

Tinies

The Childcare Experts

Children's Party Ideas



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Introduction

Another year... another trend... the day is looming and the pressure is on.

Yes, organising your child's birthday party is Fun! Fantastic! Enjoyable! Exciting! But stressful, time consuming, costly and competitive may also spring to mind first.

Here at Tinies we have a number of parents and childcarers who understand the pressures and have put together some tips on making the experience fun for all.

Keep it simple for toddlers

You have 18 years to pay for and we can guarantee each year gets more expensive!

Bake or buy the cake

If you can bake then defiantly bake away, but store novelty cakes are great and much more cost effective than getting a cake professionally made. Children will not comment on the "light sponge" or "texture" in fact they will probably lick the icing off and leave the rest!

Plan the party

Traditional games are still the old favorites and pass the parcel can be adapted for so many ages by simply changing the music, the prize and the activities whilst playing. Remember though, the little ones will simply enjoy playing with a few friends, whilst the growing child will need more entertainment. If you're happy to jump around and plan some activities - we have some suggestions below. If not, hire a local entertainer to take the stress away, but remember this will help the costs mount up.

Home or away

Toddlers are best entertained at home as they are comfortable in their environment and inviting a few is acceptable, but when they start school you feel the pressure to invite the class!

Numbers then exceed the limits of your home, not to mention the preservation of your furniture! Check out the local community hall for a DIY party or visit your local leisure center and/or health clubs for party options and packages and if you're lucky enough to have a summer birthday then think about garden options. As your child grows and friends are selected then Ice skating, Cinema, swimming and sleepovers start to win them over and guess what... it's back in you home again for sleepless overnight midnight feasts!

Party bags!

What does the 'basic' party bag consist of these days?

Traditionally it used to be a piece of cake that melted before you got home and contained half the napkin and its dye - and a small toy. Now parents are spending more and more on the bags, boxes, parcels, contents, ribbon (and need we go on)...

Again, keep it simple for younger ones - what better entertainment than a bottle of bubbles and a balloon. As the child grows then keep the bag 'traditional' and fun... go on include the odd sweet... it is a party after all.

Party invites

Every parent dreads the 'themed' party invite as some are so difficult to prepare for. If your child wants a themed party try going for easy options to help fellow parents. Fairies, Pirates, Cowboys and Indians are all relatively easy to do.

We have suggested some pirate ideas below.

So you want more ideas

Through running lots of parties and events Tinies thought it would be useful to share some of the fun and easy to play games so you can give it a go at home. All games are suitable for the age they are intended providing they are set up correctly and supervised at all times. We hope you enjoy playing!



Traditional party games (with a twist)

Pass the parcel

Prepare the parcel with an instruction between each layer such as 5 star jumps, turn around, run round the circle, put your hands on your head etc.

Play appropriate music for the age group. When the music stops the child holding the parcel removes a layer and either carries out the command on their own or all the children join in. (You need a present, music & wrapping paper.)

Musical hoops

This is taken from the traditional game of musical chairs but can be done in a smaller space and avoids digging out chairs from the garage! Place hoops on the floor and when the music stops the children have to get in a hoop.

If you have lots of children it maybe that you set the rules to two per hoop. Either: remove a hoop on each round so that you end up with a winner; or each time the music stops get the children to mimic their favourite toy from Toy Story or shout out their favourite Tweenies character and give all the children a prize at the end. (You need music, hoops & ideally a prize.)

Nursery rhyme medley

Using your child's favourite nursery rhymes, get the children in a circle and act out their favourite songs. Popular ones include:

- Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
- Dingly Dangle Scarecrow
- Round & Round the Garden
- The Wheels on the Bus
- Music Man (3+)

Listen & go

When we were young we used to play North, East, South & West and run to the area in the room instructed by the teacher. At this stage we would whistle at the captain's girlfriend, scrub the deck and salute the captain. Using the same principles name the four corners of the room or garden with your child's favourite things such as TV characters. On your command the children have to listen to where you instruct them to run and then get there as soon as they can. With little ones this normally involves a lot of pointing and hand holding! Once the children are in the right place give them a command to mimic. For Jake in the Tweenies loves to dance! (You need an imagination, loud voice and ideas prepared in advance!)

