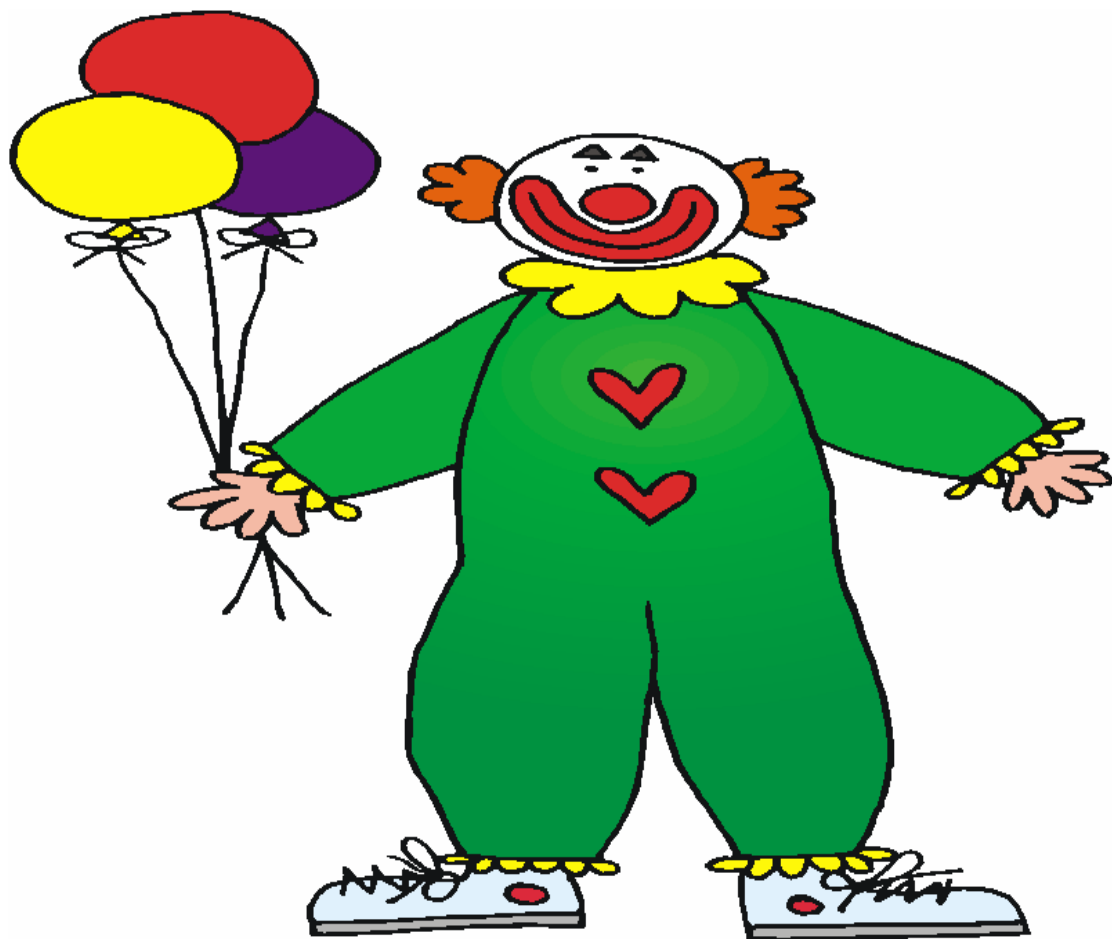


# The Party Idea Book

By

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## 7 Party Planning Tips for Building Your Party Timeline

One of the best things that you can have when you are planning a party or event of any size is a **written party timeline** and **master shopping list**. By making yourself a good solid timeline and comprehensive list for shopping, you can ensure that your party goes off without a hitch.

Here are seven tips to get you on the right track in planning your shopping list and timeline:

**Tip #1** – No matter what the size of your event, if it is for children or adults, a wedding or a simple birthday party, you must have a master shopping list as well as a good timeline. Simply use a pen and paper and decide on how long things will take you to do and start filling in your timeline. And, while you are going through the process, this is the time to start a shopping list as well.

**Tip #2** – Before you can start to build your timeline and shopping list, first you must decide on where your party or event will be held and how many people you will be inviting. If you will be using an event location or a restaurant, you need to secure your space before moving along to do anything else.

**Tip #3** – Once you have secured your location for your party, then you can start to build your lists. To start building your timeline think about the things you will need to do before the party, such as send out your invitations. If you will be having them custom printed you will need to allow extra time for the printing before you can mail them out to your guests.

**Tip #4** – Now that you have your date and location secured, and you have ordered your invitations, if necessary, then it is time to think about what you will be doing at your party, what type of food and drinks will be on the menu, and how long you want the party to last. Dedicate a single sheet of paper just to your party day and list everything you will need to do, in order, by time. For example, preparing food before guests arrive would be at the top of the sheet of paper, while giving out party favors may be at the absolute bottom.

**Tip #5** – In addition to your timeline for the day of the party, you will also want to formulate a timeline for the two weeks or so leading up to the event. Here you will need to block out time for cleaning, shopping, decorating, etc...

**Tip #6** – As you do each of the steps above, you will start to develop a good timeline and a great shopping and supplies list of things which you will need. This will be a great help to you and can even help you to remember to pick up things that you might otherwise have forgotten. In addition, you will also start to see if there will be any conflicts in your timeline where you might need to move a few things around or enlist the help of others.

**Tip #7** – Once you have your lists generated then it is time to stick to them and make sure everything gets done. If you are finding that you have more work to do than time to do it in, it is perfectly acceptable to ask other people to help you with various parts of the event. In fact, most people you will find would be happy to help you.

## **A Birthday Party at the Scene of the Crime**

Television shows such as CSI (and the subsequent CSI Miami and CSI New York), NCIS, and Cold Case Files have made crime scenes and crime investigations the new murder mystery parties. They are a great deal of fun when properly planned and well executed but leave a lot of room for failure if poorly planned or inflexible. If you are considering a party such as this, a great party for teens and adults alike be sure that you either have an actual mystery to solve as the evening progresses or that you simply use the theme as a backdrop. There is no real right or wrong way to do a birthday party but if you want to throw the party that everyone will be talking about you'll need to create a crime for the scene you're investigating and leave clues all around to help with the investigation.

