

**Ideas for a
Birthday Party
Your Child Will
Never Forget
(On a Budget)**

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

Children always look forward to their birthdays as a time of fun and games with their friends, neighbours and family members. The anticipation for kids can start weeks ahead of time, with frequent reminders to parents as to the date of the big day – as if Mom and Dad could forget! Kids are always full of ideas as to what they want their party to be like. They will come up with suggestions such as pony rides, magic shows, and puppet theatres, while you may be thinking wistfully about hiring a caterer or a party planners to do all the birthday party work for you.

YOU ARE THE EVENT PLANNER

Your imagination stops short as you realize that the planning and organizing of this birthday party is going to be totally up to you due to budget constraints. You also know that this party is very important to your precious child, so you want to make sure that this event is the type of party your child wants.

PARTY PLANNING IS THE KEY

You may be wondering how you are supposed to pull this off and stick to a budget as well. An age appropriate birthday party for your child requires both planning and preparation, and it is this behind the scenes work that is going to either make or break the party. Prior planning is also the key to holding the perfect birthday party while sticking to your budget.

CONSIDER WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO HOST A BIRTHDAY PARTY

At this stage of the party game, brainstorming is going to give you the ideas you need to start your budget party planning. It is a good idea to start this planning around two months before the date of your child's birthday. This should give you ample time to seek out the things you will need in order to make your child's birthday a success.

INITIAL PARTY PLANNING

First, decide on how much you want to spend. Think about all aspects of a birthday party, such as the invitations, party favours, decorations, games and activities, the all-important birthday cake and other menu items, and the contents of the goody bag that all party-savvy kids will expect at the end of the party. Make a list of all the things you will need, and also the things you think you might need. You will discover that this list will become invaluable to you.

WHAT KIND OF PARTY DOES YOUR CHILD WANT?

Most kids already have some sort of an idea of the kind of birthday party they want. Often, their ideas are a bit farfetched, but you can usually get the general idea of what would please them. Little girls lean toward theme parties that include princesses, pink, and glitter. Little boys tend to like birthday party themes that have cowboys, sports, or dinosaurs.

CONSIDER A THEMED BIRTHDAY PARTY

If having a themed birthday party for your child has never occurred to you, do consider this option. It has the potential to save you both time and money, for you will only need to procure items that go along with the party theme. There are so many themes that you can choose from, and we will discuss some of them later in this eBook. Perhaps the ideas listed will spark another theme idea that interests your child.

INVITATIONS FOR YOUR PARTY

Party invitations can help to set the tone for your entire party. When children see an invitation that is just for them, they become even more excited about attending your child's party. When it comes to kid's birthday invitations, you have many choices. You can use the type of invitations that have been around for many years, which are the pre-printed kind that you can buy in quantity at any stationary store.

OTHER METHODS USED TO INVITE GUESTS

You could also use the time-honoured method of inviting party guests via a telephone call or in person. Unless an adult receives this verbal invitation, you are taking a chance of the guest not attending because he or she forgot about the birthday party, or was not allowed to attend because his or her parents did not know anything about the party.

ELECTRONIC INVITATIONS FOR THE ELECTRONIC AGE

If you happen to know that all of the children on your guest list come from homes that have access to the Internet, use this fast, easy, and free method of distributing your birthday party invitations. A quick telephone call to the parents will get you this information. Once you have the email addresses of the guests in hand, you have the option of designing an invitation in Microsoft Word or Open Office, or using one of the online invitation services such as Evite in order to get the information to your guests.

CUSTOM PRINTED PARTY INVITATIONS

You also have the option of having party invitations custom printed. Many online printers will email proofs to you for your approval before doing the actual printing of the invitations. Most of the time, this type of invitation is very reasonable in price. Online printers pride themselves on the fast turnaround they are able to provide on invitation orders. Your custom printed birthday party invitations can be in your hands in a matter of day. The fun part of using an online printer is the wide range of designs that are available. You should have no problem finding a party invitation that is well suited to your party if this is the route you choose to take.

GET CREATIVE AND DESIGN YOUR OWN INVITATIONS

If your budget is not sufficient to handle the custom printed invitations or the pre-printed invitation, you have the option of making the invitations yourself. Do it yourself invitations are a wonderful way to have fun and be creative. All you need is a supply of blank invitation cards, plenty of ink for your printer, and some imagination. You can also search the Internet to find free birthday card templates to use. Some already have designs and wording in place, and some do not. These templates make it very simple to make your birthday party invitations look the way you want

them to. You can also make use of free clipart that is also online if you wish.

HOMEMADE PAPER INVITATIONS – A CLASSIC METHOD

Paper invitations are nice when they are ready made, but you can really get creative if you make them yourself. You can get creative and fashion party invitations that go along with the party theme you have chosen. If you are a member of one of the greeting card web sites like American Greetings or Hallmark, you can find party invitations that are ready for you to personalize and print. This is a true time and money saver, and the finished product is quite pretty.

CREATE A GUEST LIST

At this point, you will want to create a guest list, along with some assistance from your child if they are old enough to contribute their ideas. Small children will enjoy their birthday party more if the guest list is limited to twice as many children as the age of the child. Babies and toddlers may get fussy with the excitement of a larger crowd. Family and familiar friends are the best guests at a babies' first birthday party.

CHOOSING YOUR GUESTS

It may be the popular thing to do in your area to invite the entire class to a birthday party. If this is the case, and your budget and your home or the venue you choose for the party can handle twenty or more children, go for it! Your child will have memories of this birthday for years to come, and having his or her classmates to help him celebrate it will make those memories all the more special. If your budget cannot handle a crowd, you may want to limit the guest list to just a few family members for younger children, or several of your older child's best friends.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

No matter what kind of invitation you decide to send out for your child's birthday party, remember to include the following information - the date and time of the party, the location of the party, and if you wish, the theme of the party. You might even want to mention what foods you plan to serve. These days, many children have food allergies. Don't forget to add a phone number where you can be reached so that people can RSVP.

