

Kid's Birthday Parties

Secrets to The Best Party Ever!



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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Everyone wants to hear their child say, “That was the best birthday party ever!” You know you want to be that parent that the child brags about at school for giving the best and most creative birthday parties ever. Does this mean you have to spend a ton of money to achieve this fame?

No, not at all; you would be surprised on how little you have to spend to put on a fantastic birthday party leaving your wallet and child happy.

Of course, one of the keys to worry free party planning is to hire a magician! Let me help make your child's party the success story they will talk about for years!

Chapter 2 – Must Know Birthday Party Secret Tips

Face it; getting a group of kids together for a birthday party, regardless of age, takes a lot of finesse, quality thought and consideration, time, and sometimes a lot of Tylenol. Some people have a real knack for party giving and appear to handle it with ease others escape barely by the skin of their knees. Those that appear to tackle any size birthday party, regardless of age of child do so because they have mastered the skill of organization and must have the nerves of steel.

However, for those of us who have not quite mastered the organization nor achieved the nerves of steel, here are some tips that will help your next birthday party go without a hitch.

Tip One:

You are creating a birthday party for your child. Unless it is a surprise party, you should always involve your child in the party planning and preparation stages. This gives them ownership of the party and allows them to get excited making it that much more of an memorable event. The anticipation for the grand day alone will keep them amped in helping make sure everything that needs done is completed.

Of course, if it is a toddler party, although their input is great to get, their preparation for the event should be made to be age appropriate. Allow your child input on theme, location, menu, games, guest list, and decorations. All ages of children can help fill party favor bags and older children can help fill out invitations, and decorate.

Tip Two:

The dreaded guest list; this is where you may have to step in and draw some boundaries. Younger children it is easier to compile a list of a few close friends and their children or a few children from your child's daycare. Older children, if allowed, would invite their entire school. Know your limitations first. Ask yourself just how many screaming, laughing, loud, and rowdy kids can you handle at one time.

Give your child a ballpark number. (Word to the wise, shoot low first.) Give your child the least amount of kids you can handle comfortably. Say if your maximum is 10, offer your child 5 guest. Allow them to counter and if it gets up to ten you are still within your limitation range, yet they feel like they made the final call.

Keep in mind the ages of the kids being invited as well and how much help you will have when setting your personal limitations. Will adults accompany them or will you be on your own. If the birthday party is for a toddler, specify that an adult must remain with the child at the party. This saves you from having to be disciplinarian to a child who may be less than accommodating. A good rule of thumb with toddlers is to take their age and just add one and invite no more guests than that. Therefore, for a 3 year olds birthday party the most amount of guest you would invite would be four. The average party guest-list is eight

children for children over the age of six so do not feel like you are shortchanging your child by not having more.

Keep in mind where the party will be housed at such as in the home, yard, roller or ice skating rinks, park, recreation center, public beach or swimming pool, laser tag or paint ball facility, sporting event, convention center, or a hotel. Some of these locations can be very expensive so you may want to consider the amount of guest per cost of location when giving an allowable head count.

Tip Three:

Honestly, do you want to have an all day birthday party? Here is when you do get to pull in the reins and set a time limit for the blessed event! How long do you want the party to go on? Toddler parties are easy to put a time limited on. They tire quickly for the most part and other parents may have their child on a strict routine. So generally, an hour to an hour in a half is ample time for a toddler's birthday. Kindergarten to 3rd grade can vary a bit more depending on the child personally. However, no more then 2 ½ hours is needed o celebrate in a smashing style.

Again, here is a time to know your limitations and stick to them. Older children are going to think they want their party to go on all day and night. This is where you have the option of saying "Too bad, so sad" or again you can make a low bid offer and allow them to think they are getting more then you desired. Older kids love thinking they are one-step ahead of you. When they are adults, you can pass on the secret to them when they are planning their child's birthday party.

Here would be my recommendations:

Allow ten minutes from start time to allow all guests to arrive.

Magic Show – approximately 45 minutes

Cake and ice cream

Any games or activities that you may want to do (although not really necessary)Open presents and go home!

Tip Four:

Theme picking; Chapter Four will get into more depth of party themes however there are a few things to keep in mind before solidifying on one. For a toddler you can pretty much pick a theme by anything you see your toddler taking a special liking too. If they have yet to show any real interest in one thing or another you can bet what ever you choose will go over just fine. Discuss party themes with the birthday child.

Allow them to pick a few of their favorite ideas and you throw out a few ideas. Take each idea and write them down on their own individual piece of paper or large notebook card. This is where the brainstorming comes in. You and your soon to be guest of birthday honors will have to write down on each theme what you would need for decorations, food to follow theme, cake idea, game ideas and party favors as well as where the party will be located at. Once you get the basics written down, look at each individual them and pick out the top three themes if both of you had given three ideas.

Base your decision on your budget, ease of pulling off, as well as child's enthusiasm, within reason of course. From the top three picks, relook at supplies needed to pull it off as well as location and see if there is anything that cannot be accommodated.

