

# **Birthday Mom's Survival Guide**

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## Birthday Mom's Survival Guide

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to my Mom, who always made my parties as a child extra special. She was a wonderful audience when I first started magic at the age of twelve.

Thanks Mom for the encouragement; I couldn't have done it without you.



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## **Introduction**

This book is a result of the twenty years of experience I have gained from performing magic at birthday parties. During that time I have seen what it takes to produce successful birthday parties which both the parents and the birthday child enjoy. Planning a birthday party is not difficult, but the tips you will learn from reading this book will help make the process even easier and more enjoyable.

This book has been divided into three major sections. You will want to read through the entire book before you begin the planning process. If your child is older, you may want to read through the book with him/her. Children love to be a part of the planning for their birthday party and will help give you a better understanding of their expectations.

The beginning of this book contains all the information you will need for the birthday basics such as decorations, goody bags, duration, and the expectations the child will have for his party. You do not need to spend a lot of money in order to have a successful birthday party, especially if you plan accordingly. At the back of this section are a ton of tips to help you plan for inclement weather, what to do with your pets, and other advice to help prevent potential problems.

The middle of the book contains everything you will

need to know to produce a successful theme party, slumber party, and includes a list of the most popular party games that will keep children of all ages busy having fun. I have also included menu ideas perfect for children's parties. You will be surprised at the variety of choices which are both easy to prepare and taste great even for the pickiest eaters.

At the end of the book I have printed out a party planning guide and checklist. This guide will not only help you plan the party, but will also ensure that you do not forget anything on the big day. The work sheets will help keep you organized and on budget, but they only work if you use them.

After reading the book, review each section as you complete the planning sheets. Give yourself plenty of time and let your child help you prepare for the party whenever possible. The most important thing is to have fun.



# **Party Basics**

## **Invitations**

One of the first things you will want to do when preparing for your child's birthday party is to send out the invitations. There are many different types of invitations available at most card shops and you will easily be able to find one that will match up with the theme you choose for the party. You can also use a little creativity and design your own. We will give you several ideas you can use to help make a fun and memorable invitation.

The ten things that should be included on an invitation:

1. Name of the birthday child.
2. Name of the host.
3. Location of the party (with a map or directions if needed).
4. Date of the party.
5. Time of party (both beginning and ending time).
6. Party's theme or dress code, if applicable.
7. If a meal will be served.
8. Request an R.S.V.P. (It is a good idea to have a deadline.)
9. Your telephone number (include your cell phone number if the event is held at a location other than your home).
10. Gift suggestions (if appropriate).



The best way to customize your invitations so that they are unique is to make them yourself. Your child will enjoy helping you with this weekend craft project and each guest will receive an original creation. Here are some fun ways you can customize an invitation for your next party:

- You can easily and quickly create a customized invitation by using a computer program such as Microsoft Publisher or Print Shop Deluxe
- Use your child's handprint to decorate the front of the invitation using finger paint to stamp the card.
- Write out the invitation of a blank post card using crayons or felt-tip markers. You can then send them in the mail whole, or cut each post card into a jigsaw puzzle and send the pieces in an envelope.
- Print the invitation on strips of paper which are then rolled up and inserted into balloons. The balloons are blown up using helium and tied off with pieces of ribbon. This novelty invitation is then personally handed out to the invitees.

Here are some final tips on birthday party invitations:

- Be sure to send out the invitations at least two to three weeks before the birthday so that parents can plan their schedules accordingly.
- Always follow up a telephoned invitation with something in writing.
- It is usually not a good idea to have your child carry invitations to school to be handed out. Not only can some of the invitations get lost, but there can be hurt feelings on the part of children who are not invited.
- You can have a theme-oriented character hand deliver the invitations.

- A birthday party does not have to be held on the actual day of the birthday. If it falls on a weekday, you can hold the party on the weekend.
- The length of the party may range from an hour for a toddler to several hours for an older child. The average length of time for a grade-school birthday party is two hours.

## **Decorations**

Decorations are an important part of creating the theme for the party. You can do this by using a few colorful balloons, a tablecloth, plastic plates, and a festive cake. Depending on your budget, you can go all out with theme decorations, tiki torches, and balloon archways if you want. There are literally thousands of different decoration combinations you can go with, but we are going to give you some tips to help make these decisions easier.

### **Balloons**

Balloons give you the biggest bang for your money, not just because they are affordable, but also because they fill up a room with color and fun. Balloon bouquets can be used as centerpieces, hung from the chandelier over the serving table, attached to chair backs, and tied to the front gate or mail box. To cut down on the cost, you may want to purchase your balloons in bulk from a party catalog or party supply store. You can also rent a helium tank to fill up the balloons.

## Tips:

- You can blow up non-helium balloons with a bicycle pump.
- Do not let small children blow up balloons because they could suffocate by inhaling them.

## Party Banners

You can get party banners three different ways:

- You can purchase ready-to-use banners from a party supply store.
- You can generate a personalized banner on your home computer.
- A local print shop can make a personalized banner to fit your exact needs.

## Crepe Paper Streamers

Streamers will add a splash of color to any party. Three different streamers can be braided together to form a festive decoration. You can use them to create a canopy over the serving table by suspending the streamers from the ceiling, then attaching the other ends to the corners of the table. However you use them, this decorative accessory is one you will definitely not want to forget.

## **Paper Goods**

Colorful paper tablecloths, plates, cups, napkins, and place cards are all standards for a birthday party. These can be purchased from your favorite party supply store or you can use your imagination and create your own. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Tips:

- Use a white plastic tablecloth and write the children's names with a felt-tip marker at each place setting.
- Make a colorful table cloth by taping newspaper comic pages together.
- Use a theme-oriented sheet as a tablecloth.
- Purchase white vinyl placemats. The children can decorate them with permanent felt-tip markers and stickers. The placemats can be take home as a souvenir.
- In place of paper plates, serve the food in upside-down Frisbees. The Frisbees can also double as a party favor.
- Place card ideas:
  - Write each child's name on a helium balloon tied to the back of their chair.
  - Set a large sugar cookie at each place setting with the child's name written with frosting.
  - Place a goody bag at each place setting with the child's name written on it.
  - Write the child's name on tags attached to party favors that are set at each place setting.

## **Party Favors**

Children love to wear hats and use noisemakers when they are celebrating a birthday party. Colorful theme-oriented favors also add to the party's ambiance. Party favors can either be homemade or purchased from your favorite party supply store. For larger parties you can purchase inexpensive toys and party favors in bulk from catalog companies such as Oriental Trading Company, Birthday Express, or U.S. Toy Company. Unlike goody bags, party favors are usually handed out during the party for the children to play with.

## **Goody Bags**

Goody bags (also known as party bags, loot bags, or favor bags) are usually handed out to the children at the end of most birthday parties. Each invited guest is given one to take home. Goody bags are usually filled with candies, favors, small toys, and other small gifts depending on the age of the guests. These bags can range from simple, decorated lunch bags to customized containers that match the party's theme. In the weeks before the party you will want to keep your eyes open for containers that can be converted to goody bags that coordinate with the theme of your party. One of my favorite places to get items to fill the goody bags is the dollar store. Be sure to write the name of each guest on their goody bag so that there is no confusion at the end of the party.

## **Goody Bag Filler Ideas:**

- Bubbles
- Mini Frisbees
- Blow Up Beach Balls
- Cheap Sunglasses
- Kazoos
- Whistles
- Mini Photo Albums
- Magnets
- Inexpensive Toys
- Plastic Jewelry
- Funny Shoelaces
- Hair Accessories
- Coloring Books
- Small Packs Of Crayons
- Matchbox Cars
- Stamps and Stamp Pads
- Decks of Cards
- Candy



## Party Length Guidelines

When planning your child's birthday you want to keep the activities simple, not too long or difficult, especially for younger children. Kids can be overwhelmed by too much of anything, which can end up spoiling the fun. The invitation should state exactly when the party starts and ends. This will give a specific timeframe for the party and tells the parents exactly when to pick up their children. If you are serving a meal, such as lunch, this should be stated on the invitation. We have found that older children can handle longer parties, but even they have their limit. Here are some suggested guidelines for each age group.