MAKING THE PARTY APPEALING TO KIDS AND ADULTS

If you are planning a birthday party for a one, two, or three year old, each child will be accompanied by a parent or other adult. This can continue until kids reach around six years old. Make a note of this on your guest list, for they will need to be included in your menu plans, and they will need a place where they can sit comfortably while the party is going on. Otherwise, you are going to have people roaming your home or the venue you have obtained to hold the party, looking for a place to set their plate or cup.

PROVIDE ENOUGH SEATING

There is nothing worse than attempting to drink a cup of punch or coffee and eat a piece of cake while standing, so if you do not want spills to clean up, provide proper seating! Folding chairs are portable and well suited for a children's birthday party. Your birthday party menu should also reflect the fact that adults will be present. You will want to have coffee, tea, and soda available for the adults, and perhaps one "adult" dish that you do not plan to serve to the children.

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GET THAT PARTY STARTED!

Now that you have made your guest list, it's time to get started on some of the other tasks that you will need to accomplish in order to throw a wonderful birthday party for your child and still stay within your set budget.

ADDRESS AND MAIL THE INVITATIONS

It is important to your party planning for you to get the birthday party invitations addressed and in the regular or email as soon as possible. You may be able to enlist the help of your older children in the stamping addressing of envelopes! If you can, mail the party invitations about two weeks before the date of the birthday party. This will give everyone enough time to respond to the invitation.

CAREFUL PLANNING SAVES YOU MONEY

The knowledge of how many people are going to attend your child's party will help you to know the amount of food, decorations, and party favours to purchase. You won't inadvertently buy too much of any of these

Once you have received replies to all of your party invitations, it is a good idea for you to start a shopping list. Once you have decided on a theme for your child's birthday party (more about themes in Chapter 3) you will better understand what kind of decorations and party favours to buy.

FAVOURS AND GOODIES

For example, if your child chooses a Wild West theme, your shopping list could include items such as streamers and napkins in Western red or blue, inexpensive cowboy hats made of sturdy felt for each of your guests, napkin rings stamped with Western motives, or a saddle-shaped tablet for each guest.

WHAT GOES IN A GOODY BAG?

Items for each child's goody bag could include erasers in the shape of horses, boot-shaped candy, cowboy balloons, a miniature Western play set, a bandanna, a pretend sheriff's badge, or a set of cowboy stickers. There are many places online such as Oriental Trading.com where you can find small items that are perfect for both favours and goody bags.

THE ALL-IMPORTANT BIRTHDAY CAKE AND OTHER PARTY FOODS (ON A BUDGET)

Even if baking is not your thing, you can create a beautiful birthday cake for your child's birthday party! Using a simple cake recipe to make a 13x9 inch sheet cake, then decorating the cake with a few well-planned adornments can result in a cake you will want to photograph before cutting so you can remember just how good it looked! Baking your own birthday cake is far cheaper than buying one at a bakery! Do some price comparisons, and you will see for yourself. What will cost \$30.00 or more in a bakery can be made at home for a fraction of that price.

HOW ABOUT CUPCAKES?

If the thought of baking and decorating a large cake still makes you nervous, consider preparing cupcakes instead. The same recipe can be used, and it will make about 24 cupcakes. These can be decorated individually and topped with either an edible decoration that goes along with your party theme, or with an inedible small toy that does the same.

DECORATE YOUR CAKE WITH CARE

It is not a good idea to use inedible decorations for small children, and even older kids will need to be warned. You may want to corral the parent of one of your child's guests, and give him or her the job of going around the birthday table and collecting these cupcake toppings for safety.

OTHER PARTY FOODS

Have you thought about any of the other party foods you may want to serve? These are also simple to prepare, and will help you to stick to your budget. In fact, by making all the birthday food yourself, you can often

serve a larger spread to your guests than your budget would allow otherwise. Snack foods such as potato or tortilla chips will of course need to be purchased, but you can easily whip up a dip yourself that adult guests and older children will really enjoy.

PLAN WHAT YOU WILL SERVE

Take the time to sit down and look over the following recipes before deciding what you would like to serve for the birthday party. These recipes are of course mere suggestions. You may well have other recipes in mind that will fit into your party budget. The ones that are listed here are to show the selection of foods that are usually served at a child's birthday party.

You will want to have available a selection of drinks that are suitable for children. Assorted juice boxes and small bottles of water will work well.

TIME HONOURED BIRTHDAY PARTY RECIPES

When it comes to preparing food for a kid's birthday party, most parents want recipes that are quick, simple, and relatively foolproof. Depending on your own expertise in the kitchen, the following recipes should certainly fit the bill.

THE BIRTHDAY CAKE

The most anticipated of all the foods on the party table will be, of course, the birthday cake. This basic cake recipe can be frosted and decorated in a variety of ways that are sure to please all of your party guests. It is a lovely, light cake, yet sturdy enough to hold the decor of your choice.

Best Birthday Cake Ever

1 cup butter (do not substitute margarine)

2 cups sugar

3 cups self-rising flour

4 eggs

1 cup milk or half-and half

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1-teaspoon lemon extract

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. While the oven is heating, prepare three nine-inch cake pans by greasing and flouring them. Cream the butter, and then add the sugar. Using an electric mixer, continue to cream for eight to ten minutes, or until the mixture is very fluffy. Add the 4 eggs one by one, beating after each one is added. Add the flour alternately with the milk or half-and-half until it has all been mixed in well. Add the vanilla last of all, and stir in until it is well mixed with the cake batter.