Decorating your crime scene party can be a lot of fun with crime scene tape and chalk outlines on the floor. Be sure to make them realistic in size by having someone actually lay down for you to draw the outline. You can leave fake footprints, fingerprints, and clue cards throughout the room (not too well hidden unless you want people snooping). You can even enlist plenty of help when leaving the clues and decorating because of the novelty of this sort of party. You do not have to limit the festivities to one room and you can, if you are feeling truly adventurous, have a different case going on in different rooms and have the kids draw numbers for teams and race to solve the crime first.

You might also do well to set up a lab, complete with microscope and tables dedicated to sorting out the evidence and make notes for the shocking conclusion of the crimes in question. Of course you will want to make the crimes simple and solvable by leaving clues that the kids will have no trouble finding or deciphering without making it too easy. Use your favorite episode for inspiration if you must and throw in a red herring or two to keep things fun. Young and old alike, the kids will have a good time arguing over the clues and trying to determine who really committed the crimes (and of course making up their assumptions and stories as to why the crimes occurred in the first place).

For food you can have an actual CSI cake or go with cookies that are shaped like footprints or thumb print cookies for an excellent play on words. Of course by the time kids are old enough to enjoy a party such as this they probably would be happy with good food rather than themed food and pizza, sloppy Joes, finger foods, chips and dips, and cookies and cake will make an excellent food addition to the party without needing to fit in with any one theme. Be sure to have plenty of pop and bottled water on hand though because crime solving is thirsty work.

In real life it is best to leave the jobs of solving crimes up to the men and women who were trained to do so. In the world of birthday parties however, crime solving and crime scene investigating reign supreme as the next great thing in birthday party ideas.

## **A Casino Night to Remember Birthday Party**

A great casino night is definitely a lot of fun to be had by all. You can choose. Of course you will not be able to use real money for this but can allow each guest their own set of chips or monopoly money to play with for the evening and have fun prizes for the winners and funny parting gifts for those who do not fare so well. The important thing is that you are celebrating the great gamble that life really is in the perfect style for doing so.

Whether you go for a grand James Bond Style Casino event complete with tuxedos and a full and flowing bar or go for a more tropical sort of casual casino theme it is important that the music and drinks flow freely and that everyone has the opportunity to have a great time. Great decorations for your casino night will differ according to the style of casino you are attempting to incorporate. Needless to say gaming tables, a roulette wheel, and lots of dice are sure to please your guests as great party décor. Otherwise go with the sub theme of your party.

Be sure to let your guests know if there is a dress code for the evening when sending out invitations. You may purchase your invitations online quite easily or print your own. Again you will want to go with the method that works best with the theme of the Casino birthday party you are throwing. If it's an over the hill sort of birthday party you might want to make the invitations humorous with some sort of reference to the fact that lighting the candles on the cake may be a gamble in and of itself. Remember to let your invitations begin the party theme and work from there to build things up.

On the big night you can raid your local party supply store or an online party supply shop for all sorts of gambling related decorations. From fuzzy dice to oversized cardboard cards and hundreds of things in between you can go as elegant as you'd like with your casino night birthday party or go for some of the more 'party' themed casino settings that you will find as well. You are only limited by your imagination and personal tastes when it comes to properly decorating for your casino birthday party. With that in mind, make the decorations as fun or as elegant as you can stand.

As for the food, what sort of self respecting casino wouldn't have a grand buffet prepared. Display your food buffet style and if possible have a catering staff circulating with drinks throughout the room. For your casino night birthday party finger foods are the best. Shrimp cocktail, crab puffs, petit fours, cocktail sausages, meatballs, sausage rolls, pigs in blankets, dips with appropriate bread and crackers, finger sandwiches, and any other great finger food you can think of. Another great addition to your buffet table would be a chocolate fountain with plenty of marshmallows, pretzels, and fruits to cover.

You will want to be sure to have appropriate casino sound effects. You can get the slot machine sound effect for a more realistic feeling in your casino or you could skip the slots and keep this a table games only section with great music overhead. The choice is yours and the sky is the limit.

Be sure to take plenty of photographs in order to create a scrapbook of the grand event. Not only will this help preserve your own memories of the evening but it also makes a great gift for the guests who have shared moments in your life and make the gamble worthwhile.

## **A Circus Birthday Bash Worthy of the Big Top**

A circus theme for a birthday party is sure to thrill and excite your little one and guests alike. Be sure to make the event one worthy of its title though and keep the action lively and moving throughout the event so that little minds with short attention spans do not have an opportunity to move on to more mischievous pursuits.

The first thing that is an absolute must for a circus theme is a big top. This may run a little high on the decoration dime but can be done quite nicely without booking a huge back yard with a tent. In fact, you can create a tent in your very own living room if you are so inclined to do so. Helium can be rented quite inexpensively and you can create the illusion of a tent top by filling the ceiling with brightly colored balloons and streamers to match. In addition to this you can have the entrance of the room made to look like tent flaps. Push all the furniture along the wall and allow the little ones to seat themselves on the floor along the “center ring” where all the action will be.

Now, you really should make an effort to have some sort of entertainment for this event. It can be a clown act, magic show, or simply someone making balloon animals for the birthday boy or girl and his or her guests. Face painting is another great activity to include on your list of events and shows and a lot of fun for the little ones. Be sure to include several great games (ring toss, pin the nose on the clown, and corn hole are great games worthy of a circus theme) and a craft activity or two in the running so that the little ones do not sit idly very long. It is always a good idea to keep them occupied and having fun.

The big top provides some excellent dining delights that carry over quite well into the birthday party theme. Hot dogs are an excellent lunch for a room filled with excited little ones. Candied apples, popcorn, and peanuts are also a great and fun addition to birthday party food that work well with the circus theme. Be sure to enlist serious muscle for the clean up when all is said and done.

Goody bags can be a lot of fun for this particular event by using popcorn bags for the bag and filling them with circus animals, bubbles, glow bracelets, circus themed stickers, and other nifty little items. Oriental trading and local party stores might prove to be an excellent resource for goody bag gifts. Don't forget to include a photo frame with a photo of each child with his or her face painted or balloon animal as a keepsake.

Don't sweat the small details so much that you aren't able to enjoy the event. Other great ideas to make this an even bigger event include things such as renting a moon walk for kids to jump and play in, renting a cotton candy maker, and having a real popcorn popper rather than relying on microwave popcorn. There's something about the smell that just makes it feel like a circus.