<u>Age (In Years)</u>	<u>Length Of Party</u>
1	Based on the infant's nap time.
2-3	1 - 1 1/2 hours
4-5	2 - 2 1/2 hours
6-7	2 - 3 hours
8-10	3 - 3 1/2 hours

If you planning a party that is held at your home, it will be helpful for you to know how much time to allow for each activity. Here is a loose guideline for a two hour party:

- **15 minutes** - Guests arrive and play with toys and games you have set out in advance which are appropriate for the guests' ages.
- **15 minutes** - games appropriate for the entire group.
- **30 minutes** - Entertainment, such as a clown, magician, costumed character, singing, story time, or a craft project.
- **20 minutes** - Refreshments, including cake and ice cream (this doesn't take as long as you would think).
- **30 minutes** - Physical activities such as games, sports, or contests.
- **10 minutes** - Opening of gifts and goodbyes as parents pick up their children.

This is a basic guideline for a typical party, but feel free to change it to fit your individual needs. You will want to plan on a lot of activities as children quickly have a short attention span; there are plenty of ideas at the back of this book. Hiring an entertainer will not only make your party memorable, it will also make your job easier as they have been specially trained to work with children of this age. The most important thing is for you and your child to have fun.

## **Expectations By Age Groups**

As you plan your child's birthday party, it is important to know which activities are suitable for the various age groups. The expectations of a two year old will be very different from a ten year old and the following guidelines will help you prepare accordingly.

### **1 Year Old**

A baby has absolutely no expectations when it comes to celebrating their birthday. The party is really for the parents, grandparents, other relatives, and friends. A child at this age is too young to participate in any structured activities.

### **2 - 3 Year Olds**

A two year old is able to grasp the concept of a party and can even be excited about it, especially the birthday hats, blowing out candles, and opening gifts. The birthday child will tire quickly and will want his parents near.

By age three, a child will fully understand the concept of a birthday party. They will have probably attended several and realize a party has fun, gifts, and games. Children at this age are still very immature and constant parental supervision will be necessary.

- A loosely structured party works best.
- Children will probably 'parallel play' rather than play together.

- Simple activities such as bean bag toss, follow-the-leader, puppet shows, and simple crafts are appropriate.
- Most of the guests will need a parent present at the party.
- Non-competitive games work the best.

#### **4 - 5 Year Olds**

A four year old will be very enthusiastic about their party and children at this age usually interact well during the party. They will also have a ton of energy until they hit a wall and then become fussy and tired.

Five year olds may be more self-conscious and will need some coaxing in order to get them to participate in the planned activities. A common problem is that they can become very possessive of any prizes or favors they may acquire during the party and may try to snatch them away from one of the other guests. A solution is to provide each child with his own personalized gift bag to collect their newly acquired treasures.

- Simple games can be played because the children's social skills will be more developed.
- Most of the children will not need a parent present at the party.

#### **6 - 7 Year Olds**

Six year olds would like to be more involved in the planning of his birthday party and will probably have a theme in mind. Children at this age will be more competitive so you will need plenty of duplicate prizes for any games that are played.

A seven year old child will be even more involved in the planning of his party and usually works well with the parent in making the party decisions. The party itself can become a little wild due to the exuberance of children at this age group so you will want to have a few parents on hand to help control the energy level.

- Children will be very aggressive during the activities.
- Most of the children will eagerly play more complex games.
- Relay races are very popular.

## **8 - 9 Year Olds**

Eight year olds are less tolerant of the opposite sex, so co-ed parties will be more difficult. Also, an eight year old child's attention span seems to lessen from the previous year, so you will want to include a bunch of different activities for the party or have a destination party where the children will stay entertained. This is a great age to hire a professional entertainer for the party.

It takes a lot to keep a nine year old entertained. This age group is a challenge and you will want to plan for plenty of competitive games, but keep mixing up the teams so that the same children are not always winning.

- Your child may want an 'all girl' or 'all boy' party.
- The children will complete games at a very rapid rate and you should have more planned than you would at first anticipate.
- The children will enjoy games more than favors or costumes.
- Avoid activities or games that might be considered 'babyish'.

## **10 Year Olds**

A ten year old birthday party will be one of the easiest for you to plan. Children this age are enthusiastic, responsive to ideas, eager to help, and appreciative of your efforts and party preparations.

## **11 - 12 Year Olds**

As children get older, they form cliques and rivalries that change on an almost daily basis which makes it difficult to know who to invite. It may be best to plan an all-boy or all-girl party and keep the children busy with fun activities so that no friction develops. You may consider a destination where there is a lot of activity such as a bowling alley, amusement park, or family fun center.

## **Share Party Plans With The Birthday Child**

Your birthday child will feel special and more involved if he or she is included in the party plans including the theme, food, and games that will be played. Children tend to change their mind several times so you will want to set a deadline for the 'final decision'. You may also want to encourage siblings to share in the celebration so they will not feel jealous or excluded. Offer them special jobs to do before and then during the party.

Agree ahead of time to serve a nutritious selection of your child's favorite foods. You will want to include a variety of foods so that even fussy eaters will find something to their liking. Keep in mind that tastes in foods differs from one age group to the next and you may want to try out recipes on your children ahead of time.

Discuss all games with the birthday child. For younger children you will want to avoid games that eliminate children from participations or where there is one winner. Game prizes are not necessary but will add to the fun, especially if everyone wins something. When selecting teams don't let your child or other children pick team members. The pressure on the choosers is unfair and the order of selection often translates into hurt feelings.

## **Entertainment**

Entertainment such as a magician or balloonist will add to the fun of the party, especially if you hire a professional. The entertainment should be scheduled at the beginning of the party, usually about thirty minutes after it starts, when all of the children have arrived and active. You will want to make sure that the entertainment is appropriate for your child's age group. Children four years of age or younger may be terrified of clowns and will not understand magic, but a storyteller or character would be perfect. Children between six and ten years old are perfect audience members for a magic show. The length of the show should be no more than 20-30 minutes for children 4 years old and younger and no longer than 30-45 minutes for older children. Be sure to hire a professional and get references whenever possible.

## **Family Traditions**

It is important to share your traditions with family and friends or they may become lost over time. If you do not have any, it may be time to start some such as a birthday banner for each member of the family, a special recipe, or a favorite game or activity. You may want to make a scrapbook for each of your children specifically for their

birthday which will become a treasured memory when they get older.

## **Problem Children**

You will want to prepare yourself for children who act out or become disruptive. This will usually happen because the child becomes overexcited or over stimulated. If the problem child's parent is not present to intervene, separate the child from the rest of the group and let him know that you have certain rules that must be followed for the safety of the entire group.

Some children behave better if they are given a special task to do. Sometimes they just need a few minutes quiet time to settle down. It should be a last resort to call his or her parents.

If a child is shy or having trouble joining in, give them an alternative activity or special place to observe. Be encouraging, but don't force a shy child to participate. You may not get them to participate, but you want this child to adapt so that the party keeps moving smoothly.

Sometimes the birthday child is the one that gets overexcited or over stimulated. This sometimes happens when they are disappointed that their big day hasn't been what they imagined. Here are some tips that will help prevent problems with your child on their birthday:

- Let the birthday child go first in all games and activities.
- Always serve food to the birthday child first, especially the birthday cake.
- Make sure that you have some helpers during the party so that you can spend time with the birthday



child.

- Siblings may cause trouble because of jealousy or lack of attention. Give older siblings specific jobs to do, and arrange help in attending to younger ones.
- Don't make the mistake of spending more attention to a sibling than to the birthday child.
- Unless your child is exceptionally good about sharing, close off the birthday child's bedroom and put away toys so that none of the other children can play with their things. You may want to ask your child to select a few toys that would be okay to share. Place these toys in the party area for guests to use.

## **Stormy Weather**

Have an indoor alternative in case the weather forces you inside. You will also want to plan a few backup activities that can be played indoors as well as outside.

## **Emergency Situations**

Have a fully stocked first-aid kit on hand as well as a fresh supply of ice cubes. You will also want to know the age-appropriate methods to overcome choking. Make sure you have the contact numbers of all of the parents incase an emergency develops.

## **Don't Get Caught Short**

Have extra food, games, costumes, and prizes. You never know who will decide to bring a surprise guest and you wouldn't want to hurt that child's feelings. Children

will also lose or damage items while they are playing and you will want to be prepared with extra supplies.

