

How to Throw Your Child's Birthday Party on a

[Budget]

How do you plan a party that celebrates your child's life without feeling guilty for spending too much, or too little? It's actually easier than you think. It takes a lot of creativity, some time to plan, and only a little money to create a celebration that your child will fondly remember.

First, your child will mostly remember the friends and family who came with gifts of love and presence (not presents). A lot of the big bash birthday parties are for show. Don't get sucked into a party war with other parents. Start your birthday party planning by first defining your intention. Parents can get consumed with revisiting their youth through their children, unintentionally. We all must live intentionally, and make all of our actions conscious. Define your child's birthday party by its singular purpose: celebrating life. Here are some great tips on how to make your child and their friends feel like you've gone all out on their birthday—without actually breaking the bank.

Engrave Your Budget in Stone

Setting the budget is the next most important thing you must do. Start out by figuring how much you can afford to spend. If you have a monthly budget, just take out the money that you normally allot to entertainment. Use your available money as your guide, not the number of invites. Many people are able to throw a magical birthday party on \$50 or \$100, total. It doesn't take much money, especially if your child is younger.

It will be extremely tempting to spend more once you get to the party decorations store, and see all the cute items that would spice up your theme. In fact, adopt the envelope system espoused by financial writer, Dave Ramsey. Grab the amount of cash money you have allotted and spend directly from that envelope. When the cash is gone, you're done. It really forces you to edit your purchases and use the creative side of your brain.

Dollar Store Decorations

Your neighborhood dollar store is an amazing resource. The things you can buy from the dollar store include specialized balloons (the ones in the shape of cupcakes and butterflies), paper plates and plastic utensils, candy, party favors, and other party decorations. Or, buy do-it-yourself crafts and ask your kids to help. Make old school streamers: buy construction paper and glue from the dollar store, and cut the paper into strips, length-wise. Loop the paper and glue the ends together. Repeat, creating interlinking loops. The end result is a colorful set of streamers that your child helped create.

Let Them Eat Cake

To buy or not to buy, that's the question. You may think that you can't make your own cake, but chances are you can! With the advent of the internet, everything is possible. Sites like AllRecipes and YouTube help even the novice baker create a masterpiece. Making your own cake gives you the most flexibility, and is very cost effective, shaving as much as 90% off of the price.

Foodies for Kiddies

Most people blow a large portion of their budget on expensive food. The key is in serving finger foods that your guests will actually want to eat. Stay away from fine French cheese, when you're hosting 5 year olds. Think more along the lines of Goldfish. Instead of crackers, think potato chips-- the baked, good for you kind. Incorporate healthy snacks into your menu. Serve homemade granola bars and fresh fruit. However, remember, it's a kid's party, and candy is basically mandatory!

Try designing mini pizzas on biscuit dough, topped with pepperoni, shredded cheese and pasta sauce. You do the baking, and supervise, of course. The end result is ownership and accomplishment on the kids' side, and less work on your side. Other good and quick food ideas: Pigs-in-a-blanket, Hamburgers, Chicken Nuggets, Party Mix, Home-baked Cookies, Punch, Popsicles.

Entertain the Masses

This is the part that requires the most creativity. How do you entertain a bunch of kids, whose attention spans are several going at one time, if you have a large amount of guests in attendance. You want to create simultaneous activities so that a child can go from one to the other. You can have board games, a movie playing in the background, and a face painting station, and the background. Consider throwing a show. Beforehand, buy some fun from the thrift store, and have them the day of the party. Invite the kids to characters and act them out on stage. encourages imagination. Other tips: a sleepover for girls or a camping trip for the boys.

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