Another thing you need to do when planning a big top or circus themed birthday party is plan for contingencies, such as rain if the party was to be held outside. The show must go on whether it is storming or whether the sun is shining brightly so be sure to have a back up plans in case things go awry.

# **A Fun Teddy Bear Party**

## **Invitation ideas**

Buy some inexpensive rubber stamps with bear images and let your little one make homemade invitations. Or cut a piece of cardstock into the shape of a bear and write your invitation on that. Free clipart can be found for this purpose in many places on the Internet. Make sure you include the request for all the guests to bring their own bear to the teddy bear party too!

## **Decoration ideas**

When kids think of bears they usually think of honey and bees, so a big hit for decorations is LOTS of yellow and black balloons and streamers. If possible have various teddy bears all around the room as well to tie in the theme.

## **Bear Party - Activities and craft ideas**

Crafts with a bear theme abound but here are some quick ideas for your teddy bear party. Make a paper bear chain (paper dolls) that the kids can color and decorate. Use paper plates to make paper bear masks. Bead a bear collar (necklace). Take a picture with all the kids and their own bears and decorate a simple scrapbook page to honor the occasion. Decorate teddy bear cookies with colored icing and various decorations.

## **Bear Party - Game ideas**

Pin the honey pot on the teddy bear - if you have an artist in the family, draw a large teddy bear on poster board and cut out honey pots. Blindfold each child individually and see if they can put the honey pot into the teddy bear's hand.

Hot Teddy Bear - like hot potato only pass the teddy bear to the music. When the music stops, the person with the teddy bear is out.

Toss the honey pot - draw a large bear head with an open mouth on poster board and lay it on the floor. Using yellow beanbags as the "honey" each child throws the bag to see if it will land in the bear's mouth.

## **Take home gift ideas**

Purchase yellow lunch bags (available at party stores) and decorate with bee stickers. Fill with gummy bears, teddy grahams, miniature stuffed teddy bears and fun bear jewelry. Or if you want to go all out, hire a stuffed animal party planner to come and have each child make their own stuffed animal as part of the party.

## **A Night at the Drive In Birthday Party**

Birthdays are a very special time indeed. One party theme that works well with people of almost all ages is the idea of a movie night. Whether you want to make your movie a drive in movie or you prefer the modern conveniences of air conditioning in the summer or heat in the cooler months then that is understandable you can bring the movie night in. If you'd like something a little new and different then creating a drive in movie is a great way to go and you can invite all the neighbors so that no one chooses the moment your movie begins (hopefully) to start making a ton of noise.

The idea of a drive in movie can be expanded somewhat by the movie you select as well. Screens for playing the movies and DVD projectors can also be rented as well as speakers to play the sound. A good place to put the screen is on a garage door if you are a little lost on that particular matter. Once you've decided the movie you can go about elaborating on the theme. If you choose something that is relevant to a specific time period (such as Grease for the 1950's), Bill and Ted's Adventures (for the 1980's), and the like you can have your guests put on their best 50's or 80's finery and come dressed for the occasion.

Be sure that in addition to the movies you have music that is appropriate for the theme to play before dark arrives and afterwards. Everyone can have a lot of fun dancing and you can set up a concession stand area with pop, popcorn (an absolute must - you will be glad to know that you can even rent popcorn poppers for the evening as well), whole dill pickles, nachos and cheese, hot dogs, pizza (if you're feeling really ambitious) and other favorite movie munchies. The idea is to make the evening a fun evening for everyone.

Great decoration ideas, in addition to the screen of course would be cardboard cut out cars, movie posters, and Christmas tree lights to create rows for 'parking'. You will want to make sure that there is plenty of seating available. Folding chairs work perfectly for an event such as this. You should also make sure that you have plenty of waste bins available for the garbage that may be accumulated throughout the evening and recycling bins if appropriate (people who do not ordinarily recycle often will if presented with the option to do so).

If you take the party indoors you can still accomplish the movie feel but make it feel more like a theater than a drive in. Use Christmas tree lights along the floor and turn off all other lights in the room once the movie begins. You can rent a big screen television for the evening or a projector and a screen. You may also want to consider pushing the furniture back against the wall and leaving the center of the room free for throw pillows that allow guests to sit (or lay) on the floor to watch the movie. Place movie posters throughout the room to set the tone and have the concession stand in another room so that it can be enjoyed and seen without disrupting the movie.



## A Pirate of a Birthday Party

Pirates have for a very long time been a source of great fascination for children. This is why a pirate themed birthday party can be one of the most interesting and entertaining party ideas on the planet if you are willing to pay careful time and attention to the planning process. There are things you will need, of course, in order to pull the pirate's party off without a hitch and the most important is a lot of patience and the ability to organize well, plan for contingencies, and be flexible when the big event finally arrives. If you can do all these things with style and grace then a pirate's life really may be for ye.

Set the stage with the invitations. A great idea to use for the invites is a pirate's map. Let "X" mark the spot, give the date and time and remind everyone to dress in their pirate's best (make a costume contest a part of the festivities). This lets everyone know the theme ahead of time as well as the fact that they should show up dressed for the occasion. I suggest making a cute rhyme in a pirate's voice to go along with the invitation. Something like

Ho ho hum and a bottle of rum  
Our good lad "name" turns nine  
So come ye to the Weatherly's  
And have a mighty fine time.

For decorations you will want to make the party room or the exterior of the house, wherever you are actually having the party look as much like a pirate's ship as possible. It really is best if this sort of party can be had outdoors in order to provide great places for burying treasure and hiding stuff. If that isn't possible however, you'll just have to get creative inside the home.

Party games for a good pirate party are almost limitless. You can begin by handing a clue and explaining that there is a treasure map that has been divided into four pieces. The first clue will take you to the first piece, which will then have another clue that will lead you to the next piece until you find all four pieces. This buys a little time for getting things ready for snacks, cake, ice cream or other adventures that may occur later and gives the kids an objective. Once they have all the pieces you can tell the story of the lost treasure and then allow the kids to go on a massive hunt for the treasure. You could of course have teams with two different treasure chests if you want to make it a competition or race though both teams will win their treasure in the end. You could also, for younger kids, have a nice rousing game of pin the peg - leg on the pirate or a game of walking the plank if you have a swimming pool and are certain everyone can swim (though swim trunks are highly encouraged for this rather than pirate's costumes) and there is an adult waiting at the bottom just in case.

