag: Generic 6# brown paper bags



Any brown paper bag will do. We find that 6# (6 pound) bags are just the right size for mobility and space for all the items we need to put in it. You can even go with plastic bags if you like, though paper bags are more environment friendly (God created the world so let's love it), even if they are more expensive. Finally, in our area, white or other colored bags were more expensive than the brown.

The bags come organized in sets of about 50 placed every other way, with 12 sets total. I say "about" because there aren't always 50, so I'd double-check before taking only one set. The 12 sets would ideally last you 3 months.

# The Bread: Oroweat Country Buttermilk Bread



Costco sells these bad boys in sets of two loaves. Each loaf has 24 slices. We buy two bags of two loaves each. That will allow you to make exactly 48 sandwiches, including the ends. Some people love the ends, some people don't. We believe food is food, and so we include them as part of the 48. Sometimes we mix and match so one person will get one end piece and a regular slice, just to keep everyone happy.

## The Meat: Kirkland Signature Sliced Extra Lean Ham





Costco also sells these two-packs of ham. They come already sliced in 24 slices per pack. We purchase two of these two-packs, which allow us to put two slices of ham per sandwich. If you want to do only one slice of ham per sandwich, purchase only one two-pack.

## The Cheese: Kraft American Cheese Singles



These come in a single box of 96 individually wrapped slices of cheese, divided into four packs. We buy one box for two week's worth of outreach, taking two packs out each time. The individual wrapper is somewhat annoying to remove, but buying bulk cheese was more

inefficient and once you find the key to unwrapping them, you won't have too much trouble.

## The Sandwich Bag: Generic non-zipper plastic bags



The key here is non-zippered. We used to use the zippered kind, but you have to unzip each bag before you stick the sandwich in, and the sandwiches don't always want to fit. The fold and close top allows for much more flexibility and faster packaging. Buy a bulk box and let it last for many outreaches to come.

## The Chip/Snack: Pringles On-The-Go





Costco sells these in a variety pack of 48. They don't always have them, so in that case we go with our backup (see below). 48 is the perfect number for 48 brown bags! They are slightly more expensive than the bagged chips, but sometimes they are on sale.

Remember, you can always substitute anything for the snack or chips!



This is our backup when the Pringles aren't available. These come in a 54 variety pack. We take 6 out each week, and bring the entire box. The 6 left over we keep each week until we have enough to make 48. These are also available at Costco.



# The Dessert: Kirkland Signature Funhouse Treats Assorted



Is it healthy? No, but it sure does taste great! We purchase these at Costco. They sell them by weight, so there aren't always the exact number of candies in them. However, we found that on average, we can pre-pack 4 gallon-size ziplock bags of 48 treats each. We put in one piece per bag.

Costco also sells a chocolate variety pack version, but chocolate tends to melt in the heat and won't last as long as these hard/chewy candies.

## The Manners: Disposable napkin



This is, of course, totally optional. But we believe that it really does matter to the recipient the amount of care and thought that goes into each bag. Including a napkin goes a long way into sharing some of the motherly (or fatherly) love that went into your lunch.

We buy this four-pack of Kirkland napkins from Costco, and pinch a few in each bag (one per bag takes a little too long to separate).

