



PARTY PLANNING GUIDE

Pages & pages of helpful hints, tips, lists, schedules, games, recipes and other ideas to make your child's birthday "The Funnest Party Ever!"



The key to GREAT parties... Keep It Simple!

Birthday Parties are very important to children, especially around the ages of 4 - 9. You can make the occasion memorable and special with just a little bit of pre-planning. This booklet will show you how!

Click on the list item below to read that section.

Planning Checklist : This list will help you stay focused.

Shopping List : The most popular and useful items for parties.

Age Appropriate Parties : A year can make a big difference.

Party Themes: Very appealing to kids and simple to do.

Guest Invitations : A great way to involve the birthday child.

Decorating Ideas : Bright decor can really raise the level of fun.

Snack & Drinks : Popular food the kids can make themselves.

Games & Activities : You may already know plenty of games.

Party Favors/Goody Bags : Much easier than expected

Schedule of Events : Always have something happening.

Misc Hints & Tips : Plenty of ideas, very useful... read them all.



**Mister Greggy
GUARANTEES
you will have the
BEST worry-free
party EVER... and
your guests will
have a BLAST!**



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Common Mistakes Made by Party Planners

Over scheduling: Don't try to "cram the party down their throats" and don't try to do too many things at the party. Most birthday parties last 2-3 hours. You need to allow time for the guests to arrive, the kids to get settled down, Mister Greggy's performance, the gifts to be opened, cake to be cut and eaten, pictures to be taken games to be played and parents to pick up their kids. Don't try to do all the games listed in the book. Simply pick a couple that look interesting to you and that suit your needs best.

Scheduling Conflicts: Other birthday parties, sporting events, vacations, etc. Unfortunately these things can't be helped, but you need to be aware of these types of things when scheduling your party, especially those that may involve the kids you child most wants to attend.

Lack of a back up plan: What if it rains? Do YOU have a back up plan? If you have to move the party inside do you have room for it? One suggestion might be, if it rains and you were planning on having an outside party, be sure to have appropriate indoor games or movies for the kids to watch. When you've hired Mister Greggy, rain won't be a problem at all.

Doing everything last minute: Start early, use the checklist in this book, and you'll do just fine.

A few generations ago, children were treated to cake after dinner and a present from their immediate family. In the '50s and '60s, "Pin the Tail on the Donkey" and "Musical Chairs" were the highlights of parties celebrated at home with a hand full of friends. Now, it's not uncommon for parents to orchestrate elaborate celebrations for their young children, often with expenses and stress levels spiraling out of control.

Parents who stress-out trying to create the perfect birthday event often end up creating tension, unrealistic expectations and unnecessary expense. Here are some tips for focusing on the real meaning of birthdays - the celebration of life:

Hold off on parties with peers until the child is at least 3 and comfortable with group situations. Here again, small, yet special parties are best. The adage of the child's-age-plus-one works well for a guest list. Birthday hats, a cake and a simple chorus of "Happy Birthday" are all that's needed to complete the celebration. You may want to include a few simple games like "Simon Says," a non-competitive treasure hunt or an easy craft.



Planning Checklist

Start early. It's much easier to find 15-30 minutes every evening for a few weeks than to get everything ready the night before.

Date of Party: _____

3 - 4 Weeks Before The Party

- Contact **Mister Gregg** to book a date & time
- Make a guest list
- Make a tentative schedule of party activities
- Decide which decorations and favors to make and which to buy
- List all supplies needed
- Plan the party menu
- Choose a location (home, party room, restaurant...)



2 - 3 Weeks Before

- Make/buy invitations, then deliver
- Buy party supplies
- Make or buy party decorations and favors
- Order cake from bakery if you're not making your own
- Arrange for extra help

1 Week Before

- Do any heavy cleaning.
- Confirm any orders placed for cake and/or party supplies
- Bake cake and freeze it, if making your own cake
- Make other foods that can be prepared ahead of time and store in the freezer
- Write out a final schedule of activities for the party

2 - 3 Days Before

- Buy remaining food for the party. Also remember birthday candles
- Check batteries for cameras, flash units and/or camcorders (often forgotten)!
- Get an exact guest count. Call those who haven't responded
- Call to confirm any services or entertainment

1 Day Before

- Finish decorating cake or pick up from bakery
- Child-proof party area
- Decorate any indoor areas of party
- Prepare all "Do-Ahead" food

The Day Of The Party

- Prepare the rest of the food
- Decorate outside party area
- Mark the outside of the house or the party area with balloons or a sign

Week After The Party

- Send out thank you notes to all the helpers and those who gave gifts



Shopping List

This list is compiled from ideas in this book, especially the groceries section.
You probably won't need to buy everything on this list.