Chain reaction

Get all of the children in a large circle and before getting them to hold hands pace a hoop between two children. The aim of the game is for the children to pass the hoop over their head and down their body onto the next child without breaking hands. The hoop should travel all the way around the circle with body movements only. Play appropriate music and when the children become confident, encourage cheering, dancing, adding another hoop or splitting them into two groups to race one another. (You need music and hoops.)

Parachute games

If you are able to buy or borrow a parachute they can provide endless hours of fun and enjoyed by most age groups. If playing with children under four then parent participation is a must.

Older children and even adults too can create and play several games to suit all age groups. Here are just a few ideas that are written in progressive stages. Meaning the easy ones for little ones are first.

Safety

Before you start please ensure that you have considered some safety factors. Ensure that there is room around the outside of the parachute in case child run round the edge.

Ensure all children and adults hold the parachute with their knuckles up to the ceiling and palms facing down so that you are gripping the parachute over the top - to avoid any wrist strains.

If you have a parachute with a hole in the middle rather than a netted area, ensure the hole is pulled tight so children cannot put their head through and get caught.

Practice

Making sure everyone is lifting at the same time creates a wonderful dome but it's a disaster if everyone is out of time!

Once everyone is equally spaced around the edge encourage everyone to bend from their knees keeping their backs straight and hold the parachute to the floor. On the count of three get everyone to lift the parachute whilst still keeping their back straight and raising their hands above their head. In adult terms you are effectively doing a big squat but children often associate it with sitting on the toilet!

Keep practicing until everyone is in time with one another and you are creating a great air rush all around.

If you have succeeded to do this without losing control of the children and having half of them running underneath you have done very well.

Now you are feeling comfortable, let's get on with the games...

Swap

Give two or more children around the circle the same number, colour or characters name and check either the child or parent knows who they are before starting to play. The idea of the game is to lift the parachute up and down whilst creating a dome.

Whilst lifting it up call out a number, colour of character name and those children go under the parachute and swap places. With small children you will need to hold the parachute up for slightly longer to avoid trapping them underneath but as the children get older bring it down quickly.

Over the top

With young children sit on the edge of the parachute and pull it tight across the floor. Either by using the children's names or again a number, colour or character call the children to swap places carefully across the top. Depending on the surface children may wear soft shoes or remove shoes and socks to avoid slipping. Older children (3+) may decide to choose something themselves to be as they swap places. We have seen many Buzz Lightyears, fairies and cowboys over the years!

Hideaway

This one takes some practice but is great to do to either sing happy birthday, a nursery rhyme or with older children tell a joke.

The idea is that all of the children lift the parachute up and down, and on the count of three as the parachute rises all of the children take one step in and pull the parachute down behind them and sit down on the edge of the chute.

This means that all of the children should be underneath the parachute trapping the air. This creates a large dome inside the chute which will start to deflate whilst you are underneath.



Mountain climbers

This one is quick and fun and children will want to do it again. Get all of the children to lift the parachute up and down together. On the count of three all of the children drop to their knees whilst putting the rim of the parachute underneath their legs which traps the air inside the chute and creates a large mountain. The children can then crawl into the middle patting down the air. This game is better played without shoes and please ensure that the ground underneath the chute has been checked for sharp objects.



Funny faces

Get all of the children to think of a funny face whilst lifting the parachute up and down. On the count of three the children have to lay on their stomachs and pull the parachute around their heads so that from shoulders down can be seen from outside the chute. The children then trap the air in the chute creating the dome. It looks really funny as you can only see the children's heads underneath. Go around the circle and get the children to pull their best or worst face!

Popcorn

Get the children to pull the parachute tight at waist height. Explain that they are about to cook popcorn and when its ready it pops out of the pan. Get the children to start to warm the pan by shaking it gently as the oil warms up and when ready add the popcorn (soft sponge balls or soft bean bags). Gradually get the children to shake harder and harder until the popcorn is flying in all directions and eventually out of the pan! The children love this game and will want to play again and again. Keep the game controlled and only use soft materials to avoid accidents.