### **Present Box (Or Basket)**

A good idea is to decorate a box or laundry basket and place it near the front door. As guests arrive, have them put their gifts in the 'present box'. Keep the present box away from the party area until it is time to open the presents, then carry the box to the appropriate area. After the gifts are opened, place them back in the box along with the list of who gave which gift. Never allow the birthday child or guests to play with these gifts no matter how much they beg as something is bound to get broken or lost.

### **Setting Up The Party Area**

Part of the secret to a well organized party is properly setting up the party area. Start by reviewing your party schedule and imagine how each of the activities will flow from one area to the next. Anticipate what you will need in each area and get these items ready ahead of time.

Most tables are adult size and too high for small children to sit at comfortably. To make children size tables you can use a flat surface such as a door or a folding table with the legs folded up, placed on top of a base approximately 20" high. The base can be crates, boxes, or an end table, but the items should be the same size to keep the table from rocking.

You can find inexpensive plastic chairs specifically designed for children at many discount stores. If you do not have extra chairs, you can ask your guest to bring child size chairs from their home.

Have at least two empty trash cans and extra trash bags as the typical party generates a ton of garbage. Remove the lids to make it easier for the children to toss the trash in. You will also need a trash bag nearby when your child is opening the presents. Don't get upset about spills or messes as these are bound to happen. Have towels and cloths placed in several locations to make cleaning up easier.

Prepare your party area by locking up anything that is breakable or dangerous. Close off restricted areas and make it clear that no one is allowed in these rooms. Go over the entire area with safety in mind. Some of the items often overlooked in backyard parties are charcoal lighter fluid, garden chemicals, and gardening tools and equipment.

Make sure that all family pets are locked up in different room and properly taken care of.

Be realistic on how many children will fit in your party area. A smaller group is easier to keep under control, but you can compensate for this factor by having extra adult help during the party.

### **Balloon Warning**

Small children can swallow and suffocate on deflated or broken balloons. If you have balloons at your party, be sure to remove and dispose of them if they deflate or are broken.



## **Theme Parties**

Every child wants a terrific birthday party, but this doesn't mean that it has to be extravagant or expensive in order to be memorable and fun. You can have an incredible, creative birthday party by incorporating a theme, especially if it incorporates something your child already enjoys. For example, if your child collects dinosaurs, then a dinosaur party would be a perfect choice. You would then choose decorations, food, and games that would tie in with the dinosaur theme.

The most popular theme parties for children are:

- Magic Party
- Racecar Party
- Tea Party
- Doll Party
- Sports Party (The guests dress as their favorite sports hero.)
- Superhero Party (The children dress up as their favorite superhero.)
- Backward Party (The children wear their clothes backwards.)
- Bowling Party
- Carnival Party
- Cooking Party (for older children).
- Construction or Big Truck Party

- Dance Party
- Fireman Party
- Fishing Party
- Gymnastics Party
- Ice Skating Party
- Make-Over Party
- Mall Party
- Mermaid Party
- Miniature Golf Party
- Movie Theater Party
- Pirate Party
- Pizza Party
- Pool Party
- Princess Party
- Roller Skating Party
- Safari Party
- Scrapbook Party
- Harry Potter Party

You can incorporate the theme into part of the party or immerse the theme into the entire party depending on your budget and you and your child's desires. You can't go wrong by choosing a theme party as your guests will enjoy it as much as your child.

## **Surprise Parties**

A surprise party can be a lot of fun for older children, but can be tricky to plan. Not only do you need to figure out a way to surprise your guest of honor, but you must swear your guests to secrecy as well. This last part is especially hard for kids as they are likely to spill the beans before the big event. However, if you are able to accomplish it, a surprise party will be very memorable for the birthday celebrant.

Here are some tips for a successful surprise party:

- Be sure the invitation clearly states that the party is to be a surprise and explain your plan for surprising the guest of honor. You will also want to tell the guest what they are supposed to do to help pull this off.
- Have the guests arrive at least 45 minutes ahead of the guest of honor (nothing spoils a surprise party more than having guests and the birthday child arriving at the same time).
- It is easier to plan the party at a venue other than the birthday child's own house. You may want to have the party at a park, a friend's house, or other location.
- Line up someone to keep the guest of honor busy

on the big day so you can set up the party area.

- Another way to distract the birthday child is to take him to his favorite restaurant. While the family is eating, a co-host welcomes the guests to your home. When you arrive back at your house, “Surprise!”.
- All of the guests can gather at the next door neighbor’s house, then come over in mass and ring the door bell for a big surprise.
- Have a video camera set up to capture the exciting moment of the surprise. This will be a timeless memory you will want to keep.
- Small children may become scared at a surprise party, so this special celebration should be reserved for older children.



# **Pool Party**

A pool party is a great way to celebrate a party with your child and his friends. There is a definite advantage to having a pool party as it keeps the festivities outside which minimizes mess inside your house. You will not have to worry about spilled drinks, dirty fingerprints, or food on your new couch.

Every outdoor party should have an alternative plan in case of inclement weather. A rain date is not a good alternative as many parents have adjusted their schedule for the party. Instead, be prepared to have your party inside or arrange for another activity such as bowling, mini golf, etc.

## **Pool Party Tips**

- **Neighbors:** Let your neighbors know in advance that your family will be hosting a pool party so they will be prepared. This is a courteous gesture and your neighbors will appreciate your warning.
- **Food:** If you are going to serve food at the party, try to arrange for it to be served outside. The children will be wet and track water throughout your house. Hot dogs, hamburgers, or prepared sandwiches are perfect for this occasion.
- **Games:** There are a variety of games and activities you can do in a pool. You will find that

the children will have the most fun with water guns (you may want to ask all of the invited guests to bring their own water gun to the party) and water balloons. Water balloons can be used for games such as hot potato or relay races. You will want to arrange some out of the water activities for children who do not want to be in the water the entire time.

- **Rules:** As the children arrive you should tell them of all of the house and safety rules you will be enforcing during the party and the consequences if the rules are not followed. This is important at any party, but is especially important around a pool.
- **Adult Supervision:** There absolutely must be adult supervision around the pool at all times, even when children are not in the pool. It takes just seconds for an accident to happen. You will also want to keep track of very young children who cannot swim and may wander into the pool.

## **New Year's Eve Party Ideas**

Most kids get stuck with a babysitter on New Year's Eve, but you can have a fun party the children will enjoy, even if they do not stay awake until midnight. Most children are out of school for a week or two before New Years and they will begin to get bored. Planning and preparing for the party will give them something constructive to do.

Kids love to dress up and a New Year's party will give them the excuse to do so. Funny hats and tiaras associated with adult New Year's parties can easily be used by the kids during their party. You can find the hats as well as streamers, confetti, balloons, and whistles at your favorite party supply store. The kids can spend several hours the day of the party decorating the house for the festivities.

### **New Year's Eve Party Tips:**

- **Games and Activities:** Children become easily bored, especially for extended periods of time. For this reason you will want to plan several different activities to keep them busy. Board games, crafts, and movies will help fill this need. You should have several extra activities planned if there is a need. Have the kids help you plan which games to play and then help set them up.

- **Special Guests:** Have your children invite a friend or two to help them celebrate this special occasion. This will keep parents from worrying about their children being out late and off of the roads with drunk drivers. You want to be careful not to invite too many kids which would make it impossible for you and your spouse to enjoy the evening as well.
- **Food and Snacks:** Be sure to have plenty of food and snacks on hand. If the children are old enough, they can help you in their preparation. Individual pizzas on bagels or English muffins are a perfect choice. Have pizza supplies laid out on the table (pizza sauce, pepperoni, sausage, cheese, mushrooms, etc.) and the children can make the pizzas any way they want. This is a fun activity that the kids really enjoy.
- **Game Time:** After dinner have the kids pull out the games and other activities and allow them to play. This is also a good time for them to watch a movie, complete with fresh popped popcorn. If your children are old enough, you can take refuge in another room and enjoy the evening knowing your kids are safe and happy.

## **Slumber Parties**

You may want to plan a slumber party for your child's birthday, especially if she is between the ages of eight and fourteen. Younger children will have a difficult time spending the night away from their parents, especially if this is their first time, and for this reason slumber parties are best suited for older children where they can spend a lot of uninterrupted time with their best friends—playing games, watching movies, eating snacks, and best of all, staying up way past their bedtime.

For parents, you will want to plan the party with your child before you give it your OK. A little planning goes a long way, especially if you use the following tips.

