

Planning Your Child's Birthday Party

By JD Stewart



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Get Ready of a Party!

Every year I am invited to hundreds of birthday parties. That means I have a lot of experience in what works and what does not work at children birthday parties. This short e-book is provided to help you learn from my experience. Trust me, I have seen a lot of things that do not work. Almost every time when something does not work it is because the adults made it about them and not about the kids.

Putting a parties together can be stressful. So my first suggestion is to lay back and enjoy it. You are putting on a children's birthday party not a state dinner. The goal is to have fun. Just keep it safe and go with the flow.



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



General Thoughts

The best time for a party is late morning or early afternoon. Too early and the kids are not awake and the neither are the parents. Too late in the afternoon or evening and kids tend to be too tired.

Try to have the birthday party on the weekend. It works best for the scheduling the adults. This is true even in the summer months when there is no school.

Take lots of pictures, but avoid shooting flash photos. Videos are good too. However, some entertainers particularly magicians will not allow videoing of their performance so be sure and ask when booking the entertainer. JD Stewart does allow video taping of his birthday party show.

Plan for meltdowns. If your child cries or has a tantrum during the birthday party, take him or her to another room to provide a break from the noise and activity.

Remember the birthday party is for your child not you. I try to make the birthday child a star. But some children are not comfortable being the center of attention. That is ok. Do not try and force them to be up in front of every one if they are uncomfortable about it. Some children simply need time to adjust to the strange face or the person in the funny clothes. Some may prefer to watch the fun-and they enjoy the party just as much.



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Allow the entertainer some one on-one time with the birthday child. You should be there to watch and make the child feels comfortable. This will allow the entertainer to build a rapport with the child ahead to time and put them at ease

One way to insure that the kids do not scatter around your house is to only turn on the lights in the rooms you want to contain the party in. Shut the doors to any "off-limits" rooms.

When planning party bags or party favors - Make sure they are all the same. Take some time and make sure that if one person gets a red fish sticker, everyone gets a red fish sticker. Plan to spend \$3-5 per child. Party Bags are available from JD Stewart a limit number come as part of the show. They may also be purchased separately. If you include whistles and noisemakers, make sure the grab bags are not handed out until the child is walking out the door!



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Planning for the Adults

At least one adult should watch the magic show with the children. Parents can help lead the kids in cheering and clapping, and act as a deterrent to any problems that may arise. It's great fun to watch the children's reactions to the magic, plus you're guaranteed to be amazed and have a good time too!

If the adults plan to visit during the entertainment. Have them go to another room where they will not distract the children. This allows the children to be able to hear and enjoy the magic.



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party Menu

It's especially important to plan your birthday party menu. Check with parents to make sure their children do not have any food allergies, and plan the feast accordingly. If it is not possible to check ahead of time, let the parents know what you are serving so you will know what foods are off-limits for each child. If you have pets, be sure to discuss animal allergies as well. Once you know the allergies your guest may have, make any needed adjustments.

Keep treats simple, but decorate and package them creatively; the snacks should be fun, but safe to eat.

Plan to serve the food after the entertainment or games. This reduces the mess and also delays sugar high which will give you a more controllable situation.

Both ice cream and cake can be eaten with a spoon. You can reduce both the cost and clean up effort by providing only a spoon. You also just eliminated the chance of someone being stuck with a fork! It may just be an innocent little brother guarding his cake. (Can you blame him?)

Plan a simple menu vanilla and chocolate are favorites. Since many kids are such picky eaters, what may sound like fun at the time: Superman Chocolate Peanut Fudge - no one may end up eating it.



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Hiring a Magician

When someone calls about a magic show, the most common first question is, "How much do you charge?" But the answer to that question is almost meaningless. The only thing you can do with that answer is determine if the price is within your budget, and compare it to other meaningless answers from other entertainers.



Price is an important consideration, of course, but if you make a decision based on price alone you may end up very disappointed. It is like walking into a store and asking how much shoes cost. There are all types of shoes. And they all have different prices and serve different purposes.

Here are 6 points to help you find the right entertainer.

1) Plan ahead. If at all possible, call 4 to 6 weeks prior to your party. Planning ahead will help you get the entertainer you want. If a magician is unavailable, he should be able to recommend some other magicians. If not, that means he does not have a professional network and you are probably lucky he is unavailable!



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



2) Determine Your Budget. - Do not be afraid to let the entertainer know your budget. Some have set fees but others may be able to craft a show that will fit into your budget. Also, the price may include party favors or other things which will save you money elsewhere.

3) Ask about association membership - The best magicians in Austin belong to the International Brotherhood of Magicians and/or the Society of American Magicians. There are similar professional organizations for other variety entertainers. These organizations are dedicated to the continual education of their members. Additionally, this gives them a network to call upon if they get sick at the last minute and can not make your party.

4) Ask for references - Check both professional and customer references. By the same token, be willing to give an honest evaluation of the entertainer if someone asks you.

5) Ask what they need - Some magicians are completely self contained; others may require something like access to electricity, or a private place to set up. You do not want the magician to show up and find out he is expecting something you can not provide.

6) Listen - If the magician is not interested enough in you and your child to ask some basic questions like the age, gender, and name of the child, alarms should sound.

Magic is a wonderful theme for a birthday party. Hiring the right magician will make it a great party!



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Go with the Flow

Plan for the unexpected. If the birthday party guests like the props of the game better than the game itself, let them make up their own play. If they won't touch the food you've prepared, they won't starve. If they want to go home, they can go home. If they won't leave their parents' laps, they can still enjoy the party.



Planning Your Child's Birthday Party



Wrapping It Up

When departure time arrives, mention that it's getting close to time for the party to end, begin to clean up and get out the birthday party goodie bags. This should help wrap things up



for those parents who had planned to linger. It's important for you and your child to have some time alone after the event, and for the birthday party not to seem to go on forever.

After the birthday party is over sit down, put your feet up, and enjoy the memories of this very special occasion. You can clean up the mess from the well-planned event later. Enjoy!

