

How to have a party kids will love



EVERYONE LOVES A PARTY!

A child's idea of a successful party may be quite different from your own. The cake may flop, the camera may not flash, and the piñata may burst before anyone has a chance to swing at it, but your child may still say "Mom. That was the best party ever!" The key to a "successful" children's party is remembering whom the party is for - the kids. Children want fun, giggles and a few surprises.

As a parent, it's up to you to oversee the party plans and help get things organized. Start a couple of weeks in advance! First, decide with your child whom to invite and how long the party will be. One rule of thumb is to invite the same number of children as the age in years of your child, plus one or two. Generally, a time limit of 1/2 to 1 hour for 1- and 2-year-olds, 1 1/2 to 2 hours for 3- to 5-year-olds, 2 to 2 1/2 hours for 6- to 8-year-olds, and 2 1/2 to 3 hours for kids 9 and up is adequate. Don't forget to plan what siblings will be doing at the time of the party. Unless the age difference is very small, older children usually don't appreciate younger siblings tagging along and don't wish to be included as a "helper" at a younger sibling's party. This is a good time for a trip to visit Grandma or a friend.

Invitations can be mailed or hand delivered by your child but remember to give a quick phone call to all the parents of the guests to make sure no invitations were misplaced along the way.



DECORATION IDEAS

Choosing a theme for your party will help you with ideas for decorations and activities and often gives guests ideas for birthday presents. Even for holiday parties, when the theme is predetermined, there are variations you can do to make a party more unique.

Crepe Paper Streamers and Balloons will go a long way with children. They will set a great festive backdrop for photographs. A banner wishing the special person "Happy Birthday", "Congrats" or "Happy Halloween" etc. if it is a holiday party will be a fun addition to the atmosphere.

If you have chosen a theme for your party there are usually many nice decorations to choose from for centerpieces, wall decor and the like. If you are on a budget (aren't we all!) a few well-chosen pieces are all you need. If the party is for very young children 1- to 3-year-olds the celebration is more for the parents and friends than the little ones, so limit your choices to colorful streamers and perhaps tableware in the child's favorite character. Balloons can be dangerous for 1 & 2 year olds so keep them away from the mouths!

Piñatas not only give the children an activity during the party but dress up the event as well. Choose one within your theme or just for the color.

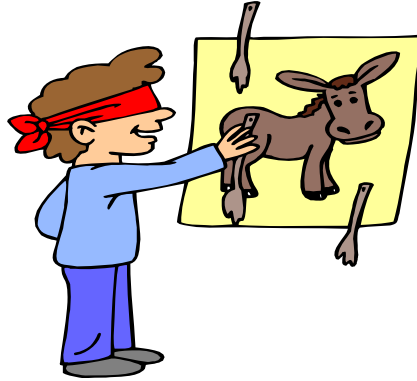
You can find more party ideas at these terrific websites:

www.partydirectory.com

www.partiesabound.com

www.partypop.com

www.about.com



PARTY ACTIVITIES

To keep the party moving smoothly, organize it in 15-minute segments. In addition to time for food, favors, and gifts, kids want time to play. Keep the games easy enough so all the children can have fun playing without getting frustrated. Children under the age of 4 may have difficulty understanding "winning" and "losing." It may be helpful to end each game by awarding everyone a prize for playing well, letting the "winner" choose first. If the activities you've planned call for teams, it's important to have a way of selecting teams so no one feels left out. You can have the children "Count Off", alternating position on the teams or pull colored paper out of a hat (each color signifies a team) or simply drawing straws.

Your local party supply store will have a selection of party games you can choose from or you can make up your own beanbag throws, bingo games, races, card games, guessing games or hiding games. Don't forget that crafts play an important roll in activities today. Children love making something they can take home to Mom & Dad!

One of the best activities to finish a party is to have a "Clean-up Race" to music. Put a trash container in the middle of the room and have everyone put in any trash left around. After completed, favors will be in order!



PRIZES AND FAVORS

Prizes and favors are an important part of the party for children and they allow everyone to take home a little of the party fun. To avoid problems later, set aside a place where guests can keep their prizes in individual, personalized bags. The "Loot" bags can match your theme or be made from small gift bags or lunch bags with the child's name on it. Consider allowing the children to create their own "Booty Bag", as a craft activity, and while they are eating cake you can fill the bags with goodies.

With children under the age of 4, it may be easiest to hand out a small favor bag as they are leaving the party. This way, none of the favors are lost and the children do not spend the whole party playing with the toys in their bags - unless, of course, that's what you want!

Prizes and favors do not need to be expensive to be treasures to a child. Here are a few suggestions:

- Stickers
- Plastic animals
- Small cars
- Writing pads
- Balls
- Jacks
- Bubble pipes
- Barrettes
- Pencils
- Jump ropes
- Finger puppets
- Necklaces
- Crayons
- Coloring books
- Clackers

Your local party store will have a wide selection of items to choose from at reasonable prices.

For the wee ones wrap favors and give them out when the Birthday Person opens gifts. It is difficult for them to understand the gifts are not for them.



MUNCHIES

Along with prizes and favors, refreshments are one of the highlights of a party for children! As with every part of planning, try to keep it simple. Choose recipes your child likes instead of those you love to prepare.

Stickers that complement the party theme can be stuck on wooden picks and inserted into frosted cupcakes for simple treats. Though sweets are traditional party fare, fruits, vegetables, and sandwiches presented in kid-pleasing ways (try cutting them with cookie cutters!) are healthy alternatives. Just keep in mind the purpose of the party is a celebration "kids" will enjoy!

Instead of soda make up a batch of lemonade or iced tea if your children like it. A punch recipe using fruit juice and ginger ale can be a healthy choice too.

Try to avoid hot or incredibly messy foods. It will just add more work for you and kids are usually easy to please. So relax and enjoy your child's fun too!

HANDY CHECKLIST

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| _____ Invitations | _____ Centerpiece |
| _____ Centerpiece | _____ Streamers |
| _____ Lunch Plates | _____ Balloons |
| _____ Cake Plates | _____ Party Favors |
| _____ Lunch Napkins | _____ Loot Bags |
| _____ Beverage Napkins | _____ Party Games |
| _____ Plastic Cutlery | _____ Banners |
| _____ Table cover | _____ Wall Decorations |