Divide the batter into the cake pans that you have prepared. Make sure that the batter in the pan is level, or you will end up with crooked cake layers! A quick way to do this is to take the pan in both hands, lift it a couple of inches off of the kitchen counter, and drop it. This takes out air bubbles as well as level the batter.

Bake for around 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. Let the cake layers rest for 10 minutes, and then turn them out onto cooling racks to finish cooling completely. If you attempt to frost a cake that is too warm, your frosting will run and droop, ruining the looks of the finished cake.

FROSTING THE BIRTHDAY CAKE

It is a good idea to use a basic frosting such as chocolate or vanilla, as you will be placing decorations on the top of the cake depending on what theme you choose for the birthday party. Vanilla frosting can be tinted with food colouring to any shade you choose that would work with your theme. You may purchase a frosting that is already made, or you may choose to make your own frosting, using the recipe below.

Easy Vanilla Buttercream Frosting

1 cup real butter (best not to substitute margarine)

1 small jar (7 ounces) marshmallow fluff

1 cup confectioner's sugar

2 teaspoons real vanilla extract

Soften the butter by taking it out of the refrigerator for about thirty minutes or so before you begin to prepare the frosting. If the butter has a slight "give" when you lightly press it with a finger, it is ready to be creamed. Once the butter is whipped and creamy, add the marshmallow fluff and blend well. Next, mix in the confectioner's sugar and the vanilla

extract. Beat this mixture on high for about three minutes. Frost cooled cake layers with this mixture.

Easy Chocolate Buttercream Frosting

½ cup real butter (please, no margarine!)

3 cups confectioner's sugar

½ cup unsweetened cocoa

1/3 cup whole milk or half and half

3 teaspoons real vanilla extract

Cream butter until it is smooth and fluffy. Slowly beat in the confectioner's sugar and the unsweetened cocoa. Add the milk a little at a time, for you may not need quite all of it. Add the vanilla last, and mix in thoroughly. Frost cooled cake layers with this mixture.

Take care that none of the children who will be attending the party is allergic to chocolate before you use this flavour of frosting on the cake. A few telephone calls will get this information for you, and you can proceed with your plans based on what you learned.

OTHER RECIPES SUITABLE FOR A CHILD'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

Children like simple foods, which makes your menu planning easier. You will probably want to serve snacks instead of a full meal. Kids will be too excited to eat a lot of food, though there are exceptions to this rule. The following recipes are easy to prepare as well as delicious!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY CAKE CONES

These are simple, quick, and kind to the budget. Many birthday party hosts and hostesses prefer these for their guest's little hands, as they are potentially less messy. They may be frosted with any flavour of frosting that goes well with the cake mix, and decorated to suit the party theme.

1 package of cake mix, any flavour

24 ice cream cones (must have a flat bottom!)

Frosting and decorations of your choice

Make up the cake mix as the package directs. Place exactly 2 tablespoons of the cake mix batter in each ice cream cone, then place each cone upright in a muffin tin. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. Cool completely before frosting and decorating.

BIRTHDAY RICE KRISPIE TREATS

6 cups of Rice Krispie cereal

3 Tablespoons of butter or margarine

40 regular marshmallows or 1 10 oz bag miniature marshmallows

Melt the butter or margarine in a saucepan, and then add the marshmallows. Stir this mixture until it is completely melted. Remove from the heat, and stir in the cereal until everything is well mixed. Spray a 13x9x2 inch pan with cooking spray. Spoon the mixture into the pan. Butter a small piece of wax paper, and use it to spread the cereal mix evenly in the pan. Allow to cool, then cut into 2 inch squares.

Variations –

Use half Cocoa Pebbles or Fruity Pebbles cereal instead of Rice Krispies for a different taste as well as a different look for these popular treats.

Freeze either M&Ms candies, Reese's Pieces candies, or some of each. Mix the candies into the cereal mixture before you remove them from the saucepan. The purpose of freezing the candies is to keep them from melting into the hot cereal mixture.

If you are looking for a treat that will blend in with the colour scheme of your birthday party, add some food colouring to the melted marshmallow mixture (before you add the cereal) and blend well. You can experiment with various shades and tints until you can decide upon one that you like.

Use cookie cutters on your treats while they are still in the pan in order to cut them into a variety of different shapes. Hint – spray the cookie cutters with cooking spray to keep them from sticking.

A few pieces of crushed peppermint candy can be add to the marshmallow mixture for melting before the marshmallow mixture is mixed into the cereal. This gives the treats a delightful hint of peppermint taste.

You can add nuts, raisins, crasins, or coconut to your Rice Krispy treats.

Many people frost the tops of their Rice Krispy treats. This is an excellent way to add both colour and extra flavour to the treats. Personalize treats with each guests' name, or frost them to look like birthday gifts!

CATCH OF THE DAY

1 cup peanut butter

1 large package cream cheese

Celery Sticks (making the sticks yourself is more budget friendly)

Tiny goldfish shaped crackers

Mix the peanut butter and the cream cheese until smooth and creamy. Spread this mixture into the natural hollow of the celery sticks, then take several of the goldfish crackers and place them on the peanut butter/cream cheese mixture. Kids love these!

EASY SAUSAGE BALLS

3 cups of boxed biscuit mix (like Bisquick)

2 ½ cups sharp cheddar cheese, grated

1 pound of mild breakfast sausage (the kind that comes in a roll)

Mix all the ingredients together, and roll into small balls with your hands. Arrange balls on a cookie sheet and bake at 400 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes.

TORTILLA PINWHEEL SANDWICHES

These are easy to make, and really pretty! You will need flour tortillas, cream cheese, peanut butter, and either grape or strawberry jam. To prepare the sandwiches, spread the tortillas with either cream cheese and jelly, or peanut butter and jelly. Roll up the tortilla, and secure it with a toothpick so that it does not come unrolled. Place in the refrigerator for at least an hour. Just before serving, take a sharp knife and slice in pieces about an inch thick. Arrange on a platter or plate and serve.