### **Slumber Party Tips**

- **Ages:** You will want to make sure the guest will be about the same age so that they will all enjoy doing the same things. Slumber parties are not recommended for children younger than seven years old because they may never have spent a night away from home and may become scared. This can even happen with older children who should be reassured that this is a normal thing so they do not become embarrassed. You will find that slumber parties lose popularity with kids over fifteen who prefer one-on-one sleepovers.

- **Themes and Invitations:** Think up a creative theme for the party such as movie night, miracle makeover party, or pizza party. You can then create invitations that match up with the theme. For example, you can make mini movie poster invitations for a movie night party.
- **What to Bring:** In the invitation you will want to ask each guest to bring a sleeping bag, pillow, pajamas, robe, and a toothbrush. You may want to keep some extras on hand for the guests who forget or do not have some of these items. You may also ask the guest to bring something that relates to the theme of the party.
- **Games and Activities:** The success of the sleepover will largely depend on how busy you keep the kids during the evening. You will want to plan a lot of games and activities that are age appropriate to entertain the group.
- **Snacks:** You will want to provide plenty of goodies and snacks. You may want to think about providing several healthy options so that the kids are not on a permanent sugar ‘high’.
- **Rules:** Be sure that all of the children are aware of the house rules at the beginning of the party. These rules should be discussed with your child before the party and they should help make sure everyone follows them. Anyone consistently not following the rules should be sent home for the safety of the others, but this should be a last resort.

## **Adding Games** **To Your Child's Party**

Children love to play games, especially in group situations such as parties. In the next chapter I am including the party games I have found to be the most successful. The key is to keep the games simple and not to play them for too long a time. When planning your party, choose three or four games you think your child would like to play, you may want to include a couple of extra games in case you need time fillers.

You should be aware that children at different ages play games in different ways. Younger kids are not as successful with competitive games where there is one distinct winner. The focus of the games should be fun and everyone should be a 'winner'. This age group also has a very short attention span, so you may want to plan several extra games to keep it interesting for them. You will also want to make sure the rules are simple and easy to follow.

Older children enjoy competitive games, but you still have to be careful that nobody's feelings get hurt. Your biggest concern will be that the games do not get out of control where someone can get hurt. This can happen very quickly, so you will want at least one or two parents with the children at all times. Even for older kids you will want to make sure the rules of the games are simple and easy to

follow or arguments will develop.

I have included an age-range index for each of the games to help you to decide which will be best for the party you are planning. For parties with a mixed age group you may want to include games designated for different ages to keep everyone's interest, but always watch out for the younger children so that they do not get hurt.

Before the party you will want to gather all of the items necessary to play the games. I have tried to keep this chore simple by including games that need little in the way of preparation, equipment, or supplies. I recommend that you put any equipment you may need in its own labeled container such as a paper grocery bag or storage box. After each game is played you can have the children help you replace the items back into the original container before moving to the next game.

You may want to award prizes or medals for the children as they are playing the games, but this is not absolutely necessary. For younger children all of the participants should win a prize while older kids can be awarded medals or prizes depending on if they win particular games, but you should still make sure that the prizes are spread around so that all of the children win at something.

You will also want to keep in mind that this is the birthday child's special day and you may want him/her to start off as the lead participant in the games. Younger birthday children may feel slighted if they are not the center of attention during the entire party, but this can partially be alleviated if you explain to them beforehand what will be happening and what they should expect. This will allow all of the children to have fun at the party.



# **Games Kids Love To Play**

## **Bowling**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 3 or more

Rinse out 10 soda cans or plastic bottles and let them dry. You will also need a tennis ball or similar size ball. Set the cans in the typical bowling formation at the end of your driveway or similar surface.

Allow each child two chances to knock down the cans. For older children you can keep score as if this is a real bowling game. You can adjust the difficulty of the game by varying the distance each child stands from the cans which allows you to compensate for age and ability.

Out of all of the games in this book, this is the one we have found to be the most fun for kids. Have some extra cans standing by when others get dented.

## **Three Legged Race**

*Age Level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

To play this game you will need pieces of rope cut between 18 and 24 inches long. At the party divide all of the children into teams of two. Tie the right leg of one child to the left leg of another child. You will need a start area and a finish line. The children run from one end to the other which is more difficult than it looks.

For older children you can tie five people together and have them race another group of five. This is even more difficult and it involves teamwork.

## **Duck Duck Goose**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

This game is best played outside or in a large room. All of the children but one sit down in a circle. The remaining person is 'It'. This person slowly walks around the group gently tapping each person on the head while saying "*duck*". Whenever he wants, It says, "*goose*". 'It' tries to run all the way around the circle while the 'goose' gets up and chases him. If 'It' successfully runs around the circle without getting tagged, the goose becomes 'It'. If the goose tags 'It', he must continue walking around the circle again, continuing the game.

## **Egg Toss**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

You will need one raw egg for each team of two, plus a few extras. Divide all of the children into teams of two. Have them stand, facing each other, two or three feet apart. Pass out the eggs, one for each team. The player with the egg tosses it to his teammate. After the toss, the teams who still have unbroken eggs are still in the game. Have each team member take a giant step backwards (away from his teammate) and the eggs are tossed again. Repeat this until only one team has an unbroken egg.

For a less messy game you can use water balloons instead of eggs, though this is not as funny when they break.

## **Dodge Ball**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

You will need a large rubber ball. Some of the air should be taken out of the ball to make it softer. Divide the kids into two groups and separate them by about 20 feet. The objective of this game is to throw the ball at a child on the other team and hit him. If the thrower is successful, that child is out of the game. However, if the child catches the ball, the thrower is out of the game. The other team is then allowed to throw the ball. This continues for a predetermined time or until one of the teams runs out of players. The team with the most amount of children still in the game, wins.

## **Snatch the Flag**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

You will need a handkerchief for each child who is going to play. The handkerchief is placed in one of their back pockets with an end sticking out. The objective of the game is to run around trying to collect other kid's flags. After the child loses his flag, he has to sit down on the sidelines. The last player with a flag, wins.

There will need to be a referee to make sure no one gets hurt. No tripping or tackling is allowed. Older kids can be divided into two teams who compete against each other. This is a great game to play during the summer time in the back yard or park.

## **Capture the Flag**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

For this game you will need two handkerchiefs and a large play area such as a backyard. The children are divided into two teams and set up at opposite sides of the field with a center line across the middle of the field. Both teams hide their flag. The teams then try to steal the other's flag and make it back to their home area without getting tagged. If a child is tagged on the other teams side of the field, they have to go to their 'jail' until someone from their team tags them. The first team to get the other's flag and brings it across the boundary line, wins.

## **Freeze Tag**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

One child is chosen to be 'it'. This child runs around trying to tag all of the other players. The children he touches must remain motionless (freeze). A frozen player can resume play when another player touches him. The person who is frozen three times is the next to be 'it'.

## **Tug of War**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

You will need a strong, thick rope. Cotton is best. Divide the group into two teams (try to make them even by total size, not necessarily by numbers). Each team grabs one end of the rope, with a dividing line separating them. On some sort of signal, each team tries to pull the other across the line.

## **Blind Man's Bluff**

*Age Level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

One of the children is picked to be 'It'. This child is blindfolded. The other kids move around It making funny noises. It tries to tag one of these kids. The first person tagged becomes the new It.

You will want to child proof your house so that the children won't trip and hit their heads. Adult supervision is a must.

## **What is My Line**

*Age level:* 8 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

As each guest arrives at the party, tape a piece of paper to their back. Each card has the name of a different famous person written on it. The children have to figure out who they are by asking yes/no questions. The first person to figure out who they are wins.

This is a great game to start the party with because the kids can play as they show up. The game is fun for both the people trying to guess who they are and the kids giving the answers.

## **Hide and Seek**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Everyone should know how to play hide and seek. One child is chosen to be 'It'. The other children hide. It has to find them. The last child found is the new It.

## **Red Rover**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 8 or more

The children are divided into two teams. Each group lines up, facing each other, holding hands. The kids should be at least twenty feet apart. One of the teams chooses a caller. The caller yells, “*Red rover, red rover, send \_\_\_\_\_* (name a person from the other team) *right over.*” The person named runs across and tries to crash through the line between two people. If he is successful, he can go back to his original team. If he is unsuccessful, he has to stay on the caller’s team.