If all of them are within your budget and capability range, you can give your child one of two options; they can pick their favorite out of the three or you can throw them in a hat and let them pick that way. Once the decision is made, it needs to be final so make sure you are capable of pulling off any of the three given choices.

Of course, I believe the best theme to be a 'magic' theme!

Tip Five:

Keep the kids happy and active! Have plenty of games for the kids to participate in and keep the downtime to a minimum. Summer birthdays are much easier to plan outdoor birthday parties for to keep children actively involved, yet it does not mean in the winter a sledding party or an ice-skating party with hot cocoa cannot be done. There are also many games that can be played indoors that do not require much preparation and regardless of the time of year for the party, you should always have several backup games for the children to play.

Summer time you could be stuck with a rainy day and winter it could be too cold to go out. Chapter Six will give you a vast amount of game ideas for both indoor and outdoors for varying age groups. Factor in approximately two games per hour of party minus time for cake and ice cream.

Make sure to have enough party game gifts that no matter if a guest wins or loses they will receive a gift. No one likes to lose and after all it is a party and you want everyone to enjoy it and be happy.

Tip Six:

Always have a back-up plan. As mentioned in Tip 5, weather may not always permit the intended party plan. In these cases, you best have a great back up plan or be ready to see a very unhappy child on their birthday and a houseful of kids with idol hands. Have an alternate location picked out in advance if your home will not accommodate the entire guest at one time should the party be rained on or other situations arise.

Regardless always make sure food is mobile, and you have plenty of back up games up your sleeve! Do your best to readjust the party to new environment in a relaxed manner. Getting uptight will be picked up on fast and the young guest will react accordingly, which is never pleasant! As long as you appear to be having a great time, the guest will too.

Tip Seven:

Set your ground rules way in advance in regards to sleepovers. If the party was not intended to be a sleepover let your child know that once the party is over, it is over unless you agree in advance for a guest or two to remain through the night. You will be exhausted by the end of the party so again this is a great time to

know your limitations. If the party's theme is a sleepover, then set your ground rules first when making the party plans with your child.

Try to steer away from sleepovers for children under the age of ten unless you already know the children well. This will save you from the middle of the night wake ups by children who are not yet experienced in spending the night at someone's home and having to return them or call a parent to pick them up.

Tip Eight:

Make a point to make the birthday child's day a special event between the parent(s) and child. This is a great time to extend an extra act of kindness or steal a few special moments with the birthday child. Make their favorite breakfast and serve it with a sentimental card or a letter handwritten to them telling them all the things that you adore about them.

Yes, you have put a lot of effort into making sure they have a fantastic birthday party but nothing can compare with that special time you sneak in on their special day to let them know they are worth it.

Tip Nine:

The famous Piñata that children of all ages adore so much comes with their own special set of rules to live by. Piñatas are great for a variety of parties and can be filled with practically anything, which makes them great for all age groups. With younger kids though, piñatas can become frustrating when they do not have the strength to bust it. Check to see if your piñata comes with an escape trap operated by a pull string. Litter kids can take turns pulling on the string until one frees the trap and the candy or toys come raining down.

Regardless of age of kids, make sure the piñata is big enough to hold enough candy to go around. You do not want anyone feeling left out. If there are some shy kids in the crowd, have some leftover candy used to stuff the piñata set aside to give them their own separate bag. Make sure you hang your piñata in a sturdy location and away from anything that could be broken by a missed swing. It is more fun to watch when the children are blindfolded swinging aimlessly at the piñata. The children's laughter is priceless.

Spin the blindfolded child around a few times and then let them have at it. Set the amount of swings allowed in each turn. Start with the littler kids' first working up in age and size as turn allows. Most importantly, keep the other children back when one is up to bat!

Tip Ten:

Do not be afraid to ask for help! You will need it. There is no way you can be in more than one place at one time. When it comes time to prepare the food, cut cake, serve ice cream or whatnot you will want to have someone who will keep the games going until it is time to settle to eat or enjoy some cake and ice cream. Some great people to consider in giving you a helping hand is friends, relatives, another child's parent, favorite babysitter, or an older sibling.

Generally, you will find most parents of guest will be more than happy to lend a helping hand especially if you offer to return the favor. Do not be afraid to delegate out some of the responsibilities. You may think you are a super parent

but tending to a flock of demanding children and still trying to keep the flow going can be rough no matter how much kryptonite you have under your belt.

Tip Eleven:

Just like Santa Claus; use a list and check it twice, gonna make sure if you missed anything or not, because the birthday party is coming real soon! I love list and that is why you will find a handy party checklist coming yet in this chapter. Forgetting something can easily break the party and unbelievably yet true, there have been more occasions then you could imagine were the host has forgotten to pick up the birthday cake or in the mix of all the planning did not stop long enough to buy a gift for their birthday child. Trust me on this one, the list will save the day!