Devilled eggs, mozzarella cheese sticks, and a cheese and fruit platter are well received by children and adults alike. A dip for the fruit is always welcome.

CREAM CHEESE FRUIT DIP

1 8 ounce package cream cheese

1 cup sour cream

¼ cup sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Mix all ingredients together and serve alongside a platter or plate of sliced fruit.

Another dip that even children seem to like is -

BIRTHDAY PARTY DIP

This is a very popular recipe to serve at birthday parties. Guests of all ages seem to enjoy the taste very much. It goes nicely with many kinds of chips as well as raw vegetables.

1 cup mayonnaise

8 ounces sour cream

1 can of water chestnuts, drained and chopped

2 Tablespoons pimento, chopped

2 Tablespoons green onion, chopped

2 Tablespoons beef bouillon

½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

½ teaspoon garlic powder

A snack food that is perfect for a party goes by several names, People Puppy Chow being one of them. Kids are intrigued by the chance to nibble on actual puppy food, but once they taste the mixture they will certainly come back for more.

PEOPLE PUPPY CHOW

6 ounces of milk chocolate chips

6 ounces of semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 cup of peanut butter

½ half cup of butter

1 box of Crispix cereal (or any square, crunchy, unsweetened cereal)

2 cups of powdered sugar

Place both types of chocolate chips, the peanut butter and the butter in a microwave safe dish. Microwave 3 minutes more or less, watch the mixture carefully lest it burn. Once this mixture has melted, pour it over the cereal and stir until the cereal is completely coated. Place the coated cereal in a good-sized paper sack along with the powdered sugar. Shake the bag until the cereal is coated, and serve. Keep the mixture stored in a container that is airtight.

GIANT BIRTHDAY COOKIES

Giant cookies are popular at birthday parties everywhere. They are often used as an activity, where children are given various colours of frosting and told to decorate the giant cookies. Here is one recipe that makes a beautiful and delicious cookie.

1 cup of real butter

1 cup of peanut butter

1 cup of sugar

1 cup of light brown sugar

2 eggs

1 ½ cups self-rising flour

2 cups quick oatmeal

1 cup seedless raisins

1 1/2 cups M&Ms candies, the plain kind

Start off by taking an electric mixer and creaming together the butter, peanut butter, and both types of sugar. Add the eggs next, then the flour. Mix each addition very well. Stir in the seedless raisins and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the M&M candies. Mix again for a final time, and then divide the dough in half.

Baking the Giant Cookie

Pizza pans are a good size for your cookie. Line two of them with parchment paper or aluminium foil. Pat the cookie dough into the pizza pans until it lacks about an inch of touching the edge. Take the remaining 1/4 cup of M&Ms and sprinkle over the two Giant Cookies before baking at 325 degrees for twenty to twenty-five minutes. Cool in the pan for ten minutes before attempting to remove cookie.

This punch recipe has been around seemingly forever, and it is still just as delicious now as it was many years ago.

DELICIOUS PARTY PUNCH

1 2-liter of chilled lemon lime soda, such as Sprite or Seven-Up

1 2-liter of general ale, chilled

1 gallon or more of sherbet

Mix all ingredients together, adding sherbet last. The sherbet will melt and mix with the other ingredients with no need for further mixing.

A similar party punch turns out to be a beautiful pale green colour. It uses –

2- liters of ginger ale

1 large can of frozen lemonade.

1 large can of pineapple juice

1 quart of lime sherbet

Stir these ingredients together, and watch the way the sherbet slowly melts away, leaving just a hint of foam behind. Both of these punches are suitable for young children to drink.

3

EXPERIENCE THE FUN OF A THEMED PARTY

THEMED PARTIES CAN ACTUALLY BE EASIER TO PLAN AND THROW!

Children enjoy pretending, and a themed birthday party appeals to them greatly. Once a theme that suits your child is chosen, your decorations and party favours can reflect this theme, if you choose. The different birthday themes described in this Ebook will also list the decorations used for each party. You are free to expand on these ideas if your budget allows.

AIRPLANE PARTY

Decorations for an airplane party are of course, airplanes. Small plastic toy airplanes and larger, model type airplanes may be hung from the ceiling with fishing line. White helium balloons can be scattered around the airplanes to give the effect of fluffy clouds. Balsa wood airplanes on hand for each guest to put together help to reinforce the airplane theme.

Come Fly with Me

A paper airplane contest allows each guest to decorate a pre-made paper airplane, and then see whose plane will fly the longest distance. A game of Pin the Pilot on the Plane will be greeted with much laughter as the fun begins. Airplane stickers and tiny Matchbox brand airplanes are perfect additions to each child's goody bag.

ANCIENT EGYPT BIRTHDAY PARTY

This party is perfect for older children, but younger ones can also enjoy the ambience. Decorations of gold streamers and gold and white balloons can be interspersed with cardboard pyramids that have been spray painted gold, and miniature mummies that are easily fashioned using a supply of toilet paper and the cardboard roll from either toilet paper or paper towels.

Games can be a lot of fun with this theme. A game of dress the mummy uses many rolls of toilet paper as the children wrap each other up in mummy fashion. Pin the Beard on King Tut will also be a huge hit. If possible, corral a friend and have her dress as Cleopatra to lend some authenticity to the party. Party favours of coloured beads, pretend gold coins, little plastic toy snakes and frogs, gold pencils, and of course candy will be eagerly received by little hands.

ARTS AND CRAFTS PARTY

For an Arts and Crafts birthday party, you will need to provide a craft project that is suitable to the age of the child. Older children would enjoy any craft such as tie-dying, candle making, painting, beading, knitting or crocheting – any craft that requires dexterity. Younger children will enjoy crafts that include play dough, finger painting, or stringing large beads. Colouring sheets printed from the Internet are also good to have on hand for the child who does not want to attempt another craft.