General Supplies

- Envelopes
- Postage Stamps
- Candles/Matches/Lighter
- Plates
- Forks/knives/Spoons
- Napkins
- Cups
- Tablecloth
- Placemats
- Batteries
- Film/Video Tape/Memory Cards
- Trash bags

Craft Items

- Glue
- Tape
- Crayons/Markers
- Construction paper
- Glitter
- Stapler/Staples
- Ribbons
- Paint
- Paint Brushes
- Feathers
- Stickers
- Scissors
- Long Roll of Shelf Paper

Cake Decorating Activity

- Cupcakes
- Icing
- Sprinkles
- Cake Decorations
- Candles
- Toothpicks
- Candy
- Plastic Tablecloths

Decorations

- Balloons
- Crêpe paper streamers
- Themed cut-outs
- Cupcakes

Favors

- Containers/Bags
- Name Tags
- Party Favor Items
- Box

Groceries

- Vanilla wafer cookies
- Chocolate frosting
- Thin mint type cookies
- Red & yellow icing
- Flake coconut
- Green food coloring | Box plain
- Cereal (such as Crispix)
- 1 stick butter
- 12 ounces peanut butter
- 12 ounce chocolate chips
- 1 pound bag of powdered sugar
- 1 package Oreos
- 12 ounces Cool Whip
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 stick margarine/butter, softened
- 2 cups milk (for pudding)
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 3 ounce package vanilla pudding
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Graham crackers
- Marshmallows
- Chocolate bars
- English muffins or plain bagels
- Pizza Sauce
- Pizza Toppings



Age Appropriate Parties

Prepare the child for what to expect. Knowing the ritual of a party helps the child to be more patient knowing that presents come after the cake. Have a "Party Practice Day" with the birthday child and any siblings so they all know what to expect.

Age 1-2

Keep the party short with individual cupcakes for each child and choruses of a few well-loved songs. Let's face it, for children at this stage, the party is more for the parents than the children.

However, many cultures love to make the 1st birthday a huge event with many guests of all ages. In this case, treat it as a party for older kids, and realize the birthday child will participate in very few of the activities.

Time Vault Party... A great idea that lasts generations!

For your child's first birthday party, invite all the relatives. Print several sheets of paper with about 10-20 questions, such as 'What would you say is the meaning of life?', 'What is the birthday child doing right now at his first birthday', etc. Some serious and some just for fun. Have the adults write their answers on the sheets, sign & date them, then seal them in an envelope without reading them aloud.

The envelope is only to be opened on your child's 16th birthday or some other significant age. Some of the older adults will be deceased, so what they had to say will be a real treasure to your child, and perhaps 'introduce' him to someone he doesn't even remember. It will also show him how much he was loved from the very beginning.

Preschoolers love easy games, grab bags and moving to music. Themes & costumes are popular.

Age 3

A couple of hours is plenty for 3-year-olds. They are a little more used to social situations and are more active. About five to eight children is a good number of guests, depending on whether or not you will have enough help at the party.

Age 4

The key with 4-year-olds is to keep the party moving. The number of guests can range from 8 to 12 kids, if you have good help.

5 - 7 year olds can handle more complex games & team efforts. They still enjoy themes of popular movies, books cartoons.

Age 5-6

Two hours is a good length of time. The children are usually easier to handle at this age and don't require an adult for each child. About 12 to 18 guests are good.

Age 7-10

Children this old are slightly more sophisticated. They may be asking for slumber parties with a few friends or specific activities such as sports, skating or bowling.

Mister Greggy has available his popular "Circus Skills Party" The children are taught magic tricks, balloon twisting, and/or juggling. Kids that age love to learn new skills they can show off to family & friends!