Tip Twelve:

Have your camera ready and at your disposal at all times. Try to capture as many pictures as possible. Have other adults that are helping you also have a camera available to them as well to aid in catching shots when you are unable. Another great idea depending on the children's age is to supply them each with a disposable camera at the beginning of the party. Allow them to take pictures in their eyes view as what they see as perfect picture moments. Have them all developed on disk and print for another tip that is yet to come!

Tip Thirteen:

Birthday parties are a great time to teach your child appreciation and great social skills. Discuss with your child prior to the party and remind the day of to make sure to thank the guest for coming and if gifts were brought, thank them for the gifts as well. A few days after the party, dependant on the child's age, sit with them and help them fill out thank you cards to the guests for coming and giving gifts. This can even be done on your computer.

This would be a great time to use some of those great memory making moment pictures you snapped though out the party to make the thank you note even that much more special. You could include pictures of the children as they helped with the various magic effects.

Tip Fourteen:

Memorialize the event. A picture may speak a thousand words but a picture story says so much more. There are numerous programs available, many that come on pictures you have developed on disc that allow you to make picture stories out of your pictures. You can add captions, voice inserts, and even music backgrounds into these nifty programs and they are easier to use then you think. You do not need to be no computer geek to make a memorialized picture story disc of your childs' birthday party.

This makes a great keepsake treasure that your child could have for life and pass down to their children. Think how great it would be if your special days had been captured on disc and your parent had taken he time to add caption, voice inserts, or even popular music backgrounds of the time, and you was able to view them as an adult. It would make for a great family tradition and something your child will treasure dearly as an adult. If that is still a bit to high tech, you can make a scrapbook.

Incorporate pictures from the birthday party, preparation list, theme cards made to decide what kind of party to have, pieces of the wrapping paper and ribbons the gifts were adorned, and add your own personal notations as to what foods were served, games played, and guest in attendance in the scrapbook. You can also add particular quirks your child had at that age, favorites and dislikes, accidents, bumps, bruises, and whatnots, much like you would in a baby journal. Either way, it will memorialize the day and the child's life and will make your child feel special on those days when you are no longer around to share those memories.

Chapter 3 – Birthday Party Checklist

The reality is no matter how you want to slice the cake, birthday parties do require work. Now, this work does not need to be overwhelming, troublesome, or frustrating if you use just a few organization skills. By using a birthday party checklist, you can save your extra energy for the party where you will need it!

Here are some basic things to keep in mind when planning for the perfect birthday party:

- Allow a good solid four to five weeks for planning
- Follow the time line given in the checklist. This will help you stay on track and ensure you do not forget even the smallest detail.
- Choose early what types of foods or snacks you intend on serving. Make a list of all the ingredients you will need and attach it to your checklist.
- Decide on type of cake and if you are making it or purchasing one. If making the cake make sure to add the needed ingredients on your party food shopping list. If ordering, make sure you check with the bakery how soon the order needs to be in to receive the cake on time!
- If ordering party favors or gifts online, allow ample time for them to arrive prior to party.
- Have help enlisted early on and back ups in case someone has to back out for any reason.
- Typical party times are 1 P.M. to 3 P.M. or 2 P.M. to 4 P.M. unless you are really energetic go for the 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. For toddlers and under, the ideal party time is 10 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. Granted, there are those occasions where if you are renting a facility or using a sporting event, movie, or some other off site activity for the backdrop of the party you will be bound to times that are available to you. This can have its advantages and disadvantages but can still be workable.

Next, you will find the handy The Perfect Birthday Party Checklist and a The Perfect Birthday Party Shopping List to help you stay on track and to ensure you do not forget anything.

Birthday Party Checklist

Four to Six Weeks before the Party

- Set the party date & time
- Book the location if the party is to be held outside your home
- Establish a party budget
- Create your guest list
- Choose a party theme – hopefully magic!
- Order party supplies & party favors
- Book the Magician

Three Weeks before the Party

- Create and send party invitations
- Keep a list of invitees near the phone for RSVP's
- Plan your party menu

Two Weeks before the Party

- Order balloons
- Order Cake
- Plan party activities & games if not having a magician
- Order any party rental equipment
- Take inventory of kitchen items and tableware to use for the party

One Week before the Party

- Buy non-perishable food and beverages
- Buy candles
- Buy film, video tape & batteries
- Buy extra garbage bags, foil & plastic wrap
- Schedule activities (Best plan = Allow for children's arrival, magician entertains, serve cake and ice cream, and open presents)
- Buy piñata & candy fillers if needed
- Confirm entertainment
- Call or email guests who haven't RSVPed
- Do heavy cleaning

Two Days before the Party

- Check camera batteries & film. Charge batteries if necessary.
- Make space in the refrigerator
- Buy groceries
- Assemble party favor bags

Day before the Party

- Clean bathrooms & party area
- Decorate party room
- Organize and set out party favors

- ___ Place crafts and prizes near activity stations
- ___ Prepare any food that can be refrigerated overnight

Party Day

- ___ Pick up cake, ice and balloons
- ___ Decorate outdoor areas if needed
- ___ Tie some balloons to the mailbox or front porch
- ___ Set up party games if you're not having a magician or feel you want to do more
- ___ Prepare all food
- ___ Check bathrooms for toilet paper, soap & towels
- ___ Relax, smile & have fun!

