

## CHILDRENS' PARTY TIPS

**Hurray, it's party time! You want to mark your child's special day with a party that's full of fun! However, as everyone knows, organising a child's birthday party can be fraught with tension and stress. Follow the guidelines below for a party that you always remember, for the right reasons!**

1. What type of party would your child enjoy? Is she/he the shy and retiring type, or excitable and boisterous? Bear in mind what activities they enjoy doing. Would they enjoy a special theme? Choosing a theme can add to the excitement and get everyone in the mood! It can also help you get organised and make things easier to plan!

2. Who will you will invite, and how many? It is usual these days for the whole nursery or school class to be invited, and that way, there are no hurt feelings as no-one is left out. But remember, it is important that you provide enough entertainment and activities to avoid boredom, or worse still, total chaos! Prepare a guest list with the help of your child, and tick off each one as they reply. That way, you will know how much food to prepare.

3. Will you book an entertainer? It is an excellent idea to organise some form of entertainment for small children as it adds to the sense of fun and excitement, and provides focus and direction for the party. A childrens' entertainer will be experienced in keeping all the children happy! If you book an entertainer, it is best not to give the children noisemakers or balloons before the party starts, as they can prove very distracting and disruptive!

4. Where will the party be held? When considering the party venue, make sure there is enough room for all the children that have been invited, and also for tables to hold the party food! Also consider whether there is enough room for parents to congregate - if they are talking to each other in a confined space the noise can spoil the entertainment). If the party is to be a village hall, check availability as early as possible. It may also be helpful to provide directions on the party invitations, and if it is off the beaten track it's a good idea to put balloons at the turning and on the gate.

5. Send out the invitations in good time (between 3 and 4 weeks beforehand is ideal). If you don't send them early enough, guests may have already made other arrangements or they may not have time to prepare. Ask for replies to be back about a week before so you have a good idea of numbers expected.

6. Decide upon the party food. If there is to be a theme, it is fun to coordinate the food with the chosen theme where possible. Simple finger food, in bite-sized portions, is ideal. It is a good idea to put the savoury food out before any sweet offerings, otherwise you may find the savoury is left untouched! You'll need to allow between 20 and 30 minutes for the party food. When most of the children seem to be getting towards the end, it is a good time to announce the birthday cake, and sing 'Happy Birthday'! Don't forget the matches to light the candles!

7. It is fun for the birthday child to choose his or her own tableware design. Allow plenty of time to choose and buy your tableware, to be sure of getting everything you need. You do not want to be racing around the shops the day before the party because you could not find your chosen design in all the items required.

8. Decorating the venue will set the scene for fun, and creates a huge sense of excitement! However, you do not need to go overboard. Just 2 or 3 bunches of helium balloons will make lovely table centrepieces, or how about tying a helium balloon to each child's chair so they can decorate the room and be taken home afterwards?

9. Decide upon the best time to hold the party. It is nice to hold the party on the actual day of the child's birthday, but bear in mind that children can be tired after being at playgroup or school, so 4.30 pm to 6.30 pm would be ideal. If the party is to be held on a

Saturday or Sunday, then 12 pm to 2pm or 4pm to 6pm are good times, as children are more likely to enjoy the party food if they are hungry!

10. Finally, the dreaded party bags! A recent survey for Tesco found that parents spend an average of £7.50 on each party bag! Again, there is absolutely no need to go overboard - keep party bag contents simple and inexpensive. Small books, crayons, bubbles, stickers or noisemakers are always welcome and, together with a piece of cake, help to say, 'Thank you for coming!' If your party has a theme, it is nice to coordinate the party bag items where possible. However, finding items for party bags, not to mention filling them, can be very time-consuming. Have a look at our cost-effective party bags for £1.80 each.

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