

How to Throw a Kid's Birthday Party

Written by Lauren Featherstone

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Ever try to throw your munchkin's birthday party together last minute and find yourself with a complete disaster? You're not the only one. Follow these easy tips to have a foolproof birthday party your prince or princess will love.



Six Weeks Before

Choose a theme with your child

Theming is an important part to planning any party. Always include the birthday boy/girl when choosing a theme for a kid's party because everything will revolve around it. Popular themes include: sports, princess, luau, fiesta, Disney movies, superheroes, books and color themes.

Determine the guest list

Talk with your child beforehand about how many people he/she will be allowed to invite to the party. Keep in mind only about 75 percent of the invitees will attend so it is OK to invite more than you expect to show. Also, decide if you are going to invite everyone in your child's class. Proper etiquette says you should, but if not do not pass out the invitations at school.

Reserve your party venue or hire a party entertainer

If needed, reserve a party venue. Remember, this should be dependent on the theme. A princess party might go well at kids salon where they put on dresses and get their hair and nails done, while a sports party might take place in a park. Other venues include: Chucky Cheese, Peter Piper, Amazing Jakes, Sunsplash Golfland, a clubhouse and bowling alleys. You also may need to hire an entertainer such as: princesses, clowns, balloon artists, face painters and more.



Four Weeks Before

Prepare your invitations

Decide whether you are going to order invitations, buy them or make them yourself. Either way, the invitations should match the theme and include: who, what, when, where, why and any other important information such as whether they need to bring a swimsuit for a pool party or a sleeping bag and clothes for a sleepover.

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Ask for an updated class list from your child's teacher

This is important if you plan to invite the entire class. If your not inviting the class do not pass out invitations at school as it could potentially hurt those kids' who are not invited feelings.

Determine games and activities to match your party theme

Games and activities will depend on the theme and the age group of the birthday boy/girl and guests. For smaller children do not plan to do too many games and activities as little ones always take longer to understand and complete activities. Some fun activities include: obstacle courses, water balloon fights, hula hoop contests and scavenger hunts.

Create a menu inspired by your theme

Keep it simple. Kids love fun, finger food that they can snack on throughout the party while running around and having fun. For a fiesta, order a party platter full of miniature tacos, burros, chimichangas, taquitos, quesadillas, and chips and salsa. A luau calls for a lot of fruits and vegetables, chicken katsu strips with dipping sauces, mini egg rolls or even Hawaiian ham and pineapple pizza. Miniature hot dogs, cheeseburger sliders, pigs-in-a-blanket, popcorn and peanuts are great for a sports themed party, while mini muffins and tea sandwiches are dainty enough for a princess theme.

If ordering a cake, place your order

First, decide what kind of cake you are having: a sheet cake, cupcakes, cookie cake, ice cream cake or a cake at all. Then, decide if you are ordering or making the cake. If ordering a cake compare the local grocery stores and bakeries, and don't be afraid to ask for a sample. Pick a design that matches the theme and will feed everyone at the party.



Three Weeks Before

Mail/hand out invitations

Before invitations are put in their envelopes, note whether just the child is invited to the party or if the whole family, including siblings, is welcome to join. This usually depends on the age of the children and the venue, but more parents equals more eyes on the children.

Buy party supplies, especially if ordering on-line

Have a design plan for the party decorations before you buy and/or order your supplies. Most party stores separate supplies by theme and provide everything you need including eating utensils. If ordering decorations from online use the Oriental Trading Company as decorations are affordable and delivered promptly. Triple check your order to avoid forgetting something and having to reorder.

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Jonny's 3rd Birthday Party

1- Icebreaker: Colouring in table

2- Running race

3- Dance to music

4- Food

5- Bubbles

6- Cake

7- Opening presents

8- Free time

Extra activities:

- Balloon chase
- Leave toy cars out

One to Two Weeks Before

Create a party-flow schedule

This is less important for younger kids because nothing goes as planned, but you should have some sort of timeline for the party to avoid complete chaos. Remember to have something for kids to do while they arrive before games/activities and eating begin. Cake--and ice cream, if desired--are usually near the end of the party. Remember to decide if the birthday boy/girl will open gifts before or after guests leave.

Call families who have not yet responded to your invitation

There are always those families who plan to come to the party, but never respond. Avoid any surprise guests by calling those you haven't heard from and confirming if they will be attending. You don't want to run out of food or goody bags because someone forgot to respond.



Three Days Before

Buy food and last-minute supplies

Don't wait until the last minute to purchase food because with your luck they will be out of what you need. Purchase anything you are not ordering, especially chips and sodas which won't lose their freshness after three days. Put the sodas in a cooler with ice or in the fridge so they are party-ready--no one likes a warm Coke.

Final details

This is the time when you want to do the things you won't think of when you're running around the day of the party: buy batteries for the camera, charge the video camera, call the entertainer to confirm his/her appearance and expectations, call the party venue to confirm all details, and assemble the party favors.

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One or Two Days Before

Bake cake or pick up pre-ordered cake

If baking the cake, you definitely want to do this a day or two before so the cake has time to cool before decorating. Another fun activity is to let the kids decorate the cake at the party. If so buy icing, sprinkles and various types of candy. If you are picking up the cake you most likely preselected a pickup date when you ordered it. Depending on the bakery's hours you may have decided to pick the cake up the day of the party which is perfectly fine.

Decorate home or gather decorations for party venue

If you have little munchkins and the party is at your house it is a good idea to wait to decorate the house once the birthday boy/girl has gone to bed. The last thing you want is for them to come through tearing down all the decorations. This way you will preserve your decorations and surprise your little prince/princess in the morning.

Prepare make-ahead food

Not all food can be prepared ahead of time, but those that can will save you bundles of time on party day. Mix any dips that need to chill and cut up fruits, veggies and cheese so they are ready to go.



One Week Later

Send thank you notes

Thank you notes are a dying art. Instill appreciation in your children by helping them send thank you notes to guests for attending their party and for their gift if they brought one--make a list of who gave what present while opening them. If you have photos of the guest with the birthday boy/girl include a copy in the thank you card.