Perfect Birthday Party Shopping List

TABLE

- Plates
- Napkins
- Plastic ware
- Cups
- Tablecloth
- Decorations

ENTERTAINMENT/DECOR

- Goodie Bags
- Party Favors
- Goodie Bags and Fillers
- Party Hats
- Noisemakers
- Games
- Balloons
- Decorations

REFRESHMENTS

- Food
- Drinks
- Ice
- Cake
- Snacks

EXTRAS

- Tape
- Scissors
- Batteries
- Battery Charger
- Camera
- Film/Memory Cards
- Video Camera
- Tapes
- Markers
- Storage CD Picture Disc

CLEAN-UP

- Paper
- Foil
- Plastic wrap
- Storage containers
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Garbage bags

ATTACH GROCERY LIST!

ATTACH GOODIE BAG LIST!

ATTACH PARTY FAVORS LIST

Chapter 4 – Perfect Birthday Party Invitations

You have your guest list and now it is time to start making out invitations. First, you must obtain them. You can purchase invitations online, make them, or buy them from a card shop or discount store. A great many sites allow you to create your own birthday party invitation online free. Do an internet Google search for “Free Printable Birthday Invitations” and you will have hundreds of possibilities at your fingertips. The great thing about creating your own is you can make the perfect party invitation to match the theme of the party.

If you have an odd or bizarre theme, it may be hard to buy one that is fitting. Your invitation sets the mood for the party so try your best to reflect the theme in your invitation. In addition, add any special requirements such as if there is a dress code as far as the theme (e.g. sledding party you would want everyone to have proper gear, roller skating, bring them if you have them, dress up parties and costume parties, pirates, e.t.c.)

Invitations should be sent out no later than two weeks prior to the grand event. The delivering of the party invitations can sometimes be a bit tricky especially if your child is hand delivering them at school. Those not invited may feel jilted and have hurt feelings. One suggestion is that you ask the teacher to put the individual cards in the appropriate student’s book bag at the end of the day, or if your child is old enough, ask that they discreetly hand them out and why. Mailing the invitations is another option but if you do not have all the guest home addresses, it may not be plausible.

Schools do not freely hand out other students home addresses without prior permission from the parent.

There is always the option of sending E-vites invitations via email but you can risk them not always necessarily being picked up in time. Make sure to always include a RSVP within the invitation, the time the party starts and ends, if gifts are not required, state that as well. A week before the party, call anyone who has yet to RSVP. When dealing with children they can be known for misplacing things that are to be given to their parents.

A parent may have not responded because they were not even aware event. Approximately two or three days before the party confirm the total headcount that will be attending. This will help you to know if you may have to pick up a few more items.

Chapter 5 – Choosing the Perfect Birthday Party Theme

Okay, is theme everything? YES, theme is everything. Without a solid theme, you really have no direction as far as decorations, party favors, food, games, or activities. Now is there one theme better than another theme. As long as your child is thrilled with the theme that is all that matters, well that and of course if your budget will allow it. The best theme, of course, is the magic theme!

Below you will find various themes for various age groups. Feel free to choose one or make up one of your own! Choosing the theme is probably the most exciting part of planning a birthday party. You can allow you and your child's' imagination go wild!

Perfect Party Themes for Children Ages 1 through 11

Rug Rats	Pokémon
Bear in the Big Blue House	Clifford the Big Red Dog
The Busy World of Richard Scarry	Paddington Bear
Outer Space or Aliens	American Idol
Barnyard	Bug or Critter
Beach Theme	Camping
Sports	Dinosaurs
Color	Carnival
Dress Up	Firefighter
NASCAR	Pajama
Pirate	Princess
Animal	Rainbow
Safari	Surf
Tea Party	Teddy Bear
Trains, Planes and Automobile	Deep Sea
Wild West	Wizard of Oz
Sponge Bob	Any Cartoon
Spooky	Ethnic Theme
The Land Before Time	Barbie

For first birthdays, keep in mind to keep the numbers low. A couple other children are more than adequate and a theme is not really necessary unless you just have to have one. Baby party decorations in bright primary colors are enough to stimulate a little ones mind. Take advantage of the ease in this one, because here on out they get a bit more involved. For first birthday parties, keep in mind that the job of the magician is to entertain the other guests and help everyone have a great time as the one year old is really too young for any theme!

A few big blown up beach balls, plastic containers with plastic spoons so they can make music, tunnels that can be made out of cardboard boxes decorated with wrapping paper are next to irresistible for a one year old not to crawl through. Poster board and washable finger paints are also a great activity. Cereal they can dump back and forth between plastic containers.

