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**Ten Kids Party Planning No-nos**

**By Patricia B. Jensen**

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Avoid the most common and obvious pitfalls many parents encounter when planning their first kids party. Tap into the knowledge of experienced party planners who've learned to steer clear of the "Ten Kids Party Planning No-Nos".

#### INVITING MORE CHILDREN THAN YOU CAN HANDLE

Your intentions were good when you invited everyone in little Tommy's classroom to celebrate his birthday, but you didn't realize what it's like when 20 active 6 year olds get together all in one place! Add excitement and sugary food and you've got a real problem!

Do yourself a favor and match the number of party guests to the birthday child's age a tried and true formula from countless Moms and Dads experienced in hosting successful kids parties.

#### UNCLEAR INVITATION

Your invitation should state clearly the Who, What, When, and Where of your party, as well as an RSVP date, phone number, and name to call. Add any special instructions such as what to wear, and whether a meal will be served or just cake and ice cream. Writing the name of the invited guest clearly will, in most cases, avoid siblings crashing your party.

#### FAILING TO KID-PROOF YOUR PARTY AREA

Protect yourself and your party guests by doing a pre-party sweep of the party area for potential hazards. Stow your precious possessions and breakables in a safe place for the duration of the party. If very small children will be in attendance, make sure you have outlet covers in place and that loose change and other items that can be swallowed are out of sight.

## Ten Kids Party Planning No-nos

During the party, be vigilant about letting balloons, or pieces of them, get into the hands of little ones. Avoid serving any food that could trigger nut allergies in children.

### OVERDOING IT – TOO MUCH TO DO, TOO LITTLE TIME

This goes for both the party host/hostess and the guests. As the party planner, be sure you have adequate adult help to supervise all the party guests, play games, serve food, and clean up. Usually other parents are happy to assist, with the promise of reciprocation at their child's event.

Putting on your child's party shouldn't mean you can't enjoy the proceedings too!

Guests should not be over-scheduled either. Make sure you have allowed ample time and that the age group has the attention span and ability to tolerate all the elements of your party plan. In general, a one hour celebration is optimal for toddlers and pre-K kids, while older school age children can handle

2–3 hours easily. Plan a winding down activity or story time for younger kids.

### NOT PLANNING ENOUGH GAMES & ACTIVITIES

This brings to mind the dreaded scenario of a bunch of overstimulated kids running amok because you've run out of games and activities with which to engage them. Don't let it happen to you! Always have extra games and prizes in your bag of tricks to tame the little monsters! You don't have to use them, but at least you'll be prepared.

### GAMES NOT SUITED TO AGES/ABILITIES OF GUESTS

Four year olds will love playing "Duck Duck Goose", but charades or a scavenger hunt are way beyond them. Do a trial run of all your planned party games with the birthday child prior to party time to avoid any difficulties that might arise.

### NO BACK-UP PLANS

Stuff happens! That's why you should always have a back-up plan for your party. Have an indoor alternative for outdoor parties in case of inclement weather. Confirm your entertainment a week in advance, but plan a few extra games or a party-themed video in case the entertainment falls through. Above all, resolve to keep your cool and handle whatever comes up with grace.

### GIFT-OPENING FREE-FOR-ALL

There's nothing worse than party guests grabbing gifts and opening them for the party child. Or, the birthday child tearing open wrappings and casting gifts aside without a proper thank-you. You might consider opening gifts privately after the party's over to avoid any unkind comments from the birthday child, or jealousy on the part of the guests.

If you're determined to navigate these dangerous waters, here's a lifesaver for you: Have guests sit in

## Ten Kids Party Planning No-nos

a circle holding their gifts. The party child sits in the middle and spins a bottle to determine whose gift s/he will open. This keeps the insanity to a minimum and allows you time to record the names of gifts and gift-givers for thank-you notes later.

### NOT RECORDING GIFTS GIVEN/ NOT SENDING THANK-YOU NOTES

It's so convenient to fall into this trap, but remember... a gift worth receiving is a gift worth giving thanks for... Thank you notes are always in style, and if you follow the instructions above for avoiding the gift-opening free-for-all, you'll be in good shape to write accurate ones.

Children will view this as a fun project if you provide them with colorful notes and markers or help them design an original on the computer. My kids always like to write out the addresses on the envelopes, too – it makes them feel grown up.

Patricia B. Jensen is a mother of three and kids party enthusiast. She is the webmaster and owner of

– a comprehensive resource for kids party ideas and complete party plans for

many popular themes, including invitations, cakes, decorations, games, costumes, favors, and food.

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where great kids parties are "a piece of cake"!

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## **Party Planning For Dummies**

**By Patty Illomia**

Planning for a party is no small stuff. It can be really hard to plan for any kind of party and the more important your party is the more stress you are bound to be under. It is a good thing for you that I am here to write this spectacular party planning article to help you to plan the perfect party for any occasion.

Party planning needs to start with a budget. You cannot just go out and start purchasing things willy-nilly without a budget and a plan. SO begin your party planning with making up a good budget. How much money do you have to spend on your party? Decide on a reasonable amount and then break this party planning budget down into sections.

Your party planning sections should look something like this, food, decorations, party favors, and plates, cups and napkins. Once you have this stage of your party planning finished you can then start

## Ten Kids Party Planning No-nos

filling in the columns. How many dishes will you need? Is this the kind of party that requires party favors? This is one of the most important aspects of party planning and it is what will make your shopping for your party much, much easier. Once you have a defined list you can go out and start your shopping. Party planning can be stressful, sure, but it should also be fun. After all you are planning for a party, so enjoy it!

The food that you choose for your party is important to the entire event. You will have to take into consideration what kind of party it is that you are having in the party planning stage. For example, is your party planning being done for a birthday, or an anniversary? Is your party planning being done for a theme party? These types of things matter when you are trying to choose the foods that will suit your party to perfection. IF you are having a themed party then have foods that suit it. If you are having a luau themed party have Hawaiian foods and drinks or if you are having a Christmas party then have Christmas themed foods. This is just smart party planning and it will make your party all the more fun for everyone.

Patty Illomia owns and operates Instan Party Planning Ideas at

. You'll find many options and Ideas for Party Planning that

are right for you.

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