

How To Make a Balloon Arch

Balloon Arch Basics

When planning a balloon arch, there are several things to consider. Before starting, determine the size of the arch, materials needed for the frame, the color(s) and quantity of balloons, and whether you will fill the balloons with helium or air.

Size: When deciding on the size of your balloon arch, measure the height and width of the area where it will be displayed. To estimate the approximate length of the arch, use the following calculations.

To make an arch that is **wider than it is tall:**

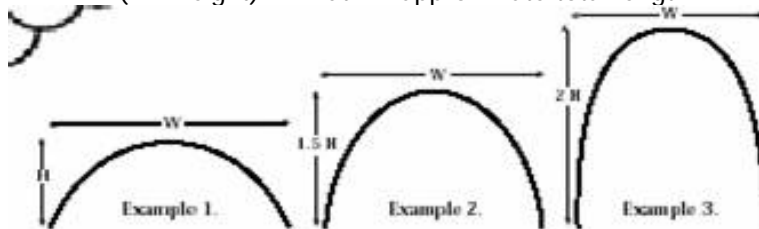
$\text{Width} + \text{Height} = \text{approximate total length.}$

For an arch with the **same height and width:**

$(1.5 \times \text{Height}) + \text{Width} = \text{approximate total length.}$

For an arch that is **taller than it is wide:**

$(2 \times \text{Height}) + \text{Width} = \text{approximate total length.}$



The size of your arch will largely determine the size of the balloons that are necessary. For a small arch, the balloons do not need to be inflated all the way; the larger the arch gets, the bigger the balloons should be.

Frame: Air-filled balloon arches require a sturdy frame. A strong, flexible material such as conduit, PVC pipe, and aluminum or plastic rod will work. For additional support, you'll need to wire the arch to the wall or ceiling, and/or find a sturdy base to anchor the frame at the bottom. If you choose to fill your balloons with helium, the gas will hold the balloons up without additional support; all you'll need is 50 Pound test nylon fishing twine (monofilament line) to tie the balloons together, and two ground supports to tether (weight) down each end of the line. (You can make 5# weights for helium filled arches by filling attractive cellophane or foil bags with cat litter or sand. If you are placing arch in an area with carpet use a drapery hook right into the carpet. Tie filament line to closed loop.)

Color: Arches with one color are the easiest to make. If you have made a balloon arch before, try combining two or more colors to create a spiral pattern.

Balloon Quantity: The size of your arch will determine the number of balloons you need as well. In general, you will need 4-6 balloons per foot of frame.

Air vs. Helium: Balloon arches filled with air last much longer than those filled with helium, but require more support. It also takes a lot of people and energy to blow up dozens of balloons. Arches made with helium-filled balloons effectively fill large spaces and require less support than air-filled creations, but can be trickier to handle and put together due to the helium's tendency to rise. In addition, helium is more costly than air and will only float for about 6-12 hours. Floating time is dependent on the size of the balloon, quality of the balloons used, and weather conditions where your arch is being displayed.

Note: Make sure all balloons are inflated to the same size. One way to ensure you are being consistent is to make a template from cardboard. Cut a round hole to match the desired balloon size, and pass each one through when inflating them.

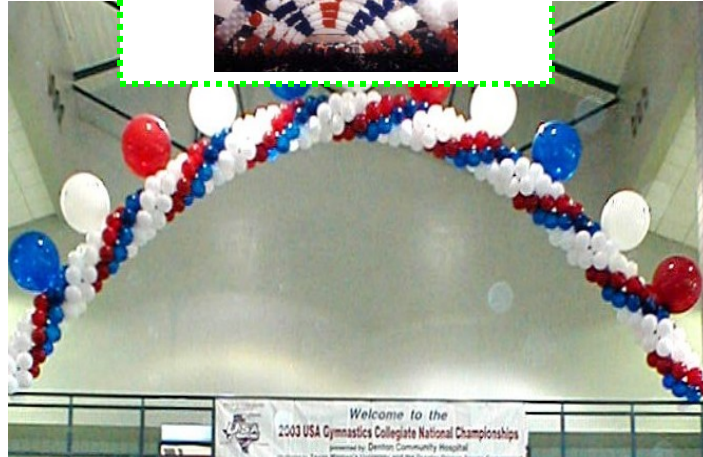
String of Pearl Arches



Pearl arches can only be made by using the Helium method. The latex balloons will not float upright if using a frame and the air filled method.