The Land Before Time is a big hit with the five-year-old crowd whereas Dinosaurs are a huge hit for the 8-year-old boys but varied from The Land Before Time Theme. Older boys want the realistic looking dinosaurs. Both are easy to accessories for. The Land Before Time Theme can have a non-stop showing of the Land Before Time series while the home or even backyard is decorated in a prehistoric theme.

There is a lot of Land Before Time toys available on the market that can help decorate or more then likely, if your child is a huge fan you already have a good number of them saving you from decoration cost. You can use Paper-Mache to design huge boulders and even prehistoric looking trees. Use a large box from an appliance store to make a prehistoric cave. The possibilities are endless if you just give it a little thought. Some of the same ideas can be incorporated into an 8 year olds dinosaur theme.

Again, magic is the theme that transforms all age groups and requires the least amount of planning on your part. If you are not doing a magic theme, you can look over the list of theme ideas listed next.

Perfect Party Themes for Children Ages 12 and up.

Amazing Race Theme
Camping Party
Fiesta Theme
Murder Mystery Theme
Polka Dot Theme
Scavenger Hunt
Spa Theme
Bowling Party
Laser Tag Party
Movie Night Party
Skating Party
Theme Park Party
50's Theme

Beach Party
Dance Party
Hollywood Theme
Pirate Theme
Pool Party
Slumber Party
Survivor Theme
Hotel Party
Limo Party
Paint Ball Party
Sporting Event Party
Retro Theme

The older the kids often means more kids invited and a bit more of an expense but if you are wise in your decisions it does not need to break the bank. Off site parties can get quite expensive especially if there are admission fees such as Theme parks, sporting events. Movies, skating rinks, laser tag and paint ball facilities. Make sure you limit the number of guest on any of these types of events. The day and time of the week can play a role on admission cost.

It is generally cheaper to rent a room at a center for a dance party in the middle of the week rather than a weekend. If your child balks at the idea of having their party on a weeknight, simply explain to them they have a choice, if it is held on a weekend less guest can attend, if it is held on a weekday they can invite more guest. Still have the top set number you will allow in either situation and stick to your guns.

Many theme parties can be pulled off quite nicely in a home. The Retro Theme works well in a home and outdoors. You can save some money by hitting the second hand stores and picking up some tee shirts that can be tied-dyed. A few other supplies you may want to consider is face paints, and fabric paints. Pull out the old record player and some good oldies and let them have at it in the back yard. Take tons of pictures, and encourage guest to wear clothing that matches the era.

A chocolate fondue party is also a hit with the teens. Between a chocolate fondue going and a chocolate fountain, you can rent from any party supply store, fresh fruits, nuts, cookies, marshmallow, pretzels and other great chocolate dipping foods the kids will be sure to remember their chocolate highs. A luau is also a feasible at home party to have. Many dollar stores carry a lot of Hawaiian party supplies for cheap. Throw some Tiki poles in the back yard, some blow up

wading pools, order some grass skirts and request the guest come dressed Hawaiian style.

Large platters of fresh fruit can be served, with Hawaiian music playing in the background and you may even want to fire up the grill and throw on a few slabs of Hawaiian Spare Ribs. A casino theme is also a huge success. Instead of winning money, have small gifts that the guest can turn in their poker chips for.

With the teens comes the Sweet Sixteen Party as well. Some great suggestions for a Sweet Sixteen Party are dance parties, a formal night out party, spa party, karaoke party, and a slumber/beauty party. The main thing to keep in mind is that the party does not need to be hugely elaborate; it has to be done with the heart. That is what will shine through in the end.

Again, if I am working with you, magic is the theme and I will help make sure your party is memorable and successful!

Chapter 6 – Perfect Party Games and Activities

Face it, no one likes to lose so first and foremost, before picking any games to play at your birthday boy or girl's party make sure they are age appropriate and have enough prizes for everyone, win or lose. I could have written a whole e-book full of different games that can be played at birthday parties, actually any kind of party. There are so many one can choose. However, for space purposes I have been forced to limit my selection.

However, you can choose to use any of the games listed or make your own variations of them. Once you start reading some of these chosen birthday party games I am sure your creative mind will kick in and you will think of a few fun ones of your own as well.

For children under the age of one as I mentioned in Chapter 5 do not require much. A few balls, maybe some finger-paints and they are happy. However, a section below includes games that could easily fall under any age group. Depending on your toddler, one of them may also work well with your group. Children over the age of three to the age 10 are quite a bit more active and need to stay busy to be happy for the most part. Face it, this age group is a blast to play games with, and they get the rules; for the most part anyways. This age group thrives on interaction.

It gets a bit trickier when you are dealing with 11 to 13 year olds; they bore quickly and they are trying out their "images." If the game appears even the slightest bit babyish, they will balk at participating. So be a bit choosy when picking out games for this age group, they have their "cool factor" to protect. Talk to your child and run all games by them first if they think their friends would enjoy playing any of them. It may end up being a movie/pizza party is all this age group will partake in or a sleep over.

Thankfully this stage passes. By 14 years of age and up, your young teen have become more comfortable with who they are and will even laugh and enjoy some more immature games that at 11 through 13 they would have not dreamed being caught participating in. However, still make sure the majority of the games you choose are in the appropriate age category.