Whether or not it's a pirate's life for you, chances are quite good that throwing an excellent pirate themed birthday bash will make you the mom of your little one's dreams – at least for a day and will give the neighborhood and, of course, all your guests something to talk about until the next great event takes place.

## **A Tie Dyed Birthday Bash**

If you are looking for an excellent birthday party idea how about having a hog tie dyed good time? Tie dye was all the rage back in the 1960's and appears to be making a rather lengthy come back with a few fun variations of course. This is a party that will be appropriate for all kinds of kids and many different ages. If you are having a party that will include boys and girls this is definitely a great possibility to consider for party entertainment and even to center the entire party around.

One great craft project would be a groovy photo frame for each guest to place a picture of himself or herself wearing their tie dyed creation with the birthday girl or boy. It's a great keepsake and will pass a little of the time during the party. You could also have them work on a scrapbook of the party and allow each one to take one home with them (this is often more appealing to the girls than the guys) or hand painting headbands or bandanas to match their tie dyed tees.

You can make a tie dyed tee shirt cake if you are feeling quite ambitious or get one from your favorite local bakery if you are good at describing what you want and place your order far enough ahead of time. You can have fun allowing each guest to create his or her own psychedelic pizza. You would make the dough of course and allow them to decorate the pizza with sauce, veggies, pepperoni, and/or ham. It's a lot of fun, good food and something that will make the party a little bit unique. You will also want to have plenty of good snack foods on hands such as chips, sausage rolls, pigs in blankets, sloppy Joes, fruits, cake, and groovy chocolate chip cookies if you want to be the grooviest mom of the day.

Be sure to play good music and laugh a lot. You should also make a point of getting photographs of all party guests in their works of art, a pair of jeans, and bare feet. It will be a cool memory and a lot of fun. This is a party that is cool to have in almost any season (minus the pool in winter in most locations of course) and any location. Be careful though as you are working with dye. You want to make sure that the area you are working in is well ventilated and that you protect your flooring and any furniture in the area (clear plastic drop clothes work wonders for protecting floors and furniture from dye and paint).

This is the type of party that is not only a great deal of fun for you as the parent but also for all the kids that are invited. Everyone gets to take a little something cool home with them and they get to work with their hands and imaginations to create something special that is all their own. As far as parties go, this is one of the coolest to have, especially for those hard to impress and please teenagers that seem to take over our beautiful little babies after about 13 years though it is suitable for younger kids as well.

## An Egyptian Themed Birthday Party

Ancient Egypt is a fascinating place all these years later. From mummies and pyramids to pharos and scarabs there is plenty of fuel for the fascination pyre. Keep in mind however, that the goal here is for the kids to have a great time, not to be frightened so keep the scary stuff to a minimum if possible (even if your child is brave to a fault that doesn't mean that some of the guests won't be frightened and you want the experience to be pleasant for everyone).

Decorations for this are not as difficult as you may think. In fact, some of these decorations will double quite nicely for Halloween or may already be in your Halloween stash. First of all, if you have a canopy or tent lying around this will make an excellent substitution for a pyramid. You can fill your canopy or tent with relics that are authentic looking for what would be inside an Egyptian pyramid. Use skulls (leftover from Halloween decorations) on the floor, gold coins (or doubloons, which can be purchased rather inexpensively at many party supply stores), sequins that look like jewels, and fake jewelry that might have been worn during the period. Of course the *piece de resistance* will be the mummy wrapped in the corner (if this isn't part of your Halloween stash it should be after this).

Now, what self respecting mummies home doesn't have a great curse to go along with it? Before allowing the guests into the "pyramid" you need to make sure they are aware of the curse that goes along with it. It's a fun little addition to the theme and a lot of fun to watch their eyes as you tell the tale of the mummy inside and why the tomb is cursed.

If you are still looking for excellent activities you can bury treasure in your sandbox (if you have one) and let them all take turns digging up treasures and/or artifacts that they can take home with them. Make sure everyone has at least one turn and gets one thing to take home from the digging.

You can either barbecue dinner or order pizza or something simple for dinner. I recommend letting the guests eat inside the pyramid for fun (if it isn't too terribly hot) and allow for a showing of *The Mummy* afterwards (provided the audience is old enough and interested). You could also allow them to play in the tomb for a while or make it an overnight event and allow them to camp in the tomb if it's a tent.

Great goody bag gifts include flashlights, glow sticks, spiders, chocolate coins, stickers, and other candy jewelry. One great game for an Egyptian themed birthday party would be wrap the mummy. Divide the kids into groups of three and have them take turns racing to wrap the mummy (a member of the team) in toilet paper. Do this so that everyone has the opportunity to be wrapped – just be sure to use the cheap brands of toilet paper for this particular project and plan on having plenty in case they get a little overzealous.

Most importantly you want to plan an event that is fun to participate in and that will have all your guests eager to come back for the big birthday bash next year. Just remember you'll be expected to top the current theme and might gain a reputation for throwing the cool parties.

## Camping Birthday Party Ideas

A favorite theme among those holding camping birthday parties is that of a trail ride. With this you can bring your gear along with you, ride horses, cook, eat, and sleep under the stars. If you don't have a trail ride, horses, or long trails in the wilderness nearby don't despair. With a Dutch oven, an open fire, a few sticks, and little bit of imagination you can have your very own cowboy camp out birthday bash celebration. Don't forget the fixin's for some s'mores while you're making plans and be sure to have a camera handy as you create an unforgettably fun birthday bash and camping party for that special guy in your life. Be sure to include a few tall tales to share around the campfire. Now might be a great time to brush up on your Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill stories.

A military camping birthday party is another great camping party idea. Right now boys need good solid heroes and the military is a great place to find them. If you have friends or family that are serving over seas this might be a great way to help your little guy bring them closer to home for an evening and could be the best birthday memory he'll ever have. Set up pup tents, visit your local military supply or surplus store for MREs (meals ready to eat), have everyone wearing their favorite camouflage, and have an army green face painting contest before bed time.