Party Themes

To come up with a fun theme, start by thinking about your child's favorite book, cartoon character, TV show, movie, animal or sport. You can then create the party around that particular idea. For example, *The Little Engine That Could* book might become a train party. *The Three Little Pigs* could evolve into a farm party. Cartoon characters like *Scooby Doo*, *Sponge Bob* and *Mickey Mouse* all make wonderful themes. If your child loves superheroes, then *Batman* or *Spiderman* are great options for creating a costumed, action-packed theme party.

Any profession like fireman, policeman, rock star, fashion model, or sports hero can be made into a party theme. Just use your imagination and your child's.

•**Zoo Party:** Scatter old stuffed animals around the house. On the invitation tell everyone to come dressed as their favorite zoo animal or in safari attire. Mister Gregory's puppet pal Rocky Raccoon will feel right at home.



•**Costume Parade:** Put the clothes crammed in the back of your closet to good use! Divide up boxes of clothes, hats, shoes, etc. and see who can come up with the most creative outfit. When finished, have a fashion parade to show off!

•**All Girls Night:** This is a great slumber party idea. Let the girls polish their fingernails and toenails, apply make-up and fix each other's hair. Mister Gregory's friend

Abbie Cadabra 

would be perfect for a face painting princess party complete with balloon crowns & sparklies!

•**Join the Circus:** One of Mister Gregory's favorite themes, this fits perfectly with his show. Have the guests dress like their favorite circus act. Serve popcorn & cotton candy, and have circus skills classes. Your guests could learn magic, juggling, clowning or balloon twisting!

•**Presto, It's Magic:** When Mister Gregory performs his goofy magic show, make the whole party revolve around the magic theme. Use magic tricks as the party gifts and don't forget the obvious rabbits, top hats and magic wands for decorations. Your guests could also learn how to do a magic trick or two with Mister Gregory's help!



•**Pizza Party:** Turn your kitchen into a pizza parlor. Let the kids make individual pizzas and that way each child can make theirs exactly how they like. A recipe and ideas for various toppings can be found at the end of this book.



Party Invitations

ALWAYS confirm that Mister Gregg is available for the day & time you need BEFORE sending out the invitations. He's a very popular children's entertainer, so he may already be booked. It's easier to coordinate schedules before the invitations are sent than afterward.

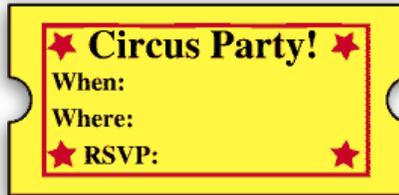
Be sure to make your phone call or email request to Mister Gregg well in advance of the date you want.

Saturdays and Sundays are busy days for him because those are the most popular days for parties. If you allow three weeks time, you stand a good chance of getting the day and hour you want. There will be times when he is available on shorter notice, but don't count on it. If he is unable to schedule your party, he will be glad to refer you to another high quality children's entertainer. Usually it's best to have him begin 30 minutes after the party has started to make sure all the guests have arrived.

Ask for a definite response to the invitation (RSVP). A written or emailed invitation is better than a phone call, because the guests have the day, the time, the place, etc. in writing.

To make fun invitations, do a play on words to go with your theme.

For a pirate party your invitations look like treasure maps. Crumple brown paper bags to look like parchment paper. Draw a map leading up to your house, which would be marked with an "X." "Ahoy Matey! Prepare to Set Sail on the Seven Seas. All Ye Scallywags Come and Join Me. Chart Yer Course for (address) on (date). Don't Be Late or Ya'll Walk the Plank!"



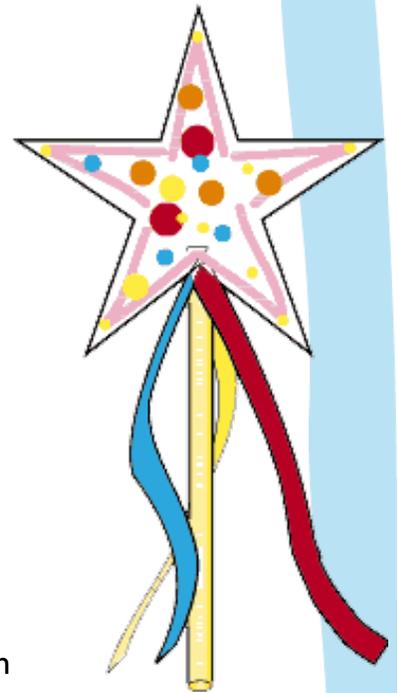
Mister Gregg's favorite invitations are for Circus and Magician Parties. Here is a fun circus invitation made to look like tickets to the big top.