Games and Activities for Children 1 through 10

Animal Game

This is a great game to build with your child a couple weeks before the party. Collect a bunch of old magazines or coloring books and cut out pictures of different animals. You may want to glue them to notebook cards to make them

sturdier. The game goes like this. Each guest will get a picture of a different animal pinned with safety pins to the back of their shirt. Make sure you let all the kids know first though that they are not to tell each other what animal is pinned to the back of each other's shirt. The child then ask inquiry question like, "Do I have four legs?" or "Do I have a tail?" until they can guess what animal they are. This is a great time to have a grab bag handy. (That will be covered more in Chapter 8) When they guess which animal they are, they get to take one item out of the grab bag... no peeking though!

Design your own Name Tag Activity

When guest arrive have a craft table set up to where they can design their own nametag. Have markers, stickers, glitter, and whatnots available for them to use their artistic abilities. If they are smaller children, you can help them by writing their name yet allow them to decorate as they wish.

Butterfly Crafts Activity

For this activity, you will need coffee filters, pipe cleaners, a spray bottle, and some magnets. Let the kids color the coffee filters with markers. When they have finished, spray them with water and the marker will run giving it a tied-dyed look. Allow the coffee filter to dry completely and then gather in the middle. Use the pipe cleaner to wrap around the center making its body and then a shorter piece slid under the body to make the antennas. Glue a magnet to the back and the children have a gift to bring home to their parents.

Bob the Builder Activity

This activity is perfect for the Bob the Builder party theme. For this activity, you will need enough unfinished birdhouses for each guest to have one and a couple spares, paint, and paint brushes. You can get small birdhouses from many craft stores however if you are handy, rather than purchasing small unfinished birdhouses you can make some out of basal wood. To bring the theme to life you can make Bob the Builder work aprons.

Have the workstation set up and allow the kids to paint their birdhouse in their own special design. Yet another gift you child can bring home to their parents or keep as a party favor.

The Toothpick Marshmallow Tower Game

This is a cheap game for your young ones to play. All you need is some toothpicks, and large and miniature marshmallows. It is probably not a wise game to play with real young children, but if well supervised 5 and up should be fine. The object of the game is to see who can build the biggest tower. You can set a timer on it if you choose. So everyone can win you can do this game in sets of three children. For each set, there are three winners: one with the biggest tower, one with the most creativity, and one with the smallest tower. That way each round no one loses.

Musical Chairs

Another freebie! All you need for this game is chairs (enough for all guest or play it in rounds), music, and someone to operate the music. This game has been around forever and is always a winner with the little ones. You play the music as the kids circle around the chairs you remove one chair and when the music stops whoever remains standing is out. You can either choose to give prizes with this game or not. If you choose to give prizes you can have some set up for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. out rewards. It can be something as simple as stickers! Kids love stickers.

Boat Race Game

This game is great for little ones. All you need is a couple roasting pans or deep cake pans, water, straws, and a few small bathtub toy boats. Give the kids a straw and let them pick their boat and time how long it takes them to blow their boat to the other end of the container. If they are too young to blow yet real well, have them try to get their boat to the other side only using the straw.

The Mining Game

This game is great for the entire age group and is cheap. Fill a cardboard box with popped popcorn and depending on the theme hide theme based party favors or candy in the popcorn. You can do it like dunking for apples, blindfolded, or with one arm tied behind the back; however you choose. They get to mine until they pull out one item. Every one wins.

Spoon Walk

Another cheap game that is tons of fun. You can use practically anything but I do not recommend using raw eggs especially if indoors. Golf balls or ping-pong balls work great with this game as well. The object of the game is getting the ball to the other side of the room without dropping it off the spoon. If you want to make it a bit tougher for the older kids, have them carry the spoon handle in their mouth.

Sock Game

Games do not need to cost money to be a riot and the sock game is proof of that. I am not sure about other parents, but I have never had much luck getting little ones to put their socks on themselves. Well with this game, they will not only put them on themselves, they will love doing it as well! Get a mess load of socks, it does not matter if they match or not. The object of the game is to see who can put the most socks on the fastest. Set a timer (age appropriately, more time for little ones, less time the older they get) and have them go at it. You can make up categories so everyone wins such as most socks on one foot, most on two feet, most colorful socks used, shortest socks, you get the idea.

Balloon Burst

All kids love balloons and this is a great activity you can have done up well before the party. Place inside each balloon a slip of paper stating what they have

won; it can be a sticker, piece of gum, candy, or a grab out of the grab bag. Blow the balloons up and tie them off. Depending on the age of the children will determine what is used to burst the balloons to see what prize they have won. Little ones you can have them sit on them or help them burst the balloon they chose.

Some other good stand bys are Pin the Tail on the Donkey, coloring books and crayons, and face painting.

