



Photo by Alexia Leland Photography

Alexia



Reece



Ian



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BIRTHDAY PARTY PALOOZA!

20 tips for the best birthday party blowout ever

Written by Katrina Katsarelis

1. COLLABORATE WITH YOUR CHILD

Include your child in the party planning process and theme ideas as much as possible. This is also a great time to discuss behavior, gift gratitude, and expectations for the party.

2. PLAN IN ADVANCE

Start planning the party at least a month in advance and establish the guest list. Find ways to be "inclusive" not "exclusive" so you don't hurt feelings of the children in his peer group.

3. CHOOSE A THEME

A great theme makes the party much more memorable and sets the stage for theme-related games, decorations, food, and fun. (See our list of party themes.)

4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT DATE AND TIME

Check the school, church, and community calendars to make sure the party time doesn't conflict with important events. Have a start and an end time.

5. SEND DIGITAL INVITATIONS

Email and even Facebook events will get a much better response than mail. Create an adorable theme-related birthday graphic to include in the email and cover photo on social media.

6. PLAN A LOOSE AGENDA

Have a general timeline of when the food, games, cake, and gifts will happen so you don't overlook these when the party is in full swing.

7. ENLIST HELPERS

If you have a sister, mom, or in-law that can come to the party and take photos, record, or just help wrangle children, it will help you tremendously.

8. GET CREATIVE

Find innovative ways to make your theme come to life through food, decorations, games, or props. Check Pinterest for amazing party ideas, many of which are reasonably easy to implement.



9. BEWARE OF TEXAS WEATHER

Planning an outdoor party is risky in Texas so make sure you have a back-up plan. An outdoor party on a super hot day will give you the added responsibility of watching for dehydration and overheated kids.

10. CONSIDER CUPCAKES

Save yourself the headache of cutting and passing out cake by having a presentation of adorable cupcakes to serve guests.

11. MAKE ONE EXTRA-SPECIAL MEMORY

Have all the guests chase the birthday child with silly string (or whipped cream for older children), or have a surprise entertainer show up. This may be the only thing they remember because it's so much fun!

12. HAVE FABULOUS GOODY BAGS

Following the theme, you can get fun little trinkets for the goody bags. Oriental Trading Company, Amazon, and dollar stores often have affordable goodies that fill the bags nicely. Don't spend more than \$5 to \$7 on each goody bag.

13. HAVE KID-FRIENDLY FOODS

This is not the time for spinach quiche and shrimp cocktail. Kids do well with easy-to-grab finger foods with no strange ingredients. Pizza is simple, but is always a hit at parties.

14. KEEP A RUNNING RSVP LIST

Invited guests are not always great at responding, so feel free to check in with them as the party gets closer so you can get a final head count.

15. SAVE YOUR HOUSE

Plan the party at a location like Tilt, Pump it Up, or Altitude Trampoline Park. There's no cleanup and the location pretty much handles it all.

16. SET UP A PHOTO SPOT

Following your theme, set up a great backdrop with decorations and maybe some fun signs and props. Ask one of your adult helpers to bring kids over in groups and by themselves to get their photo taken.

17. GUARANTEE A GOOD TIME

Keep your eyes open for a child who is lost or alone in a corner and find ways to draw them into the party. Giving him an important job like helping run a game will bring out the best in him.

18. OUTSOURCE WHAT YOU CAN

It will help save your sanity if you buy as much ready-made items as possible. Balloon bouquets already blown up at the party store, prepared food picked up from the store, cupcakes from a bakery, etc.

19. SHOW GRATITUDE

Try to have your child thank each guest as they leave and send a thank you note either digitally or by hand for the gifts received.

20. DON'T OVERDO IT

Keep in mind this is just one child's birthday party and there will be many more to come. As long as you surround him with love with people who matter in his life, that's the most important thing to having the best birthday party ever. **KM**