A person from the other group now becomes the caller and the game continues back and forth. Whichever group has the most kids at the end of the game is the winner.

## **Musical Chairs**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

You will need one less chair than the number of children playing. The chairs are placed in a circle with the seats facing outwards. Music is played as the children slowly walk around the chairs. When the music is turned off, everyone tries to find a chair, but one person is left standing. This person is eliminated from the game. Another chair is removed from the circle and the game is continued until only one player is left, who is the winner.

## **Twenty Questions**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

One of the children is chosen to be 'It'. This person thinks of something that everyone in the group is familiar with. The other kids each take a turn asking yes-no questions. The first person to guess what the item is is the winner and the next person to be It. If, after 20 questions, nobody can correctly guess, It tells the answer, and the person to his left becomes the next It.

For smaller kids you can ask them to think of their favorite TV actor, zoo animal, comic book character, religious person, etc. This makes it easier and fun for younger children.

## **Fish Pond**

*Age level:* 3 and up

*Number of players:* 4 and up

For this activity you will need to make homemade fishing poles with clothes pins as hooks, a wall or divider to fish over, and a bunch of little toys. Each child is handed a fishing rod and the strings are thrown over the divider as if they are fishing. A hidden helper clips the toys onto the clothes pin. Younger children have a lot of fun with this game.

## **Hot Potato**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 5 or more



This is a favorite of most children. One of the kids is 'It'. He covers his eyes. The other kids sit in a circle. The kids pass around a potato, rubber ball, or small stuffed animal. The objective of the game is to pass the object quickly. The caller says, "stop!" whenever he wants. Whoever is holding the object must leave the group. The game continues until one person is left. This person becomes the caller in the next game.

## **Hay is for Horses**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

You will need a bale of hay or straw and a bunch of small prizes. The hay is spread around in a pile and the toys or prizes are buried in it. The kids are allowed to crawl through the hay looking for the prizes. This messy activity is a scavenger hunt perfect for younger children.

## **Relay Race**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 3 or more

You will need to mark off a start and finish line. Each child is handed a bowl half filled with water. The objective is to run from the start to the finish line without spilling any water. The child to first successfully cross the finish line wins.

For older children you can divide the group into two teams. Line up half of the kids on each side of the course.

The kids run back and forth, handing off the bowls of water. The team, who finishes first with the least amount of water spilled, wins.

## **Scavenger Hunt**

*Age level:* 3 and up

*Number of players:* 3 or more

This is a fun game to play whether you have a small or large group. A paper with a list of objects is given to each player. Each person goes out and tries to find the objects on their list. Whoever finds the most things, wins.

You will want to make the list specific and fun. You also want the objects to be things that the kids can find. You can hide some of the specified objects much like you would an Easter egg hunt. The kids then run around trying to find the objects. You can also have the kids form two teams, working together on one list.

## **Mummy Wrap**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

You will need a roll of toilet paper for every 2 kids. The children are split into teams of two and each is given a roll of toilet paper. One team member tries to turn the other into a mummy by covering him completely with toilet paper except for the eyes. The first to accomplish this, wins. This is a fun game for all age groups.

## **Friend Trivia**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 5 or more

Interesting and unusual trivia is gathered from all of the party guests. As the items are read, the players guess which trivia matches up with which guest. The one, who guesses the most correctly, wins.

## **Balloon Races**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

A short length of straw is taped to the top of each balloon. A string is fed through the straw and tied between two chairs. The balloon is blown up. When the end of the balloon is released, it will travel along the string like a rocket. To set up the race, each child sets up a balloon rocket between two chairs. A signal is given and the balloons are released. The balloon that goes the farthest or fastest, wins.

As a variation the balloons are set up as described above, but after inflating you tie a knot. The balloons are propelled by the kids blowing on them. The first child to blow his balloon over the finish line wins.

## **Red Light, Green Light**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

This is another game that is perfect to play outside with a large group of kids. All of the children, except one, line up in a row. The last child stands 20 to 30 feet away. The person turns her back on the kids as she says, “*green light*”. The other kids are allowed to move towards her. At any point she suddenly says, “*red light*”, and spins around. Anyone she sees moving must go back to the starting line. The first person who can cross the field wins and becomes the new caller.

## **Pin the Tail on the Donkey**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of performers:* 4 or more

This classic game is still fun for kids to play. A large donkey is taped to the wall. Each child is given a tail which has a piece of double-stick tape on the end. One at a time, the children are blindfolded, spun around three times, and try to stick the tail to the donkey. Continue, letting each child have a try. Whoever places their tail closest to the correct spot on the donkey, wins.

You do not have to use a picture of a donkey for this game. You can use almost any animal and with a little creativity, different objects. You will find that the children have more fun watching the other children try than worrying about who wins.

## **Clothespin and Jug**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

For this game you will need a one gallon milk jug, washed out and dried, and a bunch of clothespins. Each child tries to drop the clothespins into the jug from 1 to 3 feet. Prizes are given out according to how many pins land in the jug.

For younger children you may want to cut a bigger hole in the top of the jug. For older children you can create two teams. One of the kids is blindfolded, another child verbally directs him on dropping the clothespins.

## **Milk Jug Catch**

*Age Level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 2 or more

This may not be an Olympic sport, but it is a lot of fun. In preparation to play all you have to do is cut the bottom off of two or more one-gallon milk jugs. You will also need a small ball, bean bag, or rolled up pair of socks.

Each person holds a milk jug, bottom side up, by the handles. Facing each other, the object is tossed back and

forth and is caught in the milk jugs. Each time the children successfully catches the object, they take a step away from each other. The kids, who are the farthest apart at the end of the game, win.

**Speed Round:** In a set amount of time, the kids see how many times they can catch the object in the milk jugs. This variation depends as much on speed as it does on hand-eye coordination. Ready-set-throw.

## **Boat Races**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 3 or more

Cut a cardboard half-gallon milk carton in half horizontally. Glue or tape the seams of the carton so that it will float. Punch a small hole in the back of the carton and push the nozzle of a balloon through the hole. Blow up the balloon, twisting the end to close it, and hand it to a child to place in the water. The boat will be propelled across the water by the balloon.

You can organize boat races by having the children each make their own boat and then race them against each other. The boat that goes the farthest or has the best time, wins

## **Treasure Hunt**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 2 or more

Clues are placed inside sealed envelopes. Each clue

leads the players to the next clue until they find the treasure. This game can be made competitive by dividing the group into two teams which look for different clues in different spots which ultimately lead them to the same treasure. The first team to the treasure wins. You can use different things for the treasure such as small toys or candy which is then shared with all of the children.

## **The Peanut Hunt**

*Age Level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Peanuts are hidden around the back yard, family room, etc. Each child is given a bag and sent out to find the peanuts. The one, who finds the most, wins.

You can use other objects instead of peanuts. Playing cards, candy, and toy soldiers would work equally well, especially if someone has a peanut allergy.

## **The Bean Quiz**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

As each guest arrives they are given 10 jelly beans. The host of the party thinks of a common object. The guests ask questions to figure out what the object is. For every no question, they lose a jelly bean. The objective is to figure out what the object is without losing all of their jelly beans.

## **The Feelies**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

A number of different items such as a pencil, newspaper, string, dog biscuit, carrot, etc. are placed inside a covered basket or box. Each guest slips their hand into the box for a certain amount of time and tries to guess what the different items are which they write down on a piece of paper. The person with the most complete list wins.

## **The Odd Bean**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 and up

Each guest is given a bag of twelve beans. The game is played by a child placing his hand into the bag and secretly taking out a certain amount of beans. Another player has to guess whether he has an odd or even number of beans in his fist. If he guesses correctly, he gets to keep the beans. If the guess is wrong, the other player gets to take the number of beans in his fist from the guessing child's bag. The objective is to get the most beans.



## **Floating Feather**

*Age level: 5 and up*

*Number of players: 4 and up*

Each guest is given a feather. The contest is to keep the feather in the air by blowing underneath it longer than the other players. You can do this as a group game by dividing the guests into teams of 2 or 3. The teams hold hands in a circle and then compete to keep the feather floating the longest. This will add to the fun for older children.

## **Bouncing Balloon**

*Age level: 5 and up*

*Number of players: 4 and up*

For this game you will need an inflated balloon. Each player is given the balloon and tries to bounce it off of their head as many times as they can without using their hands or arms. The person, who is able to do it the most amount of times, wins.