Decorations for an arts and crafts party can be the usual balloons and streamers in colours of your choice. A game of Drop the Crayon, where the player stands before a plastic cup and attempts to drop the crayon in the cup, is an unusual game that kids love.

ASTRONAUT BIRTHDAY PARTY

All children are interested in astronauts and outer space. If your child thinks an Astronaut birthday party would be wonderful, then you are ready to start planning! Glow in the dark stars and planets that you hang from the ceiling are a budget option for astronaut-themed decor.

More Astronaut Décor

You can spend a bit more and hang black fabric on the walls and the furniture of the room you are planning to use to hold the party. Silver stars and planets can be taped onto the black cloth to create a solar

system. Black and blue streamers and balloons will add to the affect. Anything you can think of that will give the children the illusion that they are in space will be a perfect decoration for this theme party.

BARBIE BIRTHDAY PARTY

This theme is extremely popular with young girls everywhere. If you have ever walked down the Barbie aisle of a toy store, you are going to see a lot of "Barbie pink". Pink and purple balloons and streamers, several Barbie posters, pink and purple flowers and butterflies can be your main decorations for this theme. Some parents continue these decorations right out the front door and outside! The colourful balloons and streamers can be hung from trees, bushes, or anything in your front yard that will hold a few of them. One advantage to decorating the outside of the home is that it does help the guests to find your house if they have not been there before.

A Barbie Birthday Table

Take a trip to your local Dollar Store (almost every city has one of these stores where everything they sell costs just one dollar) and you just may be able to find a Barbie tablecloth, Barbie napkins, and Barbie cups and plates for your party. If these cannot be found, a pink tablecloth and disposable dishes will do nicely.

Fun Barbie Games

Search the Internet for Barbie colouring pages, and print out enough for your young guest. The children will enjoy this fine activity. Another fun game would be Pin the Ponytail on Barbie. A poster with a clear Barbie figure can be pinned on a wall, and each child is blindfolded and handed a Barbie's "ponytail" made from construction paper. A piece of double-sided sticky tape is affixed to the back of each paper ponytail so they will stick to the poster when each child attempts to put it in the right place

BASEBALL PARTY

A children's baseball themed party can be a lot of fun to plan and experience. You may want to hold this party outside, for obvious reasons! Decorate this space with red and white balloons and streamers, a scoreboard crafted from cardboard, and anything else you can think of that will make the area look like a baseball stadium. A hot dog stand serving real hot dogs and popcorn will thrill small guests, and will limit your party food preparation tremendously. Birthday cake may be served inside our outside at some point during the party.

Just A Little Imagination

This party is very easy on the budget, since your decorations are mostly cardboard that your imagination turns into something fun! Pin up baseball posters and have a table where various baseball cards are displayed. A safe plastic baseball bat and a "whiffle" plastic baseball should be on hand for those guests who would enjoy some informal batting practice.

Baseball Party Favours

Favours for this party can be inexpensive baseball caps from the dollar store, a package of baseball cards, and a package of Big League Chew bubble gum. Baseball pencils, erasers, or key chains are also excellent favours. Other small baseball items may be purchased from Oriental Trading online.

BASKETBALL BIRTHDAY PARTY

If your child is fond of basketball, and has been asking you about having a Basketball birthday party, then we have lots of good ideas for you! A Basketball party is a lot of fun to plan and to host, so your little one is in for a treat. One of the key things about this birthday party theme is the sport itself. The kids who attend your party probably enjoy basketball too, so count on having some impromptu games of basketball going on at your house if you have a basketball goal set up.

After some time outside, gather the children inside so that they may settle themselves before the opening of the birthday gifts and the serving of refreshments. A good game for a basketball themed party is a takeoff on the old game known as Hot Potato. Have the party guests sit in a circle. Start to play some appropriate music, and tell the kids to pass the ball around the circle. The object of the game is who has the ball when the music is stopped, for that is the winner of the game. Favours for the goody bags can include basketball stickers, pencils, candy, and other items.

BEE BIRTHDAY PARTY

This is a perfect theme for toddlers. Usually, only a small group of children and a parent each are invited to a two or a three-year-old child's party. This makes it a little easier on the budget, and allows you to do more than you ordinarily would have. Decorations for the Bee theme are black and yellow streamers and balloons. Yellow paper cups and plates will blend in beautifully.

A piñata in the shape of a bee would be the perfect addition to this themed party. Children this age would enjoy decorating bee shaped sugar

cookies as a fun activity. You may want to play Pin the Stinger on the Bee if you think the children would like this game.

CIRCUS/CARNIVAL PARTY

Your birthday boy or girl and all the guests will enjoy a circus themed party. Balloons and streamers in red, yellow and blue, circus posters, and a friend or two you have recruited to dress up as a clown will make this party very special. An elephant and clown cut from cardboard and artfully painted are easy decorations. Circus colouring pages printed from the Internet are always well received. Circus music will lend atmosphere as your guests mingle with the clowns and watch them shape balloons into funny animals.

Circus/Carnival Party Activities

If your budget will allow, renting a pony for pony rides is a wonderful activity that will be long remembered. Face painting and a Fishing Booth where the guests can "fish" for small prizes are always popular activities for this type of party.

Inexpensive circus paper plates, cups, and tablecloths are easily found. Animal crackers, clown noses, cotton candy and microwave popcorn are all perfect goody bag items.

DINOSAUR BIRTHDAY PARTY

This is the perfect party for the child who loves dinosaurs! It is a fun party to plan as well. Table decorations can be as simple as a white paper tablecloth on which you have drawn "dinosaur footprints". Around the footprints, scatter dinosaur "eggs". This can be candy malted milk eggs or another type of egg shaped candy that is sold year round and not just at Easter.