For a magician party, all you need are some drinking straws and stars cut out of cardboard. Write the invitations on the back, and deliver to the guests. Make sure your guests bring the stars with them to the party. (Have a few extras for the ones who forget).

When they arrive, use their star to make a magic wand. With a stapler, fasten the star to the straw, then encourage the kids to decorate the star with markers, or glitter. Spread lots of old newspapers to keep the glitter out of your carpet, or do the decorating outside.

For a real magical surprise invitation, make a pop-up card. When folded, it looks like a top-hat, but when opened, a rabbit pops up over the top. Here is a website that teaches how to make pop-up cards:

Simple Pop-Ups You Can Make!
by Robert Sabuda



Decorating Ideas

Once you have your theme figured out, the ideas for decorations will start to flow. If you're going to use balloons and streamers, the theme will help dictate the appropriate colors. For example, a Batman theme party would lend itself to black and yellow, whereas a tea party might be lavender, pink, & mint green. A princess party calls for a royal affair sporting purple, silver and gold.

Turn the party room into your theme. For example, an undersea adventure for *Finding Nemo*. Cover the ceiling with a net and fill it with blue and white balloons to create the clouds. Cover the walls with blue butcher paper for the water. Attach various fish pictures from fishing line and hang from the ceiling.

Cardboard cut-outs of wands, stars, playing cards, etc hung around the room make a great magical decoration! Use an old deck, staple or glue a dozen or so cards on a ribbon and hang on the wall or from the ceiling. Mix them up so some of the cards are backwards and at weird angles.

Posters of famous magicians:

The history of magic posters is very interesting, and a child interested in magic or arts will find them intriguing. Check magic books in the local library & utilize your child's artistic talents to create their own posters. Search the internet for images of magic posters for ideas!

Mister Greggy doesn't need much space to set up (about the same amount as three adults standing next to each other), just make sure there is enough space for all the children to sit facing him on the floor. Keep in mind the light source also. Position the guests so their back is to the sun or indoor

lights, and Greg is facing the light. By doing this, your photos & videos will be much clearer when he brings up the birthday child to help, because by having the "stage" area face the light, you avoid problems with "back-lighting."

Remove all breakables, ornaments, and easily tipped over items. It will only take few minutes and your mind will be at ease during the party.

Materials: Have materials for games and activities setup nearby ready to distribute and use as necessary. Lay them out neatly so that anyone can help distribute them.

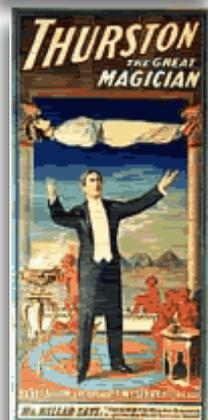
Furnishings: Think about the height of furniture for kids. For making crafts, kids under 5 can easily use folding tables placed directly on the floor, or raise them up by placing on milk crates. Kid size plastic chairs are inexpensive; buy or borrow some to make guests feel more comfortable.

Trash: Don't forget trash bins. At least two or three in the party area and a large one outside.

Presents: Decorate a box or set a card table near the entry door so guests can put gifts there as they arrive. Later, when it's time to open the gifts, place them in front of birthday child (great photo-op). As gifts are opened, put them back in the box, and the wrapping in the trash or recycling bin. Take notes so you know who to send thank you cards.

Spills: You can expect at least one spill. Have paper towels or cloths handy in several places, or kept in your pocket.

Pets: Make sure pets, especially dogs, are kept out of the party area. They'll get as excited as the kids.



Snacks & Drinks

Let creativity rule. Place a sign by each food item to identify its new theme name. For example, serve peanut butter & jellyfish sandwiches and Goldfish crackers for a *Finding Nemo* party theme. At a superhero party, you could serve mini super "hero sandwiches."

Have drinks in a cooler, that way you aren't pouring juice or soft drinks every thirty seconds. The kids can just serve themselves.