Games and Activities for Children 11 and Up

Mystery & Murder Mystery Games

The internet has made this game free to anyone. A Google search with “Free Mystery and Murder Mystery Games” will bring a ton up for you to choose. You can also purchase more advance versions of this type of game online. This would be a great task for the birthday child to get ready. All Instructions are included and they are great fun for this age group.

Indoor Golf Ball Croquet Game

This game makes for some hysterical pictures. Each guest will need one pair of panty hose and two golf balls. Place the one golf ball in each leg of the panty hose. Tie the pantyhose around the waist with the long ends of the legs hanging down in front of the guest. The guest will then take turns trying to make a golf ball that is place on the ground into designated targets. You can use duct tape as targets or pieces of paper.

Karaoke Contest

For the brave teens, a karaoke contest can be a blast. They can pretend like they are the next up and coming American Idol and other guest can play the roles of the judges.

Other great standbys are treasure hunts, board games, or letting each guest make their very own personal pan pizza. It can be a pizza bake off plus double as their snack.

Games and Activities for all Age Groups

Dressed for Work Game

You already have everything you need for this game. Supply the guest with enough adult clothes and a timer and see who can get dressed over their existing clothing for work on time. Longer time is allowed for younger children but speed up the time for older children and see who ends up half dressed come time to “go to work.”

Pass the Orange or Tennis Ball

Make a relay with the guest having to go from one end of the room to the next holding either an orange or tennis ball under their chin and pass it on to the next person on their team. The first team to have all their players finish, wins. If the ball or orange is dropped, they can only pick it up with their neck. For younger children you can modify the rules some to make it easier for them.

Bubble Gum Game

This is another relatively cheap game that only requires paper plates, whipped cream, and bubble gum balls. This is another great game for picture perfect moments so have your camera ready. Here is how it is played. Put a couple gumballs on a paper plate and bury them with whip cream. The guest has to dive in and find the gumballs! Messy, but hilarious!

Build your own Maze Activity

Hit your nearest appliance stores and department stores for this game in a hunt for as many extra large boxes as you can find. This activity involves letting the kids take the boxes and make mazes they can crawl throughout them. Do not forget to recycle when you are done.

All of the above games and activities are listed in order to provide you with ideas if you want to do something in addition to the magic show. In most cases, you will not need anything other than the magic show.

Chapter 7 – Perfect Birthday Party Food

Birthday party food does not need to be elaborate, just kid friendly, and in some case, such as for toddlers, age appropriate. Sure-fire wins in most every age group are pizza, hot dogs, hamburgers, and tacos. Now the theme of your party will play a role on what foods you may serve but does not need to dictate it. For a Hawaiian luau theme, you may choose to serve traditional Hawaiian foods, however you could get by having Hawaiian pizza (Canadian bacon and pineapple) as a dish.

Sure, not everyone is going to want to dive into it necessarily, but it sets the base allowing you also to throw in a few cheese or pepperoni pizzas. They will remember the Hawaiian pizza offered for sure which saves the theme. I personally love Canadian bacon and pineapple pizza. Vegetable trays can be good as long as they are served with dip and fresh fruits are always great. If you go with hotdogs, make sure to have all the trimmings; throw in a few bags of chips and you are good to go. Be careful of the mini sandwiches, although they are cute, after 10 minutes in the air, they start to be dried out, and kids will turn their noses up to them.

Unless you are able to keep them fresh and soft, I would rethink that choice. Chicken wings, pizza rolls, mini corndogs, chicken fingers, meatballs, and little sausages also make great snack type foods. Yes, children are going to want to eat, they are creatures of habit. It does not necessarily mean they are hungry, but if it is out there, they are going to eat it. Will they recall fully what all they ate, more then likely not. They will not be as concerned about the food as they will be about the action.

So do not stress too much over preparing a reward-winning feast, they would be just as thrilled with a bag of chips and dip. In addition, remember, there is still the cake and ice cream.

Depending on the children's ages at the party and your child's wishes, you may choose to do cupcakes and save the birthday cake for a family birthday dinner. Cupcakes are quicker and easier to serve and more times then not will be fully eaten. Cupcakes are much easier for children especially under the age of six. When it comes to the ice cream, stick to the basics, chocolate and vanilla. It will save many headaches in trying to figure out who wants what.

Remember, a happy host makes for happy children.

Chapter 8 – Perfect Birthday Party Favors

Party favors are necessary! It is your obligation as a parent to provide your child's birthday party with party favors. This does not mean you need to break the bank, it just means you had better have something to offer on the table. That is like the coolest thing to a kid when they go to a party and the one thing your child's friends will comment on to your child, how awesome of party favors they received or worse, if no favors complain immensely about what a bore the party was.

Creativity can pay off huge here. The chapter regarding party games and activities offers quite a few activities have built in party favors. That is one way you can accomplish to light two candles with one match! Depending on the age of the child is also going to factor in on the amount of money forked out for party favors. Luckily the older children, 14 and up do not necessarily expect party favors anymore. However, a 10-year-old girl inviting 10 friends over for a make up party can get costly in party favors.