More for the Party Table

Dinosaur shaped fruit snacks will also work if by chance you cannot find the candy eggs. If you already own or can borrow a large stuffed dinosaur toy, this can be a part of your table decorations. Tie green and gold balloons from the stuffed dinosaur to complete your table.

Dinosaur Decor

Green crepe paper streamers hung from the ceiling will create the effect of being in a jungle full of dinosaurs. Little plastic dinosaurs placed around the party area along with more dinosaur footprints help to create a

wonderful ambience. Those who have drawing talent can take large sheets of paper and create pictures of dinosaurs, which can be mounted on the walls in various places.

Dinosaur Games

Games for the children can include Pin the Tail on the Prosauropod, Dinosaur Ring Toss (use a good-sized plastic or stuffed dinosaur for this), and Dinosaur Excavation Time. Take a child's wading pool and fill it with clean sand. In the sand, bury little treasures like small plastic dinosaurs, plastic dinosaur "bones", a package of dinosaur fruit snacks, and any other little prize that you think would work

DRESS-UP TEA PARTY

This theme is perfect for little girls who enjoy dressing up. On your invitations, indicate that each guest should wear her favourite dress up clothing. Collect china cups and saucers from thrift shops or your own cupboard for an authentic touch. Costume jewellery will make each girl feel very dressed up. You can locate tons of costume jewellery at dollar stores and thrift shops. Each child will receive the jewellery they choose to wear along with their teacup as a party favour.

Games and Dress Up

It will be easy for you to fashion a pin the teacup to the saucer party game out of cardboard, and the children will thoroughly enjoy your efforts. If you have access to enough "dress up" clothing and shoes, your young guests will thoroughly enjoy playing Dress Up at the party. The tea table should be set as formally as possible. Persuade a friend to dress up and act as a butler to serve the children their "tea" and other refreshments.

FARM BIRTHDAY PARTY

A Farm party can be lots of fun to plan. You will want to have representatives of farm animals at this party. This can be accomplished by finding colouring book photos of farm animals online. These colouring pages can be blown up in size to about 3 by 4 feet at a copy shop, or on your own printer if it has that capability. The finished result can be coloured or painted as you desire.

Farm Birthday Party Games to Play

Games for a Farm party can include an Egg Gathering activity. Simply take plastic Easter eggs and place small treats inside, then hide them in places where hens might lay their eggs. If possible, a hay or tractor ride for each child is a fun way to experience this part of farm life. Younger

children will enjoy a story with a farm theme, while older guests can participate in an apple-bobbing contest. A few bales of hay can come in handy to create a farm-like atmosphere. Overalls and checked shirts can be the uniform of the day.

FIREMAN BIRTHDAY PARTY

A fireman themed birthday party mainly appeals to little boys, but there are some little girls out there who will be interested as well. The decor for a fireman party starts with orange, red, and yellow balloons and crepe paper streamers. Your local Dollar Store can probably provide kid sized fireman hats for a small cost that should not stretch your party budget. These can be used either to hang from the ceiling as party decorations, or to give to party guests as a favour.

Much to Do and See

A bright red or yellow tablecloth for your party table will look extra perky when topped with a centerpiece such as a toy fire engine. Cardboard fire engines and firemen can be fashioned and painted to be used as decorations. Toy badges and Pin the Badge on the Fireman is an excellent game for the children to play during the birthday party. Check with your local fire station to see if they offer the free tour of the fire station. If so, arrange to transport all of the party guests to this most enjoyable tour.

FOOTBALL BIRTHDAY PARTY

A Football birthday party can be big fun for children and adults alike. Your child surely has a favourite football team, so use the team colours to guide you in your decor. For example, team colours of blue and silver would call for blue and silver balloons, crepe paper streamers, paper plates, cups, and tablecloths. Football memorabilia would be a superb addition to your birthday party decor.

Football Birthday Party Activity

While an impromptu game of touch football might take place at the party before it is over, you should never plan for this to be the only activity. The children will thoroughly enjoy several football themed games. A good one is the Football Throw. Obtain a hula-hoop, and hang it from a tree or another support. Get out a football, and explain the rules of the game to the kids. Each child gets one turn throwing the ball through the hoop. Whoever throws the ball the farthest away wins the prize. A game on Pin the Football on the First Down is a huge hit with kids who are football fans.

GARDEN BIRTHDAY PARTY

A garden themed birthday party can be great fun for everyone involved. For the decorations, the pastel colours of spring are a good choice. Yellows, greens, blues and pinks can be used in balloons, streamers, and other decor such as tablecloths, cups, and saucers. Borrowing a few potted plants and arranging them around the party room as well as fastening brightly coloured paper flowers here and there around the room can make things look a lot like the typical garden. Paper butterflies, water cans and birds may also be used as decorations in the party room.

A Garden Dessert for Birthday Parties

Children will thoroughly enjoy putting together the kid's dessert known as "Dirt". The ingredients are chocolate pudding, whipped topping or whipped cream, crushed Oreo cookies, and gummy worm candy. The pudding and whipped topping are mixed together, and layered with the crushed Oreo cookies. Gummy worms are used to decorate and simulate an actual worm. This dessert is usually placed in a small clay pot when served. A pot like this will make a nice goody bag item for the birthday guests, especially if some flower seeds and an inexpensive trowel are included.

HOT WHEELS BIRTHDAY PARTY

You might be of the opinion that a Hot Wheels party can only be for boys. However, little girls also enjoy playing with these famous and popular toy cars. They would thoroughly enjoy your fun party featuring Hot Wheels! Your decor can be purchased, or you can make it yourself. Hot Wheels tablecloths, cups, and napkins are available for purchase should you care to go that route. If you have decided that the do it yourself method is best, then here is what you need to do for a splendid party table.