## **Card Flip**

*Age level: 6 and up*

*Number of players: 4 and up*

An open hat or shoe box is placed 6 to 8 feet away from the challengers. Each person is given 10 playing cards which they then attempt to flip or toss into the receptacle. The person, who is able to get the most in,

wins. Instead of playing cards, you could use peanuts or another prop and you could use a bucket or clean trash can instead of the hat.

## **Balloon Fortunes**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Humorous and different fortunes are placed inside balloons which are then inflated and tied closed. After all of the guests have arrived at the party, the balloons are thrown up into the air. Each child grabs a balloon which is popped with a pin to release the fortune. This causes the party to begin with a bang. Instead of fortunes, you can place papers with the names of different gifts which the guests receive depending on which one they end up with.

## **Split Connections**

*Age level:* 7 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

Each guest is given a piece of paper with either a famous person or character and another person is given a different paper with the corresponding object he is identified with. The children then pair up by connecting the two together. You can use this activity to pair people up for another game. Here is a list of examples you could use:

Aladdin ..... Lamp

Cinderella ..... Glass Slipper

Goldilocks ..... Porridge

Midas ..... Gold

Miss Muffet ..... Spider

Bo Peep ..... Sheep

Robin Hood ..... Bow and Arrow

King Arthur ..... Round Table

## **Airplane**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 and up

This is a variation of ‘pin the tail on the donkey’. A large map of the world is attached to the wall. Each guest is handed an airplane cut out of thin cardboard with their name printed on it. For younger children attach double-stick tape to the back of the plane. For older children you can use a thumb tack. The contestants are blindfolded and try to attach their plane to a prearranged spot on the map. Whoever is closest, wins.

## **Charades**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Before playing the game you will want to write down on separate pieces of paper the names of different words, movies, cartoon characters, books, animals, etc. The paper is folded in fourths so that the words cannot be seen, then placed in a bowl. The children are divided into two teams. One person from each team is designated to be the 'actor'. He chooses one of the papers and must act out without talking until his team can guess what was written. A new actor is chosen and the game continues.

## **Baby Bottle Contest**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 3 or more

For this game you will need a clean baby bottle for each contestant. You will want to make the holes in the nipples larger using a straight pin or small nail. The bottles are all filled to the same level. At the signal each child tries to quickly empty his bottle by sucking on it. The first to do so, wins.

## **Bumble Bee Contest**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

This is a very simple contest. The test is to see which child can buzz the longest without taking a breath. This is almost as fun to watch as it is for the children to participate.

## **One-Legged Contest**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Similar to the last game, this game is to see who can stand on one leg the longest. This seems easier than it actually is as you are about to find out. You will want to make sure there is no furniture or other items that the kids will fall on and possibly get hurt.

## **Balloon Basketball**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

You will need a generous supply of balloons which are blown up and tied. You will also need a trash can or basket which the balloons easily fit. Each child stands about ten feet away from the basket and gets ten tries of tossing the balloons into it. Whoever gets the most balloons in the basket, wins. You may have to adjust the distance the kids stand from the basket depending on their age and skill

level.

## **Orange Race**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

This is a classic icebreaker to get your party started. You will need two oranges or small balls of similar size. The kids are divided into two teams and lined up into rows. The first player of each team places an orange under his chin. The objective is to pass the orange down the line using just the children's chins, no hands are allowed. Whichever team can pass the orange down the whole line first, wins.

## **Suitcase Relay**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

For this contest you will need two suitcases filled with old clothes, one for each team. The clothes should contain similar items such as hats, jackets, ties, scarves, belts, skirts, etc. The children are divided into two teams. At a signal, the first person in the line runs to the suitcase, opens it, and puts on all of the clothes. He then runs back to the line, takes off the clothes, and places them back in the suitcase. The next player takes the suitcase, runs back to the original place, and puts the clothes on. This continues

until every player has had a turn. The team that finishes first, wins.

## **Simon Says**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

One player is chosen to be Simon. Simon's job is to call out, "*Simon says,*" and then demonstrating an action that the group should mimic. If he doesn't say, "*Simon says,*" the group should ignore the command. Anyone who does not follow the rules is out of the game. This is a fun game for large groups, especially older children.

## **Balloon Burst**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

You will need a balloon and a small magnifying glass for each guest, as well as a hot summer day. The balloons are blown up and attached to a fence or wall so that they face the sun. Each guest is given the magnifying glass which is held so that the sun shines through them onto the balloons. The kid who is able to pop his balloon first, wins.

For indoor fun you can set the inflated balloons all over the floor and let the kids pop as many as they can by stepping or sitting on them.

## **The Zookeeper**

*Age level:* 4 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Before the party you will want to cut out pictures of different animals and paste them on index cards. The cards are handed to all of the players except one who is the zookeeper. The children pretend to be the animal on their card and it is up to the zookeeper to figure out what they are. The game can be repeated with different cards and a new zookeeper.

## **Dinosaur Dig**

*Age level:* 4 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Before the party you will want to hide small plastic dinosaurs in a sandbox or sand filled roasting pan. You may want to use more than one roasting pan for larger groups. Each child is given a spoon or strainer and told they are archaeologists digging for dinosaurs. You may want to hide a prize at the bottom of the sand for each child.



## **Pumping Iron**

*Age level:* 5 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

You will need 2 adult sized one-piece long underwear and a bunch of blown up balloons. The children are divided into two teams and one person from each group puts on the underwear. The objective is to put as many of the balloons into the underwear as possible. The end result makes the two children look like weight lifters.

## **The Invisible Gift**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

The players form a circle and sit down on the floor. The first player secretly thinks of an item such as a toy, animal, or food item. He pretends to handle the item without talking. For instance, if it is a dog, he could scoop it up, pet it, feed it, etc. The next player then pretends to take the item and does the same thing. This continues around the circle. The last person tries to guess what the item is, often with funny results. The rest of the children then try to guess. The game continues with a new lead person.

## **Guess the Present**

*Age level:* 6 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

As the guests arrive at the party, they are asked to put their presents in a pile. After everyone has arrived, the birthday child stands in the middle, selects a present, and reads the card (or has it read). Then the birthday child and the other guests try to guess what is inside. The gift giver can give up to three clues to help. After everyone has a chance to guess, the birthday child opens the present to see who was right.

## **How Long is a Minute**

*Age level:* 4 and up

*Number of players:* 4 or more

Ask all of the children to sit on the floor in a circle and close their eyes. After a signal, the children are to guess how long a minute is and then raise their hands. The one closest to a minute, wins. This is a good game to help settle the children down after more exhilarating games.

## **Treat Bag Game**

*Age level:* 7 and up

*Number of players:* 6 or more

The children sit on the floor in a circle. A goody bag is handed to one on the children and music is played. The

children pass the bag around in a circle until the music stops. The child holding the goody bag at that point gets to keep it and is removed from the game. This is repeated until everyone has a treat bag. This is a great way to end the party.



## **Crafts & Activities**

In addition to games, you may want to include some party crafts and other activities, depending on the age of the guests, for your child's birthday party. Not only will the kids have fun, but it will also give the kids a souvenir of the party they can take home with them.

### **Coloring Books and Crayons**

Give each guest their own coloring book and small box of crayons as they arrive at the party. Provide a table where they can sit down and color as the rest of the guests arrive. Instead of a coloring book, you can have a caricaturist draw a coloring page specially for your party which you can then reproduce at your local copy store.

### **Decorated Mural**

Purchase a long piece of butcher paper from a teachers' supply store which you attach horizontally along a wall. Each guest is assigned a section to decorate and then sign their name. This can then be hung in your child's room as a treasured souvenir.

## **Self-Portraits**

Cut butcher paper into child-size lengths. Each guest lays down on one of the pieces and his outline is drawn with a pencil. The kids are then allowed to color in their own features, including face, hair, clothes, etc. The children can then take their self-portraits home as a party souvenir.

## **Play Dough**

For an end of the party activity you can supply each child with their own bag of homemade play dough. The children can then amuse themselves by forming their dough into various shapes.

### *Play Dough Recipe*

**(Enough For 8 Children)**

**2 cups white flour.**

**1 cup salt.**

**4 tablespoons vegetable oil.**

**1 drop food coloring.**

**Water as needed.**

**Mix all of the ingredients together. Add water, a drop at a time until the dough is workable.**

## **String-a-Necklace**

Provide bowls of round cereal, round hard candy, miniature pretzels, or any other food that can be threaded on a string. All of the children will be able to make their own edible necklace.