## The Condiments: First Street Mayonnaise/Mustard Packets

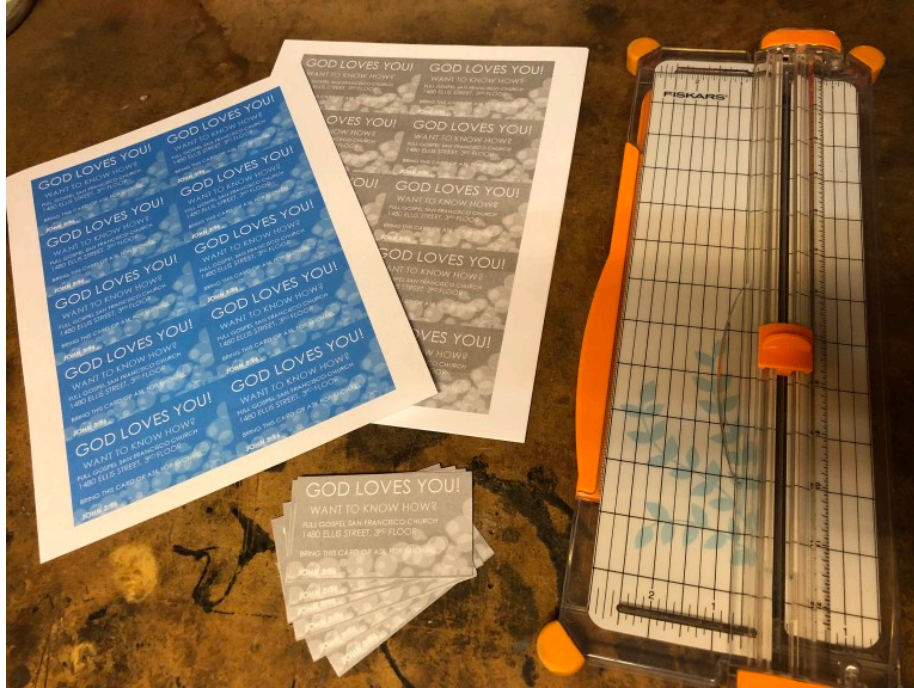


I don't know about you, but I'm definitely a saucy kind of guy. Sandwiches need some extra flavor! We used to do mayonnaise, mustard, and ketchup, but we quickly found out that no one really uses ketchup in their sandwiches. You can buy a box of these at your local Smart & Final or Cash & Carry, and I believe they're carried at Sam's Club as well. Obviously, you will run through two mayo boxes per mustard box so you may want to stock up!

At one point, some of our members thought we should scrap the

condiments altogether because no one was using them. But one day, a homeless friend of ours told us we were the only free lunch out there that included the condiments – and that was that.

## The Invitation: Custom printed cards



We include these invitation cards to invite them to our Sunday service each week. We include our address, the time of our service, and the person they should ask for (in case your church isn't used to homeless showing up). Obviously this assumes that your church is open to receiving the homeless to their services (you'd be surprised!).

The color printed cards look way better, but at some point the cost of color printing weighs in. I use a small Fiskars paper cutter to make neatly cut cards. Find a template of our cards in the resource section at the end of the guide!

## The Drink: Kirkland Signature 8 oz. Mini Bottled Water





This is an essential. Our friends are THIRSTY. We used to provide juice, but we quickly found that by providing water, they could use it for other things (hygiene, etc.) instead. These come in a pack of 80 at Costco, so we pull out 48 and save the rest. When the left overs total 48, we skip buying them that week and just bring the ones we have. These 8 oz. bottles fit perfectly inside our brown bags.

Feel free to include juice like Caprisun, or juice boxes instead! Make it your own!

## Anything else?



As I've said already many times, we want you to be able to make this your own! Feel free to add extra things, or substitute for others. These are some of the items we include as extras each week depending on the amount of money we have on hand. Each of these are also bought at, you guessed it, Costco.

## Other Important Items



Here is the list of items we like to keep with us to help us prep the bags and keep everything sanitary, as well as help us distribute the bags on our route!

- Disposable plastic gloves (for all hands touching food items!)
- Disposable wipes (to clean the tables before and afterwards)
- Paper towels (to wipe up messes and spills)
- Large tray or clean disposable table sheet (to prep sandwiches on)
- Scissors or Knife (to open boxes and packaging)
- Personal grocery cart (to carry brown bags)
- Large reusable bags (to carry extra brown bags or other items like socks)

Some items that require a special note are shown and discussed below:

## Disposable Plastic Gloves



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Keep it sanitary! Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, then use some disposable gloves when you're handling any

of the food items. Our friends already have a lot to defend themselves from, so let's not make it harder for them!

## Large prep tray or Clean disposable table sheet



We use commercial size baking trays to prep our food, which we dishwash afterwards. When we first started, however, we used large sheets of clean art paper to cover the table before we began. Use whatever method you need to keep it clean and safe!

## Distribution: Personal grocery cart or Large reusable bags



We used to carry all our bagged lunches in 4-5 large reusable bags every week. However, that got to be a bit tiresome so we purchased a personal grocery cart (above, left) at Smart & Final for about \$20. All 48 brown bags fit in there when packed correctly, and it's much less weary on the body.