The Hot Wheels Table

You will be turning the party table into a car. If you can locate a roll of butcher paper, it will be perfect for this. If the butcher paper is not available, a smooth white sheet will suffice. Once you have the white surface in place, tape a line of black construction paper sheets down the middle. Next, paint yellow lines like those seen on a real road. Once dry, place something like a remote control car in the middle of the table for a centerpiece.

Hot Wheels Decorations

Other decorations for a Hot Wheels birthday party can be cardboard car cut outs, car posters, red, black, and yellow balloons. A checkered flag

like the one used in auto racing will look nice hanging from the ceiling. A hint – visit local auto supply stores and ask them for posters, stand-ups of racecar drivers, and other items used for advertising purposes. Often, these items are sitting in the back rooms of these establishments, waiting to be thrown away.

Hot Wheels Games

If you have access to enough wind-up toy cars, your little party guests can have their own racing experience. Mark each car with a guest's name, and then mark off your racetrack's start and finish. Masking tape is very good for this. Do not make the track too long in case the wind-up cars veer off course, as they are prone to do. The winner of the race can receive a small prize. Goody bags can be filled with Hot Wheels stickers, pencils, and other car-related items.

JUNGLE SAFARI PARTY

The Jungle Safari party can be a blast for kids and adults alike. You will want to create a jungle atmosphere, and the easiest way to do this is with plenty of green crepe paper streamers. Hang them from the ceiling, thickly in some places, so that they brush the face when you walk through them. Butterflies, jungle flowers, and snakes may be cut from cardboard, painted, and hung among the crepe paper streamers for a jungle effect. A few green and yellow balloons may be added to the decor.

Jungle Animals for Your Party

Find posters of jungle animals locally, or make them from colouring book pages from the Internet that have been blown up and coloured. Lions, Tigers, Elephants, Monkeys, and Giraffes should all be well represented. If you know someone who has artistic abilities, jungle animals can be drawn on poster board and displayed.

Jungle Games and Decor

Jungle patterned paper plates and cups may be purchased, or you may use plain green to continue the jungle effect. Any toy lions, tigers, monkeys or giraffes that are available may be displayed around the room where the party is held. Animal shaped balloons are also available for purchase. Face painting is a good activity for a Jungle Safari party. All will welcome a game of Pin the Banana on the Monkey.

MOVIE NIGHT BIRTHDAY PARTY

A movie night birthday party is the choice of many a young tween girl who desires to see part of her home give the illusion of a movie theatre. This may sound difficult, but it is actually easier than you think to do the

decorating required for this birthday party. Making signs from begged cardboard that describe the sights and sounds of a movie theatre is a big part of the decor. Gold glitter and a black Sharpie marker can work wonders on your "Now Showing" sign.

Arrange the seating in the room you have chosen for the party. This room should be decorated with black and gold balloons and black and gold crepe paper streamers. Large stars can be cut from cardboard, spray painted gold and silver, and hung from the ceiling. You will probably want two rows of seats, depending on the number of guests. It is a nice idea to have a Concessions table that will serve popcorn and candy to your guests for their enjoyment during the movie.

PIRATE BIRTHDAY PARTY

Yo ho ho and a bottle of pop! A pirate birthday party can be great fun for your child and his or her guests. Using red and black crepe paper streamers, red and black balloons, and a red tablecloth can help to set the pirate theme. Use disposable red cups and plates to complete the colour scheme. Gold foil wrapped candy sprinkled around the table can lead to a cardboard treasure chest that you can fill with more gold coin candy, gold and coloured beads, and plastic jewels.

Favours for Your Guests

Have bandannas and eye patches (simple to make at home) for all guests to get them in a pirate mood. You can even use an eyebrow pencil to give each guest a pirate moustache, or pick up some fake beards cheaply at a party supply store.

Walk the Pirate Plank

There are many fun games you can introduce your guests to that will fit in well with a pirate theme. Walk the Plank is one of them. To play this game, all you need is a plank – in this case, a 2x4 board. Have the children walk across the plank. At the end, they get a small candy prize. Most of the time, the children will want to repeat this game again and again.

Find the Treasure

Place a treasure map that you have made or purchase before the party on a sturdy wall. Place a large black X on the section of the map where the treasure is supposed to be. Blindfold children, and turn them around and around before turning them loose to pin their Pirate's Treasure Chest (which you have made previously from construction paper and backed with double-sided tape) as close to the X as they can.

POOL BIRTHDAY PARTY

This is a lovely party theme for those who are celebrating a summer birthday. If you are fortunate enough to have a swimming pool in your back yard, a lot of your prep work is already done for you. If you do not own a pool, do not think that you cannot throw a pool party for your child. Small wading pools scattered around your yard will be just as enjoyable for small guests, and in many cases, much safer for them.

Make a Water Slide

Kids will greatly enjoy a water slide. You may already own a pre-made water slide, (product name Slip n Slide) but if not, you can fashion a fine one out of a plastic tarp and a water hose. Place the hose so that the water runs down it in an even stream, and let your guests have fun!

Pool Party Decorations

Decorations for a pool party can be inflatable palm trees, or palm trees drawn on sturdy cardboard, painted, and cut out. Balloons and streamers in summer colours, beach balls, and paper flowers in tropical colours can all be a part of the pool party decor.

Pool Party Games

A fun activity for guests when they are tired of water play is Find the Flip Flop. Purchase an inexpensive pair of flip-flops for everyone who will be coming to the party. Hide one of each pair somewhere in your yard, and let the children search for the flip-flop that matches the one they have. Once they find the other shoe, the flip-flops are theirs to take home with them. Another fun activity is bobbing for flip flops, similar to the popular party game of bobbing for apples. Whoever manages to grab a flip-flop with their teeth receives a small prize.