As far as make up party themes go, I suggest you check with your nearest Avon dealer and ask to look at their discounted or close out pamphlets. It is a great way to get fingernail polishes and lip glosses for the preening beauties. Dollar stores are another great way to save the pocket book for any theme! They carry everything from party supplies such as loot bags, or otherwise known as goodie bags, and a wide variety of party toys and toys in general that would work great. A couple of packages of army men coming 30 in a package will work great split up used in goodie bags for an army theme party.

Some great standbys that make excellent fillers for goodie bags are individually wrapped cookies, candy, suckers, and token toys such as rings, pencils, stickers, noisemakers, and small individual play dough packages. One key pointer to keep in mind is, the bigger the bag, the more you have to buy to fill it properly. Think of things you have seen your child come home with from parties. What was your first impression? What was your child's impression? Base your shopping off that. If your child was less then thrilled with the party favors received at another's party you can bet that if you buy the same types of things the guest will not be pleased either.

Some ideas for kids that are 10 and older are glow led necklaces, light up rings, bracelets, necklaces, hats, photo frames, personalized gifts, wrapped candy bars, personalized pens or pencils, die cast cars, or nail files. Just use your imagination and in the three to four weeks you have to plan watch for things on sale or discontinued that would be unique.

Here are just a few more activities you could incorporate into your birthday party festivities where party favors are built in.

Purchase either 3x5 inch or whichever size you prefer of stock paper picture frames (the kind where a picture slides into them). You can get these at any art and craft supply store or order them online. Take a group picture on a digital camera of the birthday child with all their friends around them and print off before the guest leave putting each one into a photo frame. When the guests leave, they have a keepsake of the day and a picture of the guest of honor.

You can buy white tee shirts cheap when you get them three in a pack or more or order them off line. Purchase enough tee shirts for all the guest and supply them with fabric paint. They can each design their own or use them for autograph tee shirts where everyone signs each other's tee shirt.

Kites and basal wood rubber band operated airplane kits work great with the boys! It gives them an activity as well as a party favor to take home and still get a lot more fun out of them.

Sun visors and flip flop/thongs can also be purchased very cheap if you buy them plain. Get enough for each guest and birthday child of course. Purchase some decorating supplies such as fabric paints, artificial flowers, glitter, ribbons, and pom-poms; you name it, what ever you think they would get a kick out of using. Allow them to decorate their own ending up being yet another party favor and activity! A little imagination can go a long way

In closing on party favors, I do want to mention the grab bag. Grab bags work great for party game awards. Prizes for party games do not need to be anywhere near as fabulous as the party favors. Candy, stickers, mini note pads, pencils and other items along that line work perfectly. It is not so much you are awarding a win, or keeping a child who lost feel better; you are, in a small gesture, thanking them for playing along. Grab bags also eliminate a lot of arguing over who got what.

Finally, if we are doing a magic show for your child's party then you will want to go with a magic theme. Call me for ideas!

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to leave you with a few simple birthday party rules. Remember, it is your child's birthday party and no matter how much we wish we could go back and create the birthday party of our dreams as a child, it is not about us. Well, not totally anyhow. You do want to be thought of as the coolest parent in your child's school, so in order to accomplish that you have to put your wants to the side a little bit and focus primarily on the birthday child.

Birthday parties are meant to be fun and it is our job to make sure that happens.

Do not attempt to pull off a smashing hit of a birthday party alone. You cannot do it; you will lose. There will be chaos on top of chaos and by the end of day not only will your guest be crying, but you will be too.

Talk to the birthday child all through the planning about proper manners. There may be a repeated gift or even a gift they do not like but you want them to handle that type of situation and any other difficult situations that may come up with excellent manners. Give them alternative things to say and practice with them. Explain to them that it is good manners for them to greet guest as they come in as well as when they leave. Instill the use of proper manners when receiving gifts and compliments.

Always have a back up plan and do not be afraid to use it! Have extra game and activity ideas available to you in case for whatever reason another one falls short or they are played quicker than you anticipated.

Think safety! Make sure pets are put up regardless of how nice they may be. Some kids may just be plain afraid of them or make them uncomfortable. With toddlers make sure sockets are covered and there is nothing they can get into that may cause them harm. With older kids, especially teenagers, make sure there are no alcoholic beverages they could get into or anything else that could cause them harm. If you are having a home pool party, make sure you have enough adults lifeguarding the pool at all times. Keep small trinkets out of toddlers' party favor bags.

If children are dropped off for the party, make a point to greet the guest at the car if at all possible. This will give you another opportunity to reconfirm the party end time and assure that parent will return promptly at end of party to retrieve their child.

Lastly, and just as important, have fun. Relax! Not everything has to be perfect and as long as everyone is having fun; that is all that really matters! Here's wishing you the perfect birthday celebration ever!

This handbook has been prepared and presented to you by YOUR NAME HERE.

It is my hope that by working together as a team, we can have the best birthday party ever for your child.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions!

Sincerely,

Your Name

(Any contact information, website, etc. can be added here).

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