## **T-Shirt Art**

Purchase plain white t-shirts from your favorite discount store. You will need to cut cardboard ‘torsos’ (these are available from craft shops) which fit snugly inside the t-shirts so that the paint does not bleed through from front to back and also to stretch the fabric taught for painting. Provide fabric paint, brushes, stencils, and sponge stamps.

## **Piñatas**

You can make your own homemade piñata by filling a large paper grocery bag with toys and candies, and then stapling the top shut. The children can decorate the outside of the bag with paint or crayons. The piñata can then be hung on a branch or hook using a piece of rope.

## **Sleepover Tent**

You can make an indoor tent by placing a blanket over a card table. This will be almost as much fun for young children as camping outside.

## **Donut Race**

This is really more of a game than an activity. Tie strings around donuts and hang them from the ceiling. Have players race to see who can eat their donut first without using their hands. You will probably want to place a sheet on the floor to make it easy cleaning up the crumbs.

## **Decorative Hair Accessories**

Purchase plain headbands and or barrettes along with decorative materials (sequins, jewels, glitter, ribbon, bows, buttons, etc.) and tacky glue or a glue gun. Use caution when handling hot glue. The girls can then take their hair accessories home with them as a souvenir of the party.

## **Flying Saucers**

For this fun activity you will need heavy weight paper plates (two per child), stickers, crayons, markers, and a stapler. Staple the two plates together at their rims. The kids can then decorate their flying saucers and then test how far they can fly.

## **Decorative Party Bags**

The kids can decorate their own party bags if you offer plain paper bags, glue, pens, markers, stickers, etc. After the kids decorate the bags you can fill them with party favors, small toys, and candy.



## **Goop**

To make goop you will need the following ingredients: 1 lb. box of cornstarch, 1 1/2 cup cold water, and 1 tbsp. green or blue food coloring. You will also need a large bowl, wax paper, and small resealable plastic bags. Mix all of the ingredients in the bowl with your hands until it forms a smooth ball. Each child gets a glob of goop which is placed on a piece of wax paper (add a little water if the goop gets dry) which they can play with. The goop can later be placed in the plastic bags so the children can take it home.

## **Children's Sing-Along**

Younger children enjoy singing familiar songs such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "Mary had a Little Lamb". If you are not familiar with these types of songs you can rent sing-along tapes from your local library.

## **Story Time**

Younger children also enjoy hearing someone read their favorite books. Practice reading and acting out the story ahead of time, giving thoughts to props you might be able to use.

## **Kazoo Marching Band**

Provide a kazoo for all of the children attending the

party. Teach all the children how to blow on the kazoo, and then lead them in a few of the favorite songs such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” or “Mary had a Little Lamb” (not that anyone will recognize the melody as it is being played).

## **Menus & Recipes**

The key to the success of any party, whether for children or adults, is to serve mouth watering, eye appealing food and beverages. This section is filled with recipes of party food perfect for a child's birthday party. Best of all, all of the recipes are quick and easy to put together.

### **Food Tips:**

- Have the children eat outdoors or serve the food in a room that will be easy to clean-up. You can place sheets over a carpet as one alternative.
- Don't serve nuts, hard candies, or hot dogs to small children because of the hazard of choking.
- Have alternative treats available for any children who have special dietary needs due to diabetes, lactose intolerance, or food allergies.

## **Party Snacks**

### **Popcorn Balls**

Roll six cups of popped corn in eight ounces of melted caramel mixed with one tablespoon butter (microwave for

one minute on high to melt the caramel). Shape the coated popcorn into small balls. Wrap each in plastic wrap and tie with a bow.

### **Snack Kabobs**

Skewer chunks of cheese, pineapple, cherry tomatoes, melon balls, bananas, etc. onto wooden skewers.

### **Painted Toast**

The children can paint pictures or faces on bread using food coloring, then toast.

### **Stuffed Celery**

Wash the celery stalks and pat dry and then fill with peanut butter. Cut into 3" sections and serve.

### **Hamburgers-in-a Biscuit**

Bake refrigerated biscuits in the oven according to their directions. Cook small hamburgers. Use the biscuits as buns and garnish with ketchup, mustard and relish.

### **Pigs-in-a-Blanket**

Wrap hot dogs in ready-to-use crescent roll dough. Bake at 400 degrees until lightly brown on top. Serve with a side of mustard.

### **Bugs-in-a-Swamp**

Spread cream cheese into celery stalks, and then press raisins into the cream cheese. Kids love these.

### **Trail Mix**

Combine raisins, peanuts, M&M's, Wheat Chex, dried apples, chopped dried apricots, coconut flakes, sunflower seeds, and pretzel sticks. Serve in a large bowl.

### **Veggies and Dip**

Serve bite-size pieces of broccoli, cauliflower, celery, carrots, cherry tomatoes, raw zucchini, and radishes with bowls of salad dressing.

### **Fruit and Cheese Tray**

Arrange fresh fruits and cheeses on a tray. Strawberries, melons, and grapes are popular choices because they hold up well. Even kids like this party classic.

### **Nachos**

Sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese over tortillas chips and heat in the oven until the cheese melts. For older children you can serve a mild salsa on the side.

### **Peanut Butter Banana Dogs**

Fill a hot dog bun with slices of bananas, peanut butter, chopped nuts, and M&M candies.

## **Potato Toppers**

Provide one baked potato per child. The kids can top them with their favorite items such as butter, sour cream, bacon bits, grated cheese, etc.

## **Giant Pancakes with Fruit Topping**

Cook giant pancakes in a round cast-iron skillet. Let the children pick their favorite fruit topping and finish off with some whip cream.

## **Animal Sandwiches**

Cut sandwiches into animal shapes using a cookie cutter. It seems like a little thing until you see the expressions on the children's faces.

## **Macaroni and Cheese**

Boxed or homemade, kids love this stuff.

## **Muffin Pizzas**

Provide the children with English muffins, along with grated cheese, pizza sauce, pepperoni pieces, etc. Let the kids make their own pizzas, then bake until the cheese is melted.

## **Desserts**

### **S'Mores**

Older kids can roast large marshmallows over a fire using sticks or straightened coat hangers. As soon as the marshmallows begin to brown, help the children smash it and half of a chocolate bar between two graham crackers.

### **Edible Necklaces**

Provide the children with long, thin strands of licorice and bowls of donut-shaped dry cereal. Let the guests make their own party necklaces by threading the licorice through the cereal, then tying the ends together.

### **Snow Balls**

Roll scoops of firm vanilla ice cream in flaky coconut and serve immediately.

### **Rocky Road Sandwiches**

Slice chocolate cupcakes in half. Place a small scoop of rocky road ice cream between the two halves which are then pressed together. These ice cream sandwiches are then served on a platter. Instead of cupcakes, you could use two large cookies.

### **Gummy Worm Cake**

Bake any kind of cake or cupcakes. Press gummy worms down inside the cake after it has baked. Frost the cake and add more gummy worms on top.

### **Pudding Sandwiches**

Use pudding as a filler between two graham crackers for each sandwich. The children love to help assemble this snack.

### **Frozen Fruit Balls**

Cut off the tops of large oranges, and then cut out the fruit. Fill the fruit shell with frozen orange sherbet and freeze until ready to serve.

### **Make-Your-Own Sundaes**

Provide bowls, several flavors of ice cream, ice cream scoops, chocolate syrup, caramel, strawberry sauce, maraschino cherries, crushed pineapple, sliced bananas and strawberries, nuts, and whip cream. The fun and mess will follow.

### **Frozen Bananas on a Stick**

Peel some bananas and insert a wooden stick in one end, then freeze. When you are ready, hand the bananas to the children who then dip them in chocolate sauce for a frozen treat.

### **Decorate-Your-Own Cupcakes**

Hand out a cupcake to each guest. They are allowed to decorate them with frosting, frosting tubes, sprinkles, etc. For older children, you can award a prize for the most outrageous cupcake.



## **Party Beverages**

### **Party Punch**

Place the following in a large punch bowl; two quarts of chilled fruit punch, one quart raspberry sherbet, a two liter bottle of ginger ale. The sherbet will foam and bubble when the carbonated drink is poured over it.