A safari camping theme is another great theme for a terrific camping birthday party. Begin by having everyone dress appropriately for a day underneath the hot African sun, khakis, and an appropriate hat work well. Create a safari pack (goody bag) for all the kids including really chip binoculars, a net for catching stray bugs (really great for lightening bugs at night), safari themed stickers, and a picture frame that is worthy of a fearless safari adventurer (you'll definitely want to send them home with photos of their safari attire). Set up camp for the evening and serve animal crackers for dessert. You can populate the tent with stuffed animals of favorite safari animals and supplement the adventure with a trip to the zoo for even grander effect and more fun.

If none of these are getting you very excited you could always go with a Rocky Mountain sort of theme for your camping birthday party. Be sure to have plenty of stuffed black bears and have everyone wear red flannel and denim. This is a great and fun sort of adventure for the little men in your life and a great fun party idea. It also presents a few wonderful photo ops for souvenirs and your very own memory book. Have the tents pitched in the backyard and the grill should be set up to feed your hungry mountaineers. If you are fortunate enough to have a creek on your property or live very near one you could even have your 'adventurers' go panning for gold.

Even if the weather, for some odd reason, doesn't want to cooperate you can bring your great outdoor adventure inside and still have a grand time. If you live in an apartment or an area in which you are uncomfortable having a camp out, there's no reason you can't have a wonderful camp "in".

## **Hollywood Birthday Party Theme for Teens**

Hollywood is source of seemingly infinite fascination with teens. They are constantly looking to Hollywood for fashion tips, entertainment, and, far too often, advice and guidance when it comes to daily life. The good news is that while Hollywood may not be the theme you want your teens carrying around with them every day it makes for a great birthday party theme if you are inventive, creative, and can find the good in everything.

There are plenty of events in Hollywood that set the stage for elaborate and very fun birthday party events that will impress even the most cynical of teens and have their friends talking for weeks to come. Your teen's birthday may even become the birthday event of the year if you plan carefully and put the full power of your creativity into play for the big event. Remember however, that whatever you plan must be somewhat flexible as teens are also notorious for putting bumps into what would otherwise be a smooth ride.

One great Hollywood theme that is often a joy for teen parties, especially among teen girls is the idea of an awards show. This includes the proverbial Red Carpet, plenty of photo ops, and a dress code that is quite formal (this should be noted in the invitations). It is all in good fun however and you do love your children right? Besides, the planning of an event such as this can prove a worthy challenge. You can use glittery star nameplates to indicate seating, have the "Oscar Room" decorated elegantly with a white table cloth and fine china, and have cameras flashing throughout the event to record important moments. Don't forget the completely "Oscar worthy" goody bag. Great ideas to fill this bag include items for facials, manicures, pedicures, a photo frame for the fabulous photos you will be sending home, and an autograph "scrapbook" in which you can all work to create a scrapbook of the evening with photographs and autographs.

Diva dinner. This idea for a glamorous Hollywood themed birthday is a little more irreverent than the notion of an Oscar party, which might make it a little more entertaining. This is also the sort of party that is best left to girls rather than attempting to include girls and guys. When your guests arrive dressed to impress you will hand out feather boas and sunglasses that are worthy of Hollywood (be fun and think "Glam"). You will want to have plenty of photo ops throughout the evening so be sure to have cameras at the ready and create a backdrop for more formal photos of all the divas together or any diva to take with the birthday diva. You can all get together to make photo frames and bring your photo with the birthday girl or the group en masse home with you when the party ends.

Over the years Hollywood has brought many laughs, tears, sighs, and sobs into our homes. It makes perfect sense that teens are so fascinated with the comings and goings of people in this very unique city. Bringing the glitz and glam of a Hollywood birthday party into your home for a night, or even a weekend is a great way to make your teen a very happy teen but more importantly it is a while it's fun on occasion to have all the attention that the lights of Hollywood can bring it's even better to have friends and family who love you.

## Laser Tag Birthday Party

As far as birthday bashes go, laser tag arenas are taking the birthday industry by storm. Gone are the days when only little boys are interested this is a game that anyone, no matter how big or small can have a great time exploring and makes for an interesting and entertaining birthday party idea. If you have a laser tag arena in your neck of the woods it is very well worth checking out as the perfect location for your next birthday party event.

The great thing about most laser tag arenas is that you do not have to sacrifice the idea of a themed birthday party or gathering in order to incorporate the laser tag action into the party. There are plenty of themed parties that work wonderfully right alongside the action packed time that can be spent enjoying life on the laser tag floor.

Now there are plenty of themes you can bring to the laser tag table with you but my personal favorite is that of a spy mission or secret agent. Most arenas will be happy to play along to your party needs if you are booking with them and let them know far enough ahead of time to make the proper preparations (provided they are reasonable and age appropriate of course). Check and see if they may have a few 'secret agent missions, that they can incorporate into the festivities and make the decorations, cakes, and plates fit with the secret agent theme. You could also have everyone dressed in black from head to foot to pull off the theme even better.

Army men are still fascinating to boys of all ages. Whether the birthday boy in your live is 10 or 25 chances are quite good that he would not turn his bag on the idea of a camouflage birthday cake or dressing in his favorite camo for a rousing game of laser tag. It is quite easy at the moment to find all manner of camouflage plates, napkins, and party favors that will accommodate the army greens and be an excellent addition to the party (I wonder if you hide the cake on camo plates if the calories will still count?).

Kim Possible is all the rage on Disney these days and proves that girls can be spies too. If you have a girl that is interested in laser tag there is really no reason whatsoever that she should not have her birthday celebration at your local laser tag center. Girls definitely like to play with these toys too and might just prove to be superior in battle when all is said and done.

If you are interested in a theme that is out of this world for your laser tag festivities there is no reason not to pursue a space aged theme with your laser tag maneuverings. A birthday party is supposed to be fun and you can pretty much do what you want in a venue such as this without the mess and after party clean up. Have fun and choose a theme that the birthday boy or girl will enjoy and appreciate.

When it comes to a laser tag birthday party you need to book early and make sure you have all the information you need when booking in order to insure that you will have the space you need when you want it. Check with policies on cake and/or other outside food as it may vary from one arena to the next. Be sure to check out food offerings there, as many will have a fairly decent selection of snacks for your partiers if that is your preference. The most important thing is that everyone involved has a great time.

## **Mission Possible - Spy Birthday Party**

For the little spy master or mistress in your life the idea of a spy themed birthday may be the absolute best gift you could give. It is an even better gift if you take the time to carefully plan an evening and event that every guest, especially your child will remember for a long time to come. There are many great themes upon which you can expand and build your Master Spy party for girls or guys and make it the most talked about birthday party of the birthday party season.