"Hamburger" Cookies

Vanilla wafer cookies
chocolate frosting
thin mint type cookies
red & yellow icing
flake coconut dyed with green food coloring.
Take 2 of the vanilla wafer cookies (the buns), place a dab of chocolate frosting on the flat side of one of the cookies, place the mint cookie (the burger) on top of that, place the green coconut (lettuce) on top of the mint cookie (another dab of chocolate frosting will help it stick), put a little red & yellow icing (catsup & mustard) and then put the other vanilla wafer (flat side down) on top of that. There you go... a mini hamburger cookie.

"Puppy Chow"

1 Box plain Cereal (such as Crispix)
1 stick butter
12 ounces peanut butter
12 ounce package chocolate chips
1 pound bag of powdered sugar
Melt butter, peanut butter and chocolate chips together in the microwave. Pour cereal in a large bowl. Pour melted mixture over and mix well. Dump 1 pound bag of powdered sugar in a brown grocery bag and pour cereal mixture over it. Shake well.

"Dirt"

1 package Oreos
12 ounces Cool Whip
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 stick margarine or butter, softened
2 cups milk (for pudding)
1 cup powdered sugar
3 package instant vanilla pudding
1 teaspoon vanilla

Finely crush the Oreos and place $\frac{1}{2}$ in the bottom of an 11x17 pan. Mix the Cool Whip, cream cheese, powdered sugar and margarine or butter. Prepare pudding as directed and mix with Cool Whip mixture. Sprinkle with remaining Oreos. Garnish with Gummy Worms! For added fun, use washed flower pots instead of a cake pan. You can even stick silk or plastic flowers in them as decoration until you're ready to serve it. The kids will think this is really cool!

Indoor S'mores

You will need graham crackers, marshmallows and chocolate bars. Place one marshmallow on $\frac{1}{2}$ of a graham cracker and put in the microwave for 10-20 seconds, remove and immediately place half a chocolate bar on top of the marshmallow and the other half of the graham cracker on top of that. Smoosh it down and there you go... indoor S'mores!

Individual Mini Pizzas

For the "crust" you can use english muffins or plain bagels. Spread any brand of pizza or marinara sauce on crust and let the kids put their own toppings on. Some suggestions are: hamburger, pepperoni, cheese, olives, mushrooms - whatever you like! Place assembled pizzas on a large cookie sheet and slide into a 350 degree oven. You only need to cook until the cheese is melted and bubbly.



Games & Activities

While your guests are arriving, games are a great way to start the party. After Mister Gregg's show, games are also fun while waiting for parents to arrive and pick up their children. These games don't have to involve a winner or loser.

Let the guests make name tags as they arrive. Set up a table near the entrance with tags, washable markers, and other craft items. Have an older child or adult nearby to help when needed.

Bonus tip... Always have more games planned than you think you need.

Mummy Wrap

* Toilet paper or crêpe paper streamers

Divide the kids into pairs, with one the Mummy and the others the Mummy Wrapper.

Give each wrapper a roll of toilet paper or crepe paper streamer.

On the word "Go!" have the wrappers race to see who can wrap up their mummy first.

The game is tricky because the faster they try to wrap, the more the tissue will tear, causing them to keep restarting!

A.B.C Birthday

Have all of the kids sit in a circle. The idea is for the kids to come up with words related to birthdays. For a more difficult and educational version you can have them name birthday words that begin with the last letter of the previous word.

The first child names one word that has to do with birthdays, like cake.

The second child names another word and you keep going around the circle.

Balloon Bounce

See who can keep a balloon in the air the longest using only their head.

Freeze Dance

Put a group of kids in a room, play some music, and have them dance.

Then turn the music off at random during the song, and they must freeze in their current position.

Birthday Hats

- * Markers, Paint, Paint Brushes
- * Glue
- * Feathers, Glitter
- * Construction Paper
- * Ribbon
- * Stamps, Stickers
- * Craft Supplies
- * Scissors

Set up a table with craft supplies. Provide enough materials for each child.

Gather everyone around the table and have them make a birthday hat.

Make sure everyone gets a prize for his/her birthday hat. Hold a hat parade!