### **Freezes**

Freeze your favorite fruit juice in ice-cube trays. During the party, place the ice cubes in a blender and blend until slushy. The kids will love this healthy drink.

### **Fruit Bubbly**

Freeze fruit juice in ice-cube trays. Place two or three ice cubes in a clear plastic cup and fill with chilled ginger ale. The drink will bubble as the ice cubes dissolve.

### **Kids' Colada**

Mix four cups lime sherbet in blender with one cup whole milk; blend until smooth and frothy. Serve in clear plastic cups and top with whip cream and a cherry.

### **Black-and-White Cows**

For this drink you will need equal parts chilled cola and chocolate-swirl ice cream. Fill half of the glasses with the cola, and then carefully add scoops of the ice cream. Serve with long spoons and straws.

### **Exotic Lemonade**

Pour the following ingredients into a large punch bowl; 1/2 of a 12-ounce can frozen lemonade concentrate (thawed), 1 12-ounce can apricot nectar (chilled), 1 12-ounce can unsweetened pineapple juice, 2 cups ice cubes, and 1 1/4 cups ginger ale (chilled). Gently mix, and then serve.

### **Buggy Drinks**

To add a little fun to any drink, freeze gummy insects or worms into ice cube trays filled with water and freeze. Place the insect ice cubes in the children's drinks and watch the fun.

### **Homemade Orange Soda**

Combine orange juice and club soda for a homemade concoction that children love.

# **Party Planning Checklist**

## **Four To Six Weeks Before The Party**

Party Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Party Starts: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Party Ends: \_\_\_\_\_

- Discuss party plans with your child.
- Choose a party theme. \_\_\_\_\_
- Decide on a co-host or volunteers to help with the party.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose a party site.

Name of location: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions:

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Number of guests: \_\_\_\_\_

Make a guest list (check off name with confirmed):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Party Menu:

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Party Invitations:

Store bought       Homemade

Tentative schedule of party activities

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Hire Entertainment:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Two Weeks Before Party**

Make invitations.

Mail or drop off the invitations.

Begin assembling or making decorations/favors/prizes.

Order balloons

Order cake, deli foods, and specialty foods.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## One Week Before Party

- Purchase or make name tags, if applicable.
- Purchase or make place cards, if applicable.
- Call your co-host or volunteers to arrange time to decorate and set-up.
- Finish making or purchasing decorations and party favors.
- Check camera to make sure it is working correctly, be sure to have plenty of film and batteries.
- Order flowers, if applicable.
- Decide what you and your child will wear to the party and have it ready for the big day.
- Confirm entertainment arrangements.
- Confirm cake order.
- Confirm balloon order.
- Confirm the party supply order.
- Address the “Thank You” card envelopes.
- Call any guests who have not responded to your RSVP to see if they are coming.
- Finish writing out the party plan and schedule.



# Party Schedule

## Arrival Activities

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## Main Activities

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## **Refreshments**

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## **Concluding Activities**

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## The Day Before

- Finish decorating cake or pick up cake from bakery (don't forget candles).
- Child proof the party area - put away breakables and make sure medications, solvents, poisons, insect sprays, etc. are out of reach.
- Decorate any indoor areas of the party. Do not decorate outside area until the day of the party.
- Prepare any food you can do ahead of time.
- Assemble game/craft supplies.
- Call to confirm time of pick-up or delivery of bakery, deli, or florist.
- Purchase ice if you have room in your freezer.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## The Day Of The Party

- Prepare the rest of the food and beverages and set them out.
- Finish preparing and setting up activities.
- Put balloons on mailbox or signs outside.
- Have an area for presents.
- Know where your first-aid kit is.
- Small children will need a nap before the party.
- Secure any pets in another room.
- Turn on music.
- Be sure to take a few minutes to relax before the event begins.
- Dress child for party.
- Have a paper and pen available to write down telephone numbers of parents so they can be reached in necessary.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# **Party Budget & Shopping List**

## **Item**

## **Amount**

### **Invitations**

- Store bought invitations \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Supplies to create your own invitations \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Envelopes \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Stamps \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Event Site**

- Site rental fee \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Per person fees \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Catering/serving/clean-up fees \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Decorations**

- Crepe paper \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Streamers \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Banners \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Poster board \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Balloons \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Candles \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Flowers \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Rental or borrowed decorations \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Novelty or theme decorations \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Paper Products**

- Paper plates \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Paper cups \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Paper napkins \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Plastic or paper tablecloth \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Plastic tableware \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Place cards \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Name tags \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Trash bags \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Party Favors and Prizes

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Entertainment

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Party Menu

- Bakery \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Deli/catering service \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Grocery store purchases \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_



- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Miscellaneous**

- Camera/film \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Video tape \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## **Additional Items**

- Extension cords
- CD player
- Music
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Hole punch
- Extra chairs
- Games
- Tape
- Glue
- Markers/pens
- Balloon pump

## **Tips for Hiring Entertainment**

It is quite difficult to find the right birthday party entertainer. With the right information you can be your own party planner. I will give you some birthday party ideas, kid's party ideas and event entertainers. This will help you come up with some great party ideas on your own. Some people find their birthday party entertainment through DJ Services, Party Planners, Event Planning Services, and Entertainment Agencies. You can search many of these through online search engines, and I highly recommend Google for this. Make sure to do a local search as to save money on traveling fees. Many entertainers do charge extra for travel.

DJs provide music as well as entertainers, but expect to pay a little more. A disc jockey is a middleman so they will add a fee, making the party entertainment cost much higher. A cool idea is to have a karaoke party for your children; everyone loves to be the star of the party. Disc jockeys also offer dancers, party music, karaoke, party games and fun giveaways to the kids. DJ's have party favors like funny hats, blow up guitars, giant glasses, and

glow necklaces. When hiring a party DJ you can find a wide range of prices as well as talent. Another option is Party Bands. They are also fun, and are great for outdoor events.

Sometimes you can save money by providing your own party supplies. When it comes to a party for kids you need to do some research. A party supply store has some interesting theme ideas for parties. You can also go online to websites for ideas on a party theme for your party celebration. The best site we've found is **[www.MagicPartySupplies.com](http://www.MagicPartySupplies.com)**. You can buy special themed party supplies, such as napkins, goody bags, tablecloths, piñatas, and much more.

Clowns for parties are also very popular, but at a children's party they tend to scare some of the younger children, and sometimes a chain reaction unfolds; one child starts to cry, then the rest follow. Be sure to hire a clown that does not wear too much make-up and knows how to properly handle young children as well as older children. Remember, older children may think a clown is silly and boring and may even attempt to harass the clown which will make it hard for the clown to entertain the children. However, clowns do offer a wide variety of party activities. Some party activities a clown offers are magic, face painting, juggling, comedy, stilt walking and balloon sculpturing.

Party magic is the most popular type of entertainment for children's birthday parties. When you hire a magician ask whether they specialize in children birthday party entertainment. Some magicians work more as corporate entertainers than as a children's birthday party entertainer. Magicians are a great idea for strolling as well;

they can go table to table and do magic shows. Look for a magician who offers variety such as magic, comedy, ventriloquism, balloon sculptures, live animals, and giveaways. Also, magicians appeal to people of all ages and a good quality magician will use music in his act and make the birthday child the star of the show. Be sure to let the magician know if you have a shy child because you don't want the birthday child to be uncomfortable if he or she is selected to participate in a magic trick. It is vital to have a magician who has many years of experience performing for children. Another thing to consider is what the magician will be wearing to the party. Do they look like a professional magician or like the pizza delivery man?

Another birthday party idea is a caricature artist entertainer. A caricaturist sketches quick comical portraits and makes an excellent kid birthday party entertainment. Caricatures double as a party entertainer and party favor. A family entertainer like a caricaturist is also fun to watch. The caricature artist sketches live at children's birthday parties. The kids love to see their faces being sketched; after all, watching it happen is half of the fun.

Inflatable rides are another fun idea for a birthday party. Most inflatables can be rented out for the day. Finally, you always have the option of choosing costume characters such as Elmo, SpongeBob, Mickey and Minnie, Spiderman, and many more. Make sure the party agency offers Polaroids with the costumed character. Little girls enjoy princess parties for their birthdays.

If your child's birthday party date is around the time of any holidays or busy seasons, make sure to call ahead of time so as to avoid any conflicting appointments. Most children's entertainers require a deposit to reserve a date.

