

The Great Lerdini's Top Ten Tips for a Great Party!

The Great Lerdini's Party Planning Guide

For elementary school aged children, birthday parties are a pretty big deal. Turning a year older is exciting and with proper planning, a birthday celebration can be a fun occasion for all involved.

Here are my top ten tips to a great birthday party.

Top Tip #1: Have a Plan.

You can avoid a lot of stress by planning ahead. Using a "to do" checklist (see sidebar on next page) can help ensure that you don't forget anything important – like ordering the birthday cake! If hiring party entertainment, be sure to start calling around a month ahead of time as popular performers tend to book up early.

Top Tip #2: It's all about teamwork.

Surprise gifts can be fun, but when it comes to the party, your child will want to be involved in the planning. Brainstorm a few party options. Sit down with your child and discuss the choices. Be careful not to promise your child something that you will not be able to deliver. This may necessitate calling ahead to make certain that the options you present are within your budget. Let your child help with the guest list, invitations, food, decorations, games, etc. Your child's participation will help ensure the success of the party. The time you spend together and the conversations you have are part of a unique bonding experience. Having to make decisions and take on responsibility for certain tasks is also a valuable lesson for children.

Top Tip #3: How Many and How Long?

Keep the party manageable. It's tempting to invite the entire class, but large parties are often overwhelming for the birthday child, especially the younger ones. My suggestion is to limit the number of guests to twice your child's age. Most parties are around two hours long.

Top Tip #4: Invitations.

Invitations can build a feeling of anticipation and excitement around the party. The invitations can match the party theme, highlight the age of the birthday child or reflect the child's personality through personalized stickers or pictures. It is best to avoid distributing invitations at school, where uninvited classmates may feel left out. Mailing invitations also reduces the possibility that invitations will be lost or overlooked.

Top Tip #5: Keep Them Busy.

Organize plenty of activities in advance. Games and activities often take less time to complete than expected. Visit your local library or bookstore for books on children's games. Try to avoid individual competitive games where there is only one winner. Instead, play team or cooperative games. Children especially enjoy activities like treasure hunts or creating something that they can take home.



Top Tip #6: Food that Fits.

Children are happy with pizza, hot dogs, hamburgers, or chicken nuggets. Of course, their favorite food will be the cake! I've seen some amazing cakes – they can now scan a photo and print it on the icing! Blowing the candles and singing “Happy Birthday” is an important birthday tradition. Make sure everyone is present. It's a shame when I see dads use this time to go and check their email.

Top Tip #7: Give a Pep Talk.

The night before the party, before bedtime, is a good time to discuss expectations for the big day. Your son or daughter will be too excited to think about it the next day. Talk about the way to treat guests nicely, how to greet them at the door and to make sure everybody is included.

Top Tip #8: Postpone the Presents.

Opening presents can be fun at older children's parties, but presents should be left until after the party for younger children. Opening presents with young children can sometimes lead to tears for the guests, who may want their present back, as well as the birthday child, who can become overwhelmed. Saving gifts for later allows the child time to play with each new toy and gives parents a chance to record presents for the thank you cards.

Top Tip #9: Say Cheese!

Make sure you have plenty of film/tape/batteries for your camera or camcorder. Don't forget to take lots of pictures. Focus on small groups and avoid overly posed photos. Spontaneous snapshots best capture the atmosphere of a birthday party. Pass the camera to someone else to make sure that you are in some of the pictures. Make sure you take a group photo at some point during the party. You can send a copy to each child with the thank you note.

Top Tip #10: ENJOY!

Your child's party should be fun. Don't worry if not everything goes to plan. Many times, the unplanned moments are the most memorable. As long as everyone is having a good time, then the party is a success. Relax and have as much fun as the kids!



Eric Lerner performs as the The Great Lerdini throughout the Tri-State area. As part of his Two Shows for the Price of One, whenever Eric is hired to perform, he then provides magic for the children at NY Methodist Hospital in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

For more information, please visit the website at www.lerdini.com or call 718.751.7713 today!

Party Checklist

3-4 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR PARTY

- Sit down with your child and create the guest-list.
- Call party entertainer to book your date and time.
- Order party supplies, decorations, party favors, activities and prizes for games.

2-3 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR PARTY

- Send the invitations. Ask guests to RSVP.
- Decide on activities and games to play.
- Plan your menu.
- Arrange for extra help on the party day from friends or relatives.

1 WEEK BEFORE YOUR PARTY

- Write out a final schedule of activities for the party.
- Order cake from a bakery if you are not baking your own.
- Make any other foods that can be made ahead of time and store in your freezer.
- Confirm any orders placed for the cake and/or party supplies.

2-3 DAYS BEFORE THE PARTY

- Buy remaining food for the party.
- Check batteries for the camera and/or camcorder.
- Get an exact guest count. Call those who haven't responded.

1 DAY BEFORE THE PARTY

- Bake and decorate the cake, or pick up the cake from the bakery.
- Make sure you have candles and matches.
- Child-proof and decorate the party area.

PARTY DAY!

- Prepare foods and beverages that could not be made ahead of time.
- Take plenty of pictures and video to commemorate this special day.
- Plan a nap for yourself after the party!