Cake Building Contest

- * Cupcakes
- * Icing
- * Sprinkles
- * Cake Decorations
- * Candles
- * Toothpicks
- * Candy
- * Plastic Tablecloths

This activity will get a little messy, so lay down enough tablecloths to cover the table and floor, or set up outside.

Beforehand, make a lot of cupcakes in a variety of flavors, about 2 or 3-dozen depending on how many kids you have coming. Store bought icing will save time.

Gather the kids around the table and have them decorate their cupcakes.

These cupcakes can then be served in place of the traditional birthday cake. A special oversized cupcake could also be used along with the smaller ones.

BIG ART

- * Large roll of shelf paper
- * Lots of various color markers

Lay the paper on the ground, have the markers in boxes scattered around, and let the artists loose!



Goody Bags/Party Favors

All guests, and especially kids, love to go home with a party favor - personalized candy bars are very popular. Loot bags are always a hit. A little bit of candy and other assorted goodies put in something easy to carry. It's always fun to use something that fits your theme. If your theme is magic or circus (Mister Gregory's favorites), then top hats make great goody bags!

Containers

Plastic top hats are available at most party stores. They make great goody bags for the kids to bring home their favors. Or, use them for the chips, popcorn or pretzels. They're inexpensive and help give the party room a magical theme. Mister Gregory can teach your guests a simple hat juggling move that involves no tossing or throwing. The children will love impressing friends & family with their new-found skill!

Another Circus Themed container are cardboard popcorn boxes. You'd be surprised how much you can fit into one of these.

Other containers that you could use include...

- Beach Pail / Plastic Bucket
- Basket
- Tea Cup - for Tea parties
- Make up cosmetic bags
- Small Treasure chest
- Cellophane bags tied with ribbon
- Colorful paper sacks
- Paper bags tied with helium balloons
- Just about any small plastic container
- Plastic cups with lids



Items to include

Silly putty, sidewalk chalk, deck of cards, whoopie cushion, Yo-Yo's, play dough, super balls, cush balls, digital watch, hacky sacks, pencils, pens, small flashlights, sunglasses, blowouts, horns, hats, helium balloons, balloon animals, bookmarks are all great ideas for classic favors.

Party supply stores will amaze you with the variety, quantity and low prices for small toys and other items. There are also online resources, such as

OrientalTrading.com

Website

PartyCity.com

Website

DollarTree.com

Website

But wait, there's more!

- * Organize a treasure hunt on your property. Give your guests simple clues to get from one point to the other and hide gifts for them to find. Each person can keep the gift they find. You can also have a 'treasure chest' at the end, so in case someone is unlucky and doesn't find anything, they don't feel left out. The gifts can include diamond-shaped paperweights, custom birthday cookies, crystal candle holders, candies, colorful bandannas, chocolate coins, and so on.
- * One of the simplest things is to set up a large basket filled with wrapped gifts and have each guest reach in and grab a set number of items.
- * Place an open decorated box in the middle of a table. Put goody bags inside, with a ribbon tied to each bag. When the kids pull the ribbon, they get a goody bag prize!



Schedule of Events

Planning Ahead is the Key

- Make a realistic estimate of how much preparation time is involved and how much time you can devote to party preparation. Now double it. Things always take longer than you plan.
- Turn party preparations into a family project...not only will you have less work to do, but your children will feel they helped make the party a success.
- Include the birthday child in the party plans: let him or her choose the party theme, the color of streamers and the flavor of icing. Focus on what the party will include, not what you have chosen to omit.
- Start early. It is much easier to find 15-30 minutes every evening for a few weeks than to get everything ready the night before. This Party Planning Guide has a good list of what should be done in advance of the big day.
- Shop smart. Make a list of things you need and where to get them. The shopping list will come in very handy as a good place to start. There are items on the list that even the best party makers forget.
- Have fun!

Party Sequence

1. Pre-planning
2. Start of party
3. Games or toys while guests are arriving
4. Mister Gregggy's Goofy Magic Show!
5. Refreshments (Cake, Ice Cream, Blueberry Pizza)
6. A game and/or opening of the presents
7. Get the kids out of there.