Begin by establishing a particular theme or plot for the party. Are you going to make the party a mission based party where there is an objective or are you going to set up a spy training camp? Either makes for excellent themes but really must be decided in advance. If you are going with the objective you need to have an objective that is challenging but not too terribly difficult. You could set up a scavenger hunt sort of objective where each item lends a clue to the next item and a riddle to solve to get there and the first team to the final objective wins spiffy new goodies for their bags of spy tricks.

For the training camp you can have a little more creative fun. You can set up an optical course and play memory games. You can have coded messages that each guest must decipher as one of the activities. You can incorporate this into a mission later in the festivities or leave it as a separate activity or use it both times with a different cipher for each message to make things a little more interesting.

Goody bags for a party with this theme can be a ton of fun. You can put in a mini camera, binoculars, sunglasses, water guns, notepads and pens (for deciphering codes of course), and an ID badge for each with a photo slot in which you will put their photos before they leave. This is a party that can be a lot of fun without breaking the budget. Decorations should be what you would expect in a spy headquarters or training academy. Most of us can draw them or print them from online. Some excellent examples would be targets for target practice, code ciphers, a briefcase or two, folders with "Top Secret" stamped on them, and a few building schematics tacked onto a bulletin board for an authentic feeling.

Food for a party like this doesn't have to be elaborate. Kids love pizza so pizza and pop are excellent choices with cake and ice cream to follow. If pizza isn't your thing think kid friendly with easy clean up when planning the menu. If you want to be really cruel you can make the mission about finding the stash of presents (you will have to hide all the presents as they arrive however in order to make this work) but it is a fun game to play and the idea of a spy mission birthday party is often appealing to both girls and boys.

When planning your spy themed birthday party be sure to make it fun and challenging but not over the heads of the age group for which you are planning. You want everyone to leave happy and to have had a lot of fun. Most importantly you want your birthday boy or girl happy so keep his or her wishes in mind and let her add input when planning the party.

## Pajama Birthday Party

There are many great ways you could pull off the perfect pajama party but you must remember at all times that a house full of giggling girls requires a good humor and a huge bottle of your favorite head ache remedy (non-alcoholic on this occasion of course). Once you have a nice supply of aspirin on hand you may begin hashing out the details. One important detail however is when during the sleepover cake and ice cream should be eaten and gifts should be opened. Most children prefer sooner during the event rather than later so that they can play with their haul of loot with their friends.

If this is the case, you need to have the decorations in place ahead of the party, which is probably a good idea anyway. If you've decided on a particular theme great, if not there's really nothing wrong with a pajama theme for the cake and decorations. You can even have fuzzy bunny slippers if you want and no one will complain.

Speaking of fuzzy bunny slippers, the dress for a decent pajama party is ultra casual. Why not wear a pair and see what everyone thinks? If bunnies aren't your thing, there are plenty of pajama footwear options available that should be a hit for an event such as this. Be sure to bring your favorite nail polish along as manicures and pedicures are often the rule rather the exception as the night hours move along. You might find that by the next morning you have a different color of polish on every fingertip and every toe. It's all in good fun though and perfectly acceptable pajama birthday party attire.

The problem with a pajama birthday party for many parents organizing them is that we underestimate the eating abilities of a few girls no matter what age they may be. Be aware that having plenty of food on hand, that these girls can help themselves to is an absolute must for the success of your pajama birthday party. Great midnight snacks might include pizza rolls, chips, a veggie tray to keep in the fridge, and microwave popcorn (a must if movies may be involved).

You should also have some easy to prepare breakfast "fixings" on hand too because it is unlikely that anyone involved is going to have too much sleep. This means sleepy breakfast preparation. Cereal, toaster waffles or tarts, and oatmeal are excellent choices for easy to prepare breakfast choices to have after a long night of pajama partying. Be sure to have plenty of milk and juice on hand as well so that various morning tastes are accommodated.

A pajama birthday party is a right of passage that many girls dream of before it happens. Be sure to plan activities and events that will keep the night moving on and make efforts that everyone feels comfortable and at home. Get to know parents and be sure to invite favorite night time friends (i.e. Teddy bears or favorite blankets) along for security and to insure that things go smoothly for all invited (this is particularly important with younger girls having their first pajama parties). You want to make sure that the night is a success by making it memorable for your daughter and her friends. Have plenty of craft projects, great food, even better movies, and games on hand to keep boredom from becoming an issue. If you do all of these things your daughter should have the pajama birthday party of her dreams.



## Princess Party

The first thing you will want to do before the party is to decide on the decorations, activities, and food which will compliment your princess party theme. Take out a sheet of paper and a pen, and start taking notes and brainstorming ideas which you can use to meet your own home and specific needs. This will help you to create a shopping list for your party and a timeline to get everything accomplished.

As for décor, just about anything goes to decorate your castle, otherwise known as your home. Using a lot of pink and purple is always a good choice for a princess party. You can use pastel pink and purple streamers and balloons along with a matching tablecloth and napkins. For a nice added touch you can use complementary colored plates and cups. You can also tie your napkins with a nice fancy ribbon which is only fit for a princess and her castle.

If you have pink or purple fabric on hand, you might want to cover your party room chairs with it and tie it into big bows at the back. If you do not have any fabric, check your local thrift stores for a sheet in the right color which you can cut up and use for the day.

For your princess party invitations you will want to ask your guests to come dressed in their best outfits and ready to be pampered for the party. Or, simply let them come in their everyday clothing and add to their outfit when they arrive. You can purchase inexpensive feather boas which the girls can wear around their shoulders for the party and then take home afterward. Also readily available are simple tulle skirts which can transform their outfit into one fit for a princess. A good idea is to have each guest in pink while the guest of honor is in purple, or vice versa.

Once your guests arrive you can have them decorate their own princess cone party hats with such items as gems, confetti, and feathers which you have purchased from the local dollar or discount store for the purpose. Once their hats are decorated, then you can staple on streamers or ribbons to the top of the hat so that they flow out when they move or twirl.

A fun game to play is “Princess May I?” which is the same on the old traditional game “Mother May I?” Have the guest of honor be the princess and allow her to play the role of the mother in the more traditional game.

