

Hints and Tips for a Happy Party

It can be daunting to organise a party, especially for the first time, so I hope these suggestions will help you to enjoy a truly Happy Party.

1. Tie a bunch of balloons to the front door: it guides guests to the party house.
2. Save squeakers, hats, blowers and balloons until the end of the party and it will make life so much easier for you. Tie the balloons up (out of reach) and give one to each child as a going home present. Don't leave them on the floor (they won't last long).
3. Don't wear yourself out: too many children's parties are spoilt by going on for too long. Two hours is perfect for a really good party (90 minutes for a pre-school group). Always leave them wanting more.
4. Send your party invitations out *early*. If one of your child's classmates is planning a party on the same day, it can cause a lot of problems and *you* may have to change *your* plans. Include a map and details to RSVP.
5. *Top Tip*: If there's a child who you think will cause mayhem and spoil the party for the others – don't invite them! There's no rule that says you have to. Invite the ones your child plays with and talks about. You don't have to invite the whole class, just those who will make the party more fun and special for your child.
6. As the guests arrive, put their presents safely into a BIG cardboard box and open them after the party. Then you will know who gave what for "thank you" notes later, and it will ensure that nothing gets lost.
7. Rather than writing endless thank you notes, take a photo of the Birthday Superstar with each present and get them to add a quick "thank you" to it.
8. Don't try to do everything yourself. Ask one of the other parents to help out or supervise the children while you are busy.
9. Time your party well: try to have the food at a time the children would normally be eating. Then they'll be hungry and ready to eat, rather than bored and keen to stick sausages in their ears.

10. At tea-time, sit the children round a table in a separate room if possible; then you isolate all the food and spilt drinks in one area.
11. Remember the candles, matches and knife for the cake; film and batteries for the camera; bin bags for the rubbish.
12. Don't serve ice-cream, drinks or sweets once the Magic Show has begun. Most of the food will end up on the carpet and sticky fingers will get everywhere. Don't sit in the jelly, Nelly!
13. If you have hired a bouncy castle, make sure it's let down before the Magic Show starts: no matter how good the show, if one child decides to have a bounce the rest will surely follow.
14. Toddlers don't really know what's going on at a party for older children and it's best to keep them clear of the games and performance area. They are easily trodden on, so a grown-up's lap is the safest place.
15. The Magic Show is the perfect time to put cake into the party bags and quietly clear away the food. Leave the furniture until the end of the party or the children won't be able to hear what's going on.
16. Parents and adults always enjoy the show and are very welcome to watch, providing they sit quietly and behave! If they draw attention to themselves, they might well find themselves included in Mr W.'s performance.
17. If you are organising the party games yourself, decide (write down) the games and the rules. I know it sounds silly, but you will feel more in charge when faced with a large group of children. Try to avoid elimination games (two children playing, thirty sat down getting bored). Vary the pace between games, but keep things bowling along (six or seven layers for Pass the Parcel is quite enough). You could always leave it up to Windbags...
18. Please keep pets, such as dogs, cats and crocodiles, in a separate room as they can be frightening to some children, no matter how gentle they are normally.
19. Finally, leave the washing-up until later and join in the fun!