We still bring one reusable bag with us, usually to carry socks or other items we are handing out, or some of the brown bags when they won't all fit in the cart (sometimes we have extra items in the bags that make them bigger than normal). That being said, IKEA has the best reusable bags. They have a large and an extra long large bag made of the material that won't rip. Our homeless friends are using them to move around, so you know they're tough!

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# BBO Guide – Part 2



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## Part 2: The Prep

# Prepping The Bag

Generally, this is the order and how things get prepared (at least, how we do it!). The more people you have to help you, the more things you can get done simultaneously, and the faster you'll get done!

1. Unfold 48 brown bags and place them in rows.
2. Place the beverage in each bag (to weigh them down).
3. Place the chip/snack in each bag (to space things right).
4. Place the finished sandwich in each bag (see next section for food prep).
5. Place a set of condiments into each bag.
6. Place a piece of candy into each bag.
7. Place a invitation card into each bag.
8. Place a napkin (or two) into each bag.
9. Fold the tops of the bags.
10. Place the finished bags into the cart/bag.
11. Dispose of all boxes and packaging, save the leftovers, and clean the tables!

# Prepping The Sandwich

Again, this is the order and how things get prepared when we do it. The more people you have to help you, the more things you can get done simultaneously, and the faster you'll get done!

1. Lay down the tray or other clean surface.
2. Lay down 24 slices of bread (or less depending on your space).
3. Lay down 2 slices of ham, stacked then folded in half, onto each slice of bread.
4. Lay down 1 slice of cheese on top of each pair of ham.
5. Lay down 24 new slices of bread on top.
6. Bag each into a sandwich bag and fold the top over.
7. Place finished product into the brown bag (see bag prep section above).

# Prepping The Route

Our route is a total of 2 miles, starting from our church to a major road (Van Ness Ave.) and back. Here are a couple things we considered when mapping our route:

- Are there any parks, tent cities, or other areas of homeless congregation?
- Which roads or trails will allow for the highest chance of finding someone?
- What areas might be too dangerous to walk through (at least for now)?
- What is a reasonable distance participants will be willing/are able to walk?
- Are there physical obstacles or barriers that may make walking difficult?
- Is this a route that you would be willing to walk in difficult weather?
- Would 40-50 homeless be served on this route?

It may help to walk or drive around the neighborhood before beginning this outreach program to see areas that can best be served by you and your members. Also, know that the population we serve never stays in one spot, so be willing to adjust and make changes to the route as time goes on (when it rains, for example). That being said, it's best to stick to the route you have chosen so you can be consistent and build relationships with those that you meet regularly.

# Prepping The Team

It would be best for you to sit down with your team and discuss a few things before heading out on your first outreach.

First, pray together, that God will use you and your team's outreach to further His Kingdom in your neighborhood and city.



Second, go over the purpose of your outreach. Why are you doing this? Do you have a mission statement? Is there a goal? What are you working towards?

Third, go over some safety items and procedures. You can never be too careful. Here are a few things we recommend:

1. Come up with a plan if there is an emergency, such as where to meet or what to do.
2. Consider leaving all your valuables (cell phones, jewelry) at church.
3. Have one person bring a phone just for emergencies.
4. Go over (include pictures) of health hazards to watch out for:
  1. New and used syringes
  2. Syringe and syringe plunger caps
  3. Tourniquets
  4. Drug mixing/prepping caps/cups
  5. Weapons (razor blades)
  6. Drug paraphernalia
5. Be extra watchful during the first several outreaches.

This might seem like a lot, and a bit scary, but it's better to be prepared than surprised later on. It really helps to have someone who has had experience with drugs such as a recovering addict (such as myself), or someone who has worked with the homeless in places such as shelters before. They can help guide and prepare you for some of the things you might see when you're out there.

# Optional: Designing The Bag

You may have seen some of the photos on our site with brown bags that have been decorated. In order to get more members of our church involved, we have asked them to help decorate bags that go out during special holidays and occasions. For example, we decorate bags for Thanksgiving, New Year's, Valentine's Day, and Easter. This is also a great way to get the children involved.

Remember to review all the finished bags. Words of encouragement are great, but some might be taken the wrong way or even hurt our friends in need. One time we had a bag that said, "You got yourself in this situation, but God will help get you out." While that may be very true, we want to take the supportive and encouraging approach to begin the building of relationships. Be conservative and keep it clean!