Once your craft project and game are done, then it is time to seat your princess on her own throne to enjoy a nice tea party. The best foods to serve are sandwiches cut into hearts or stars with cookie cutters. The beverage of choice could be a pink lemonade served in either fancy plastic glasses or in tea cups. Your cake can either be a princess or a castle. Both options are fairly easy to make, or they can be purchased if you so choose.

If your local stores carry piñatas, you can fill one with candy such as gold chocolate coins, ring lollypops, and candy necklaces to help round out the theme and give the girls something fun to do. They can take home the candy from the piñata in their very own princess goodie bags.

## Scavenger Hunt Birthday Party for Teens

Teens are often the most difficult among us to impress. Too old for many of the theme party ideas that often appeal to younger children and not quite old enough to appreciate some of the more entertaining adult party themes there seem to be very few options available for awesome teen birthday parties that will go down in record books. If you are looking for something a little new and different to do this year, try an Amazing Race sort of scavenger hunt for your teen's birthday. Be sure to have interesting prizes and a gift for the birthday boy or girl to give in the name of the winners.

This is a party that needs to be planned ahead of time as permission may need to be given by parents for some of the more exciting scavenged items. It's also a good idea to discuss this with other parents as they may have a few great suggestions for items that must be obtained in search of the holy birthday party Amazing Race grail. Keep the prizes simple and fun and keep the goals for each leg of the race challenging enough to be entertaining but something that can be accomplished without risking life and limb. Make sure that there is a little more to the challenge than having to go from one house or store to the next and buy, beg, or borrow items. Make some of the items things that must be carefully considered and well planned on behalf of the winning team. This makes the entire process more fun for everyone and a birthday party theme that will be remembered.

The most important thing to remember when planning a party such as this is to keep safety a first priority. If possible it is probably best to divide into teams and have one adult per team (even if the teens are old enough to drive) you definitely want to make sure that the parents of every teen involved is aware of what will be going on and that you have contact information for everyone. This can be a lot of fun, especially if you get the parents of your child to participate by issuing challenges of their own, or becoming a "pit stop" for the process. It's a great way for the parents to be involved and a lot of fun for them as well.

Finish the event with pizza, cake, and video footage (that you planned ahead of time) of the festivities from one location to the next. It should make for an excellent night to remember not only for your teen but all the other teens involved in your Amazing Race birthday party. This sort of party is a little more costly than some others may be (unless you plan very carefully). You also might want to include a couple of crafty activities in the Amazing Race or as part of the scavenger hunt in order to prolong some of the events and hand out disposable cameras to each team in order to "capture" some memories and create a scrapbook of the Amazing Race. If you have a scanner and printer you can make a scrapbook for each guest to take home.

The most important thing about a party of this sort is that you use your imagination to keep things safe and entertaining for all involved. The Amazing Race/scavenger hunt party has the potential to be a special memory for your teen and his or her friends for years to come. Go with the flow and remember that it's about fun. If something goes wrong for some reason just pick up and move on to the next event rather than getting bogged down in the details. One word of caution, plan to have plenty of food on hand regardless. A gaggle of hungry teens can go through plenty of food and pop in an amazingly short space of time.

## Star Wars Birthday Party

Even though there hasn't been a recent film release, Star Wars remains a popular favorite among fans new and old. Kids of all ages from 2 to 52 find the world that was created by Star Wars creator George Lucas to be an infinitely fascinating world in which to allow their imagination and fantasies to take flight in that galaxy far, far away. If your special birthday girl or boy is a fan of these films this is the can't miss party theme to add to your perfect birthday party list.

There are many ways you can go that will bring the theme to light in a way that allows everyone to have fun. First of all, you could have a classic Star Wars event with the original Episodes (IV, V, and VI) showing one after the other throughout the party. This is perfect for an overnight or all day sort of party as it allows breaks in between the showings and plenty of time to incorporate some serious snack making or pizza ordering without interfering with the DVDs being played in the back ground.

If you want to take things a step further you can also have your guests come dressed as their favorite Star Wars characters from all six films. If you are truly adventurous you can do a back-to-back showing of all six films though this makes for a very long weekend sort of event. Perfect if your birthday falls on around a 3-day weekend such as Labor Day or Memorial Day. Otherwise it's a great idea but you may want to break it up into two years' worth of celebrations.

If you are friends or your child's friends are a creative bunch you can have a session where guests speculate and create tall tales about what happens between Episodes III and IV as well as what happens to favorite characters after Episode VI. This is a lot of fun and creates a sort of role-playing atmosphere for the party that can be a huge amount of fun.

If this isn't enough activity and you want a little something to wear the kids (big or small) out you might want to invite your guests to a Jedi training academy of sorts. Set up an obstacle course for everyone to follow and a series of exercises similar to what Luke went through in *The Empire Strikes Back*. The winner can get some Star Wars themed award for giggles and a little added entertainment.

Most bakeries are likely to have a great form cake on hand or in inventory for Star Wars because the theme remains so popular. If not however. There are great cake ideas online that work beautifully for a Star Wars theme with home made birthday cakes. It's really great if you can try one of these because it will be something a little different from what everyone else who does a Star Wars themed party will have. Of course you could always go with a background of stars and the original Star Wars logo painted in yellow. Simple and yet completely appropriate.

If a Star Wars themed birthday party is anywhere on your wish list for your birthday or your child or significant other's birthday by all means make your best effort to make this a fun and memorable event. May the Force be with you.

## Sweet 16 Birthday Party

The 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday for most young girls is a very special birthday. It is one that should be made memorable and there are many ways in which this can be accomplished. While there are many friends that your daughter will have and many Sweet 16 parties she will attend you want to make her birthday party a little bit unique. For this reason there are several party ideas that will be mentioned below. You can elaborate on one theme or mix and match a few themes that capture your attention. Regardless any of these themes should be a little something special to make the day, or evening, a special event full of fond memories for your teen.

Throw a masquerade ball. This allows everyone to dress in costumes, dance, drink punch, and have a ball, figuratively of course. This can be a lot of fun and you can even have those in attendance make their own masks for the grand event even if you choose not to use costumes and go a little less formal. Use plenty of balloons to set the stage and make the evening quite an event.

