

Birthday Party Planning Checklist

Three Months Before

- Discuss the theme with your child.** Let your child help pick the theme to narrow down decoration and activity choices.
- Decide who to invite.** Do they have a close-knit crew or do they need the whole class? The type of party may dictate how many kids you can host (Chuck E. Cheese costs more per person than a party at the park) or vice versa.
- Plan the entertainment they'll want.** The earlier the better and ask for references.

Four Weeks Before

- Confirm that essential guests are available.** Your child won't be happy if their best friend can't make it to the party.
- Send invitations.** Make written invitations creative and coordinated with the party theme — don't just send out text messages. Include an RSVP date and start and end times.
- Make a schedule of activities for the party.** Plan to fill about three hours with a mix of games, eating and maybe a craft. You also need to factor in time for entertainment and general free play. Save the presents for last, just in case you're short on time. Plan alternate, rainy-day activities, just in case — you know how Texas gets.
- Make a master list of supplies you'll need.** Keep track of all the things you'll need, and note what you need to buy or borrow.
- Get party favors that fit the theme (and goody bags to put them in) and prizes for the games.**

Three Weeks Before

- Plan the menu and keep it simple** — finger foods, pizza and things kids actually like. If you like, plan something special for parents.
- Make a grocery list.**
- Get any help you need.** Enlist friends relatives, older kids and maybe even parents of party guests to help supervise activities. Consider hiring your babysitter to help with things like pre- and post-party cleaning food setup, and generally take some weight off your shoulders.

One Week Before

- Clean thoroughly.** This way, you won't have to worry about extra mess
- Clean the yard.** (For an outdoor party)
- Follow up on RSVPs.** Stragglers may need a reminder
- Make your cooking schedule.** Make any foods that can be frozen.
- Order the cake.** If you're making it, bake and freeze it (ice it the day before the party).
- Order balloons.**
- Check your list.** Get any missing pieces you may have overlooked.

Three Days Before

- Go grocery shopping.** Now's the time to get those snacks and small foods
- Prepare the cameras.** Charge your phone and cameras. You may need to clear some space or grab an extra memory card
- Prepare goody bags.

One Day Before

- For an outdoor party, mow the lawn and tidy the yard.
- Organize the furniture.** Set up dining and gift tables and activity stations. If you're missing anything, you have time to run out and get it.
- Decorate!** Do everything that doesn't involve helium.
- Finish as much of the cooking as you can.** This includes defrosting and icing the cake if you froze one.
- Do a touch-up cleaning sweep through the house.
- If opening presents is on the agenda, practice polite "thank you's" with your child.

Day of the Party

- Finish any last-minute cooking.**
- Pick up cake and balloons, if ordered.**
- Display food.** Set out foods that won't spoil 30 minutes before guests arrive
- Assign helpers tasks.** They can help with games or supervise a craft
- Make a list of gifts and who gave them.**
- Send everyone off with party favors. Your child can hand them out and say thank you

Two to Three Days Later

- Say Thanks.** Help your child send thank-you notes, and send your own to your helpers.