1. Determine the approximate length of the balloon arch. (See sizing calculations)
2. Cut the designated length of monofilament line and secure both ends to stationary objects, such as door knobs or chairs. Make sure the line is tight. Leave extra line at each end, so it will be easier to move and tie down the arch in its permanent location later.
3. Inflate balloon and run through your balloon sizer, if using one, for consistent balloon size.
4. Tie the neck of the balloon around the line (you can adjust the balloons position, if necessary, by wetting the line and gently sliding the balloon).
5. For a professional look that's fast, use a spacer, such as a cut balloon straw, to evenly space balloons as you go and eliminate the need to adjust later. I find a 12" ruler works perfect for an arch using 11"-12" Latex. Measure from the base of the balloon.
6. Repeat until Arch is completed. You can decorate the balloons with ribbon tails, cut lengths of curling ribbon, fold in half, loop onto the line just above the balloon, and pull tight. There's no need to tie them to the necks.
7. Remove the line from the stationary objects and anchor the ends by securing them to appropriate weights. You can fill decorative bags with sand or cat litter if a standard foil balloon weight is not sufficient to hold the arch down. If you are placing the arch in an area where there is carpet try using drapery hooks, tying the line to the looped end and inserting the point into the carpet.
8. To increase the life of a String of Pearls Arch use HI-FLOAT. We can special order Pint Bottles with Pumps included for about \$20.00.

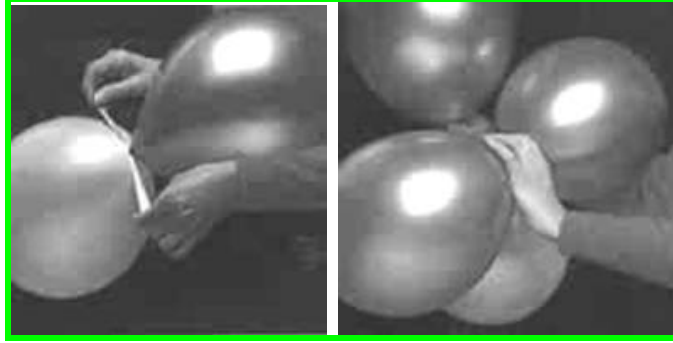
Don't want to tackle this? Need a professional Balloon Decorating Service? We recommend: "Balloons to You" visit them here:



Classic Wrapped Balloon Arch

Wrapped Arches can be created using the Helium or Air Filled methods. You can use one color or create spectacular Spiral Arches using multiple colored balloons.

1. Determine the approximate length of the balloon arch. (See sizing calculations)
2. Set up the frame, if using air filled method, for your balloon arch. If using helium, stretch out your arch line and secure each end to stationary objects leaving a minimum of 1" - 2" extra line at each end. Make sure the line is taut and secure.
3. Fully inflate two Balloons to your predetermined size (using Sizer if needed). Tie these balloons together. This is a "duplet".
4. Make a second duplet. Twist two balloons together, one from each duplet to create a four-balloon "Cluster". (see photos below)



5. To attach cluster to frame or balloon line, separate two of the balloons in the cluster and push the cluster onto the line. To secure, twist together the two balloons that were separated.
6. Attach a second cluster to the line as in step 5. Rotate it 45 degrees so it is nested into the first cluster. Before securing, push its center firmly against the first cluster's center. Twist together the two balloons that were separated.



The photo at left shows the technique of nesting the clusters together. Creating a spiral arch simply consist of alternating colors to appear as a spiral. Play with a variety of mix and match color schemes.

7. Repeat steps through 6 until all clusters are secured to the line or frame.
8. Remove the line from the stationary objects, if using the helium method, and wrap the line around a couple of the balloons to secure it to the end cluster. Tie the excess line to the anchor points.
9. Once arch is in place, you may add tulle, lights, ivy or floral garlands to accent your arch with. Remember when adding lights, to evenly space strands between the same number of balloon clusters. Also, be sure cords are completely concealed and taped down to floor, so none of your guests trip or catch your arch with a heel!

An interesting technique (shown above) is to tie 3' Balloons filled with HI-FLOAT to your air filled arch (secured only to monofilament line) for an arch that will last up to 4 or 5 days without having to create a frame. This system can be used for Balloon Columns as well.

Balloon Columns



Balloon Columns are made using the same method as a four balloon cluster arch. If using helium, weight down the column with an appropriate anchor and top off with a large foil balloon or a 16" or 36" latex balloon. If using air filled balloons you will need to purchase conduit and base plates for securing the clusters. A top off balloon will not be necessary for the balloons will not rise off of the conduit.

Note: the trick to creating a spiral effect is to arrange clusters with the two same-color balloons directly across from each other.