Quick tip: When decorating bags, remind artists to keep the decorations to the lower 75% of the bag. The top gets rolled up, and anything pretty or any glued on decorations will get ruined and make the bag impossible to close!

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# BBO Guide – Part 3

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## Part 3: The Outreach

### The Launch

Before heading out, review the "Prepping The Team" section in Part 2. Everyone should be on the same page. Consider putting together a participation agreement so everything is crystal clear (see resources

for a version of ours).

Here are some general guidelines when interacting with the homeless:

- You're here for them. Try to stay focused on them, not your phones. They will notice, and you will lose an opportunity to bring someone to Christ.
- Talk to them. Interact. Mingle. Laugh. Joke. Be a person. Time and time again, we get feedback that the time we spend with them just talking is more than any food we bring.
- Stick together. Try not to split up in order to get your bags out faster. It means a lot more when a group comes to talk to just one person.
- Be mindful of what you say. You don't have to be perfect. But be sensitive to who you're talking to and just be considerate.
- Sometimes people have bad days. Offer a bag and let them be, whether they take it or not.
- You will be asked for more than one bag by any one person. Let them have it. We didn't make them to keep them. However, we generally limit two bags per person, unless we are approaching the end of our route and we have extra bags left.
- Try not to judge or condemn. Try not to give ultimatums. Build the relationship first, and when they're comfortable, you'll find that they'll open up to you and ask

about Him.

# The Approach

Our general approach to the approach is to reach out to anyone we see on our path. Sometimes that means we need to go a little off our route to get to someone who may be immobile. Sometimes the Spirit tugs on us into one direction, or makes us notice someone we might have just let pass. Our experience is that we will see more homeless than we can reach out to, so we do what we can for who we can, and we pray that we will have another opportunity to reach out to that other person in the future.

You will find that some of the homeless are struggling with an addiction of some sort. They might be under the influence when you approach them, or might even be doing drugs as you walk up. I leave the decision whether to wait, pass or approach up to you. As a recovering addict, I am much more comfortable with those types of situations, so I tend to approach while others in my team will pass, and that's totally fine. But there's a line that needs to be drawn, and sometimes it's better to pass and say a silent prayer than to approach and get into some kind of altercation.



# The Interaction

Most of the time they just want to talk. If you let them, they might talk both your ears off. Listen more than you speak, and even if you don't understand half of what's coming out of their mouth, just nod and grin. But no matter what, stay focused on them. They can tell when you're trying to ignore them or move on. When the time comes to leave, just be honest and say that the next week you will look forward to hearing the rest of the conversation. With that in mind, we generally spend a minimum of 5 minutes for each person to 15 minutes.

15 minutes might seem like a long time, but as you grow in your relationships and you see the same people over and over again, you will have much more to talk about and you will be interested in how they're progressing. After a couple interactions, you might find opportunities to pray with them or share the Gospel with them – and most of the time, they'll be open to it. We tend not to advertise “the church thing” too early because we don't want to scare anyone off. Over time, we believe that consistency along with God's grace will be the key to opening their hearts.

Do we spend at least 5 minutes with every person? No. Some just pass and we hand out a bag and ask God to bless them. But the key to our outreach is the building of relationships, and relationships can't be built without an investment of time, consistency, reliability, and getting to know one another to eventually trusting one another.

# The Break

As your route comes to an end, you may find yourselves with a bunch of extra bags or you may have run out of bags halfway through. That's fine. Take notes and remember, and adjust the route accordingly. It may help for you to keep a journal for the first few months so that you can see how things progress and make changes as needed.

When your team returns to church (shelter, office, etc.), consider having a short debrief on what people experienced, what they felt, what they learned, and things they will remember for the future. Then end the outreach with a prayer and ask God for the strength to continue this outreach regularly.

That being said, CONSISTENCY is the key. The worst thing you can do is to tell a person in need that you will be there for them at a certain time and fall through, or that you will bring them something and not show up. On our route, we let everyone know that we will be here on the same route, on the same day, at the same time, rain or shine. And they have come to expect us at that time. While this might not be possible for every single group out there, sticking to a plan and keeping your friends in need informed of any changes will go a long way into getting great results.

So as you break until your next outreach, I will be praying for you and for those that you are serving, wherever that may be. God bless you. Amen.

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