You can have a spa event for an all girls sweet 16. This event would include having facials, pedicures, makeovers, and a great chick flick for the evening, followed, of course by copious amounts of Haagen-Dazs®. A great way to do this is by approaching your favorite home party plan representative from a company such as Mary Kay or Beauty Control for the spa portion of the party (be sure to invite parents and have friends bring money to buy their favorite products). It's a great way to get a makeover inexpensively and learn about proper application of cosmetics and which colors suit your needs.

If these ideas aren't appealing, how about a Surf's Up Sweet 16? Even if you aren't near a beach you may discover that you can bring the feeling of the beach to your own back yard. Be sure to have surfboards to set the theme and plenty of tikki types of decorations and some excellent surfing music. You could take the event one step further and make it a luau. Use your imagination and make it an event to remember.

Make your Sweet 16 a Red Carpet Event. This is a great idea for a birthday party. It allows all your friends to make a grand entrance, that you can record with a video or digital camera in their beautiful dresses (you can go semiformal if finances are a concern), and can make great scrapbooks that everyone can take home if you have a computer, scanner, and printer at home. Don't forget to create Oscar worthy goodie bags with great little gifts from the local party supply store or Bath and Body works. It's a lot of fun as far as parties go and may be a little something new and different among friends.

There really is no one way that is right or wrong for celebrating your daughter's Sweet 16. The important thing is that you create a budget and plan your party theme to fit within the scope of your budget. Even with limited funds you can have an excellent birthday bash for your teen on her sixteenth. The ideas above are a great place to start. Hopefully you will take one of these ideas and make it your own or at the very least have jump-started a few new and different ideas to add to your growing list of hits, near hits, and misses. You may just have the one hit that will make your daughter's eyes light up.

## **The Wild Wild West Birthday Bash**

There is that little kid in all of us that wishes we could have been around in the days of the Wild West. Whether your interests were in blazing new trails into undiscovered country, riding the range, going on a cattle drive, homesteading, or panning for gold there is something romantic about the old west that so many of us find appealing whether male or female, old or young.

The Wild West lends itself to many wonderful and exciting birthday party themes for the brave host or hostess. Hopefully some of the ideas mentioned below will get your creative wheels turning and help you plan the perfect birthday party for the Wild West Wannabe in your life.

**Wagon Trail.** You can create a wagon trail of sorts of your own, in your own back yard. This is great for younger cowboys and trailblazers. All you really need is a covered wagon (feel free to use your imagination for this), an open fire (check with local regulations but open fires are great for cooking hot dogs, s'mores, and using a Dutch oven for stew as well as warmth and light at night (especially if this is an overnight party)).

**Gold Rush.** This can be a blast, literally if you aren't careful with the TNT. Seriously make fake TNT for decoration as well as rocks that have been painted gold, frosted mugs for the root beer (especially if the crowd is under 21), and chicken nuggets and corn nuggets for lunch with a gold themed birthday cake to top things off. Have everyone dress up like prospectors and go out panning for gold if you have a creek nearby that would be safe for 'prospecting'. It's a great outing and a lot of fun for everyone. Even if you don't strike gold you might find an interesting rock or two that make excellent keepsakes.

Of course there are the cowboys of the old Wild West. You will want to wear cowboy boots, a hat, a bandana, and a six-shooter on your hip for added effect. Great food would be anything that can be made on a grill though hot dogs are a general favorite among a younger cowpoke audience. Barbecue is a good choice for adult Wild West parties and the cowboys need to be sure to have a good cowgirl by their sides. Square dancing is a great entertainment that can be fun even in birthday parties for little ones. Of course the birthday boy or girl should get a sheriff's badge to distinguish them from all the other guests at the rodeo. In fact, you might find that a trip to the rodeo is a perfect accompaniment to the Wild West Cowboy party theme.

The important thing when bringing a touch of the Wild West to your birthday bash is to remember to work to make it fun for everyone. If you are going to have guests of all ages, make sure that there are appropriate activities to keep them all entertained and happy rather than; isolating events to suit the target age group of the big event. This makes for happier parents, happier children, and guests that stick around longer and want to return next year to see what new and wonderful ideas you will come up with.

## Train Birthday Party for the Little Ones

Boys and girls of all ages have a deep and abiding love of trains. From Thomas the Train to *The Little Engine that Could*, trains make an excellent theme for a birthday party for your favorite youngster. The great news is that there are plenty of great party favors and decorations on the market to make your train theme carry through all aspects of the birthday party.

You can purchase invitations that are shaped like a train and appropriate for the specific train theme you have in mind. Even old-fashioned steam engines make a fascinating setting and theme for little ones who are filled with imagination. You do not need to go overboard on the decorations for a train themed party in order to get the theme apart but there are some great goody bags that can be made in keeping with the theme.

A train piñata is a great way to get the kids in on the action and having a great time. You may also choose to have all the little ones dress up as a train engineer for a little interactive fun with your train birthday party idea. You can also choose to play a DVD of your favorite train story for the entertainment of the little ones and in hopes of a little bit of quiet time before the sugar induced highs of after cake time.

Speaking of cake, there are plenty of cake forms and cake themes that are ideal for train cakes and children's birthday parties. From the popular character cakes that are related to trains to other train themes such as *The Polar Express* there are plenty from which to choose when it comes to the perfect birthday cake for your train themed party. A little cake with a little ice cream and it will soon be time to take a whack at the train themed piñata mentioned earlier.

Most party supply stores should have an abundance of train themed party supplies. From hats to plates, cups, and napkins there should be plenty of wonderful party supplies to help you convey the train theme of the party with little additional efforts unless, of course, streamers and other party supplies are needed. Goody bags are becoming a more and more important part of birthday parties in modern society. The train themed birthday party lends itself to plenty of train themed goody bag fillers. Among those wonderful items are coloring books, storybooks, puzzles, train whistles (their parents will love you and it is the perfect revenge for the air horn your child came home with), and stickers. This is a great way for your child to give back to those who have given him or her gifts while providing something appropriate to the theme for everyone to remember this particular party by.

If you are looking for a little something extra for your child's train themed birthday party you might want to talk to local train companies and see if there is a train museum near by or if you can possibly book a train car or a room at the train depot in which to host the party. This will create a very special memory for your little one and everyone that attended the party. Some trains actually run day trips that last a couple of hours. This will be a thrilling party experience for your little one's friends if you can manage this great escape of a train themed birthday party. You may also talk to those in charge at the train station for ideas and suggestions they may have to make your child's special day a little more thrilling.