

Birthday Party Checklist

By Sherry M. Lewis

- Three to four weeks in advance**
 - Guests** Write down your guestlist.
 - Budget** Create your spending plan. Be realistic, but leave flexibility for last-minute problems or ideas.
 - Theme** If you want to have a theme birthday, choose it now. It'll impact the decorations, invitations and the cake.
 - Rental** If you need to rent anything that you don't own, go to your party store and make the reservations now.
 - Food** Write down a tentative menu, and include beverages.
 - Shopping list** From the menu, write a grocery shopping list for the weeks to come. You can buy any non-perishables at this point.
 - Activities** Choose the games and activities for the guests. If children are involved, make two sets of activities: one for the kids and one for the adults.
 - Invitations** Write down and send your invitations. Mailing invitations is very formal; nowadays an email is often sufficient. You can even use Facebook and other social networks to manage your guestlist, but don't neglect those who are not on these websites.
 - Entertainment** Look up local entertainers if you plan on hiring one for a few hours. Internet business databases are good for reviews of such services. Book one that has a good reputation.
- Two to three weeks in advance**
 - Favors** If you plan on giving party favors, order or put them together now. You can involve your children in this activity by turning it into a crafts afternoon.
 - Games** If any of the games require buying boards and items, go to the toy store.
 - Balloons** If you want balloons to your party, go to your party supplies store and place your order.
 - Help** If you need assistance with the decoration and the cooking, ask some of your guests to help. Many will be more than happy to participate.
 - Inventory** Make an inventory of the party supplies you do own and put them together at the same place. Make of list of anything missing and buy what you need.
 - Rental** Confirm your reservation with the rental store.
 - Candy** If you plan on having a pinata party, go buy the pinata and the candy to fill it.
- One week in advance**
 - Cleaning** Do the heavy cleaning: floors, windows, carpets, upholstery.
 - Cake** Go to your bakery and order the cake. If you are making it yourself, bake it and freeze it, without frosting.
 - Flowers** Go to your florist and order the flowers.

- Food** If you didn't do so earlier, go to your grocery store for non-perishable food items, and anything that can be kept in the freezer.
- Timeline** Make a schedule for the activities. Be prepared to be flexible as some games might be more popular than others.
- Guestlist** Call or email anyone who has not responded to your invitation yet.
- Two days in advance**
 - Batteries** Buy or recharge the batteries for the photo and video cameras. Make sure you have extra.
 - Cleaning** Dust your tables and counters, and remove clutter from the party area.
 - Fridge** Make space in your fridge for all the food you will cook or receive from your guests.
 - Entertainment** Call your entertainer and confirm time and price.
 - Music** If having music, build your playlist or choose the CDs.
 - Pinata** Fill the pinata and put it in a safe place.
- One day in advance:**
 - Food** Defrost anything frozen in the fridge. It will keep until the next day. Don't forget the cake.
 - Cleaning** Clean your bathroom and anywhere else your guests will go if you haven't already.
 - Emergencies** Buy emergency supplies like bandages and peroxide. You never know when a scratch needs disinfecting.
 - Decoration** Decorate the area where the party will be held.
 - Childproof** Make sure you make the party area secure for children. Check the floor and other small spaces for potentially dangerous objects.
 - Games** Take out the games and put them in a corner of the party area.
 - Favors** Gather the party favors and set them in the party area.
 - Cooking** Prepare anything that will keep in the fridge overnight.
- Day of the party**
 - Orders** Pick up your cake, flower and balloon orders if they are not delivered.
 - Cake** Put the frosting and decorations on the cake, and keep it in the fridge.
 - Decoration** Decorate any other space left.
 - Games** Set the games up, ready for playing.
 - Service** Gather your plates, utensils and glasses.
 - Photo/video** Take out your cameras and have them ready to use.
 - Cooking** Prepare any food that needs to be fresh such as salads, veggie platters, etc.
 - Supplies** Confirm that you have enough bathroom supplies for the amount of guests. Make sure you have extra, just in case.
 - Party.** As your guests arrive, smile and have fun!