Sharks

This game is for children 6+ and needs to be played on a smooth floor to avoid carpet burns or grass stains. All of the children lay with the parachute pulled up to their chin. The idea of the game is that the children pretend they are sunbathing with their feet in the sea - they must all close their eyes. You select one child to become the shark that goes under the parachute on their stomach and pulls themselves around underneath quietly. Once they are ready they make a shark attack by pulling the child's feet and pulling them under. The new child then becomes the shark. You can also introduce a lifeguard who walks around the edge of the parachute doing their best Baywatch impression and when a child gets pulled under and scream they try to save them by pulling their arms. Obviously you have to manage this game and not allow children to get hurt. This is a favourite with older children and often they all end up being sharks!

Themed ideas

All children like different themes and characters so you can create a party based round their favourite things. Tinies have given some ideas below of a favourite theme (pirates) but all of these activities can be adapted into different themes. With just a little bit of imagination and decoration you can create any space into a children's wonderland...

Pirates

Thumb pirates (creative)

This takes a little organising but is lots of fun for children aged from 6+ and for those children who are not as keen on physical activity. It takes around 30 minutes to explain and play.

Prior to the party organise a bag for collecting items for each team and a ball of string for tying their boat together.

Create the scene by explaining that the children are pirates but last week when their boat was hit by lightning it sunk the boat and threw them onto a large rock in the ocean and as it did it shrunk them to the size of their thumb. They can see an island in the distance and want to get across the sea to celebrate (X)'s birthday. To be able to get across the sea each team of pirates must build a raft that can fit them all on to sail across to the desert island.



Organise the children into small teams and a parent to help with each team where necessary. Explain that the children need to go outside and collect natural objects to build their thumb pirate raft. If the weather is bad they can build it out of paper, card, plastic cups, etc.

Get the children to think about how the raft would sail and how they would power the raft. Remind the children that they are only the size of thumbs, so big sticks would be the size of trees to a thumb pirate.

Once they have collected the bits to build their raft they can build their raft, either inside or outside depending on the weather.

It might be fun to see which rafts actually float in a bowl of water providing you don't think this will create tears!

Once on the island the children can play a number of the following games:

Pieces of eight

This is a fun running game that allows the children to use up some energy and is normally good before the party tea to tire them out but you do need enough space to play so is better played in the garden.

Put the children into teams of 4/5 and put each team into different corner of the room/garden. This is their ship.

- Get a parent to help each team and number them from 1 though to 4/5
- Get the children and the parent to think of a team name.
For example: "Hook", "The Jolly Pirates", "The Pirates of Penzance"
- In the middle of the room/garden place a number of soft items. This can be balls and bean bags or if you don't have these soft toys and/or empty plastic bottles

The aim of the game is one child from each team to run in and collect 1 item from the middle and take it back to their team. As soon as they are back the next team member can run and collect an item. (Relay format.)

The first team to collect eight items must sit down and cheer very loudly to become the winning team. You can add to this by getting the children to keep running in and out until you say stop and then adding up the items each team has to find the winning team or let the children choose if they run to the middle and take an item or steal an item from another team's ship. Encourage as much cheering as possible amongst the children using their team names.



NB: Parent control is needed during this game as the children get very excited.

Cannon ball blast

This is another energetic game that needs to be played outside or in a room where ornaments cannot be broken!

- Set out enough hoops for half of the children attending the party at one end of the garden/room. The hoops need to be in lines and each line offset to the previous one. Put the children into two teams "the Pirates" and the "the Warriors". Place the pirates in a hoop each - their pirate ship
- Place the warriors at the other end of the garden/room behind a set line with several soft sponge balls or bean bags - the cannon balls! Choose a couple of children to be the cannon ball collectors

The aim of the game is for the warriors to stop the pirates invading their land. To stop the pirates the warriors must aim their cannon balls below the knee at the pirates in their ships. If they hit a pirate the pirate must stand on one leg. Once the pirate has been hit for a second time they must fall out of their ship and stand to the side cheering on the remaining pirates. The warriors must stay behind the line but the cannon ball collectors can go and retrieve balls and bring them back to their team.

The children swap places when the parent shouts "stop".

The winning team is the one with the most pirates in their ships at the end of the game.

Treasure hunt

This can be played at any point throughout the party but is often good at the end so children have to search out their party gift such as bubbles or a party bag.

- Put the children into small teams and a parent to escort them either around the house or the garden
- Tell the children that they have to find the secret treasure and that all members of the team must find their treasure before they return to the ship (a place set by the party parent)

Once all of the children are back to the ship, the birthday child can thank everyone for coming!

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