

10-Step Party Plan

If the thought of organising your child's birthday party fills you with fear, read on for mum-of-two Leonny Atmadja's tips for a stress-free celebration.



Organising a party can be so overwhelming it's easy to forget you're supposed to enjoy the experience and have fun. Hosting any type of celebration can be stressful if you're unprepared. But if you've got the details of reliable suppliers and a handy checklist, planning a special event can be fun. Try the following tips, to give your child a birthday memory they'll treasure forever.

1 Choose a theme Involve your child when deciding on a theme. If you're inviting both boys and girls, go with gender-neutral themes such as a circus celebration, underwater world or fairytale fantasy. Older kids enjoy activities such as bowling, going to the movies, having a pool party or a pyjama party and sleepover.

2 Venue Always ensure your venue is large enough for the number of children – and parents – you wish to invite. If possible, the venue should also reflect your theme, or be easily adaptable.

3 Invitations A wide variety of ready-made invitations are now available in card and gift shops. Another option is to create invitations with your child, as a craft project. For a personalised touch, use a photograph of your child that corresponds with the party theme. Remember to note on the invite if parental supervision is required. And always post invitations rather than hand them out, to avoid hurting the feelings of those classmates not invited.

4 Timeframe Two hours for a children's party should be sufficient. With regards to timing, if your guests are below four years of age, consider planning around general naptimes. For older children, weekend mornings or mid-afternoons are best.

5 Decorations Choose colourful balloons, banners and streamers corresponding to your theme. To create posters or a "wall card" for guests to sign, purchase a large piece of cardboard and decorate it with stickers, clip art, magazine clippings and Polaroid images taken at the party itself.



6 Food Keep it simple. And try to offer a balance between typical party fare – pizza, hot dogs, chicken nuggets, mini sausage rolls and ice-cream – and healthier options such as crudites, vegetable dips, fruit platters and fruit, yoghurt or flavour based ice-blocks.

7 Beverages Rather than soft drinks, opt for water, fruit juice or a low-sugar cordial. Apple and white grape juices are great as they don't stain. Serving juice boxes also helps cut down on spills. Adults should be fine with water, coffee or tea and perhaps a glass of wine if your party is in the afternoon.

8 Games Make sure you've allowed space and time for games. Organised games are generally well received and are great for burning up energy! Try: musical chairs, pin – or stick – the tail on the donkey, blowing bubbles, a scavenger hunt and pass the parcel, or a more interactive game such as face painting, piñatas or even a bouncy castle.

9 Cake The cake should either reflect the theme of the party or have personal relevance to your child. Whether homemade or bought, it will be appreciated all the same. Young children may enjoy being included in the baking and decorating process.

10 Goodie bags Don't feel you have to go overboard. Goodie bags which are well thought out and reflect the party's theme can make just as much impact as an expensive toy. Try these fillers: a small bag of mixed sweets or piece of birthday cake, box of crayons or pencils, a key-ring, marbles, small game or other trinket. **F**

TIPS

- Ask a friend to be "photographer" – you'll be too busy.
- For easy cleaning, use disposable tableware or consider an external venue.
- Unless numbers are small, always open gifts once your guests have gone. Take a photo of your child with each gift and send a thank-you note with a copy of the photo within the week.

Leonny Atmadja is a keen writer and photographer, who shares parenting, art and craft tips and her daily experiences of being a busy mum-of-two at www.oureverydaythings.com



FUN VENUES

- Art Boot Camp**
Contact: Lincoln Gabriel
Tel: 6469 5525/9115 8888
Web: www.artbootcamp.com.sg
- Frisk 'N' Romp Kid's Play Club**
Tel: 6345 5236
Web: www.frisknromp.com
- Globetrotters Restaurant**
Tel: 6356 5285
Web: www.globetrotters.com.sg
- Go Go Bambini**
Tel: 6474 4176
Web: www.gogobambini.com
- Grace Kids**
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Web: www.gracekids.com.sg
- JWT Kids Gym**
Tel: 6348 1889/6333 8511
Web: www.jwtkids-singapore.com
- My Gym@ Marine Parade**
Tel: 6440 9916
Web: www.mygym.sg
- Sol-Playground Café**
Tel: 6467 8681
Web: www.solplaygroundcafe.com

BOUNCY CASTLES, GOODIE BAGS & PARTY PLANNERS

- Bouncy Castles**
Contact: Louise Kratuska
Tel: 6465 6006/9654 3931
Web: www.bouncy-castles.com.sg
- Fantasy Parties**
Contact: Caroline Cornelius-Jones
Tel: 6467 0249/8180 0240
Web: www.kidsfantasyparties.com
- Magic Jump**
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