ROBOT BIRTHDAY PARTY

If your child enjoyed the movie "Robots", then he or she will be very excited about this movie. It can be easy to replicate that robot ambience when you purchase plates, cups, and napkins that feature the characters from the movie. However, a Robot birthday party can be held without any of these items. You can fashion several robots out of cardboard boxes. Tape or glue them together, spray paint them silver, and add features as needed.

A Robot Craft for the Guests

This can also be a fun craft for the party guests, especially when scaled down a bit. Collect small cardboard boxes of different sizes before the party, and spray paint them silver. Have a craft table set up for the children, and place the silver boxes on the table.

Robot Supplies

Place pipe cleaners, clean, empty yogurt and sour cream containers, empty milk and juice cartons of different sizes, paper towel and toilet tissue tubes, electrical tape in different colours, duct tape in both silver and gray, nuts, bolts, and anything else you can think of that could be used to create a robot. Markers and glue should also be placed on the table, and have a hot glue gun on hand in case it is needed.

Robot Games and Decor

A game of Pin the Bolt on the Robot will be enjoyed by kids of all ages. Have balloons and streamers in white and red to complement the silver of the robots. Robot shaped fruit candies, erasers, and small robot toys are perfect for goody bags.

SUPERMAN BIRTHDAY PARTY

A party with this much-loved Super Hero as its theme is sure to please your child and all of his or her birthday guests. It will be easy to locate tablecloths, napkins, paper plates and cups with the Superman logo on them. Red and blue balloons and streamers make a beautiful display in the party room.

One of the best games to play during a Superman birthday party is Find the Kryptonite. This game requires a supply of bright green fluorescent paint and several good-sized rocks. Paint the rocks with the paint, and let dry. On the morning of the party, hide the rocks. This can be done inside or outside. When game time arrives, tell the children that they must find the kryptonite. The one who finds the most wins a small Superman themed toy or book. Another game that all of the guests should enjoy is Pin the "S" on Superman.

TRAIN BIRTHDAY PARTY

Most children are quite fond of trains, so a Train themed birthday party will be much anticipated. You may choose to use a Thomas the Tank Engine theme for younger children, while the older kids can enjoy a more generic train theme. If you by chance have an electric train set, you can set up a train table where the children can interact with the trains when

they first arrive. If possible, have paper conductor's hats or bandannas available for each child so they can

Train Decorations for Your Party

Decorations for a train themed birthday party can start with red, yellow, and blue balloons and streamers. The main party table can be decorated with a white tablecloth decorated with black crepe paper streamers placed to look like a train track. A big toy train engine or even a train piñata would work well as a centerpiece for the party table.

Games for a Train Themed Birthday Party

Find the Train is a party game that little children will talk about for weeks. To prepare for this game, you will need a skein or two of good, sturdy yarn, rolled into balls, and enough small toy trains for all of your guests. Tie a piece of yarn to the end of each of the little trains, then hide them in different places, making sure to wind the yarn around furniture and other objects as you go. You may limit this game to one room of your home only, or you may decide to extend it to your whole house. To play the game, give each of the children the end of the string and tell them that they must follow it until it ends in order to reveal their prize.

TRUCK BIRTHDAY PARTY

Little children love trucks, and a truck themed birthday party would please them to no end. It is easy and fun to decorate the party area when trucks are the main event. Toy trucks of all sizes can be on display if they are available. All trucks should be suitable for small hands, whose owners will certainly want to try some of them out. Check your local party supply store for a truck themed tablecloth. You may also be able to find paper plates and cups with trucks on them that would fit in with the theme. Use a beautiful old vintage toy truck for a centerpiece. Games played at a truck birthday party can include Pin the Truck Bed on the Cab.

If you happen to know someone who drives or owns an 18 wheel over the road tractor trailer truck, see if you can arrange for him/her to bring the truck sans trailer to your home on the birthday day. Kids would be thrilled at the chance to hop onto one of these big rigs and check it out.

WILD WEST BIRTHDAY PARTY

The Wild West birthday party theme is all about cowboys and cowgirls. Kids who enjoy all things Western will thrill at the chance to have a party like this! Decorations for a Western party are fun and simple. Try a red and white checked tablecloth on your party tables, with a centerpiece of silk flowers inside a cowboy hat for the adult table, and a toy horse

holding an assortment of red and black helium balloons. Around the room you can display any Western gear you like, such as lassos, horseshoes, even a real saddle if possible. Black and red streamers and more balloons can complete the decor.

A Little Background Music

Find a CD of Western music that is suitable for children, and have it playing in the background while the children mingle. Small children will enjoy completing a Western-themed colouring sheet that you can easily find and download on the Internet. Party favours can include Western hats and bandannas if your budget permits. Popular games for a Wild West Party include Pin the Badge on the Sheriff and What's in That Haystack? To play this game, you will need a small child's wading pool and a quantity of hay. You will be hiding small toys in the hay for the children to find. Toy badges, liquorice whips, Western stickers, and other small cowboy and Western themed items are perfect for goody bags.

WIZARD OF OZ BIRTHDAY PARTY

Is your child a fan of the Wizard of Oz? If so, then a Wizard of Oz birthday party would please them very much. If you want to capture the essence of the Wizard of Oz, you must be rather creative. Here are some ideas that may spark your creativity. Use rainbow colours for balloons, streamers, and tablecloths. If possible, seek out paper plates and cups in an assortment of rainbow colours.

Fun Wizard of Oz Birthday Games

Games like Find the Ruby Slippers can be lots of fun. You will need to do some advance preparation by finding a pair of high-heeled shoes that you do not mind covering with red paint and glitter. On party day, you will hide the shoes, each in a different place. Have the kids form two teams, and tell them that their job is to find that shoe! If you wish, you can place clues in different areas where you think the children might look. Pin the Heart on the Tin Man is a fun game for this party theme.