This simple sequence works very well. Let's assume the party starts at 1:00pm. It usually takes about a half hour for all the guests to arrive, during which time games or toys will keep them occupied. Mister Gregggy starts his show at 1:30pm, and finishes at 2:30pm. From then until about 3:00pm are the refreshments (including cake), presents and perhaps more games. That makes a total of about 2 hours, which is plenty for a child's party. Children don't eat as much as adults, and they eat faster, especially when excited at a party. Don't make the mistake lots of parents do by ordering 10 large pizzas. For the average sized party (8-15 children), 2 to 4 pizzas will suffice (unless there are lots of adults around).

Always have the cake & presents last. In the child's mind, the cake is second only to the presents as the high point of the party! Also, would you want to deal with a room full of children who are now hyped up on massive doses of sugar? Fill them with sweets... then get them out of there!

Once the gifts are opened, the birthday child will want to play with them, not set them aside for later.

Remember to take notes when the presents are opened, to keep track of who gave what. When it comes time to write the thank you notes, this list will be invaluable!



Misc. Hints & Tips

Scheduling the Entertainer

Be sure to make your phone call or email request to Mister Greggy well in advance of the date you want. Saturdays and Sundays are busy days for him because they are the days almost everybody wants for their party. If you allow three weeks time, you stand a good chance of getting the day and hour you want. If you call and get to leave a message, please mention the date & time of the party, so Greg can check his calendar immediately. If he is unable to schedule your party, he will be glad to refer you to another high quality children's entertainer. Usually it's best to have Mister Greggy arrive 30 minutes after the party has started.

Invitations

Do not send out your invitations until you have confirmed a date with Mister Greggy. Sometimes he will be working another party within a short distance of your home, and could take care of you if you could change your hour. This is easier to do if the invitations have not yet been sent.

Make the invitation very specific as to what time the party begins and ENDS. The invitation can specify, "The party will be over, and your child will be ready to be picked up at 4:00pm" Then, if the parent does not come for them by 4:15pm, you can safely call to find out why. Most people will get the idea and be there.

Ask for a definite response to the invitation (RSVP) and check the list with your birthday child. A written invitation is better than a phone call, because the guests have the day, the time, the place, etc. before them to avoid errors.

Where to Hold the Party

Mister Greggy will adapt himself to any area selected. However, for your own sake, and that of the children, give it some thought. If you have a tile or linoleum floor play room, that is the obvious place to have the party. In summer, a lawn or patio is nice, provided it is not in the full glare of the sun. Neither the children nor the performer will do well with an hour's stay under the bright sun. Provide some sort of shading, if there are no trees.

If the party is in the living room, remove all breakables, ornaments, and easily tipped over items. It will only take a few minutes and your mind will be at ease during the party. Mister Greggy doesn't need much space to set up (about the same amount as three adults standing next to each other), just make sure there is enough space for all the children to sit facing him on the floor. Keep in mind the light source also. Position the guests so their back is to the sun or indoor lights, and Greg if facing the light. By doing this, your photos & videos will be much clearer when he brings up the birthday child to help, because by having the "stage" area face the light, you avoid problems with "back-lighting."

Don't Do It Alone

Invite at least one other parent, relative or local teenager to help in the party. Mister Greggy will take care of all the entertainment, but supervision of the games, gift opening and refreshments may call for a little help.



Age Appropriate Birthday Parties

1-2 year olds: Keep the party short with individual cupcakes for each child and choruses of a few well-loved songs. Let's face it, for children at this stage, the party is more for the parents than the children.

Preschoolers: Preschoolers love easy games, grab bags, simple treasure hunts and moving to music. Themes are very popular and the guests love to come in costume.

5-7 year olds: These children can handle slightly more complicated games, relay races and team efforts. They still enjoy themes based on popular movies, books and their imagination.

7-10 year olds: Elementary school-age children are slightly more sophisticated. They may be asking for slumber parties with two or three friends, more elaborate treasure hunts or parties that revolve around a specific activity like skating or baseball. As kids get older, they are often relieved to be able to celebrate their birthdays with a special event shared with just a few good friends. A popular party package that Mister Greggy offers for this age range is the "Circus Skills School" The children can learn how to do magic tricks, twist balloon, and/or juggle. Kids that age love to learn new skills that they can show off to family & friends! The balloon class is also very popular with younger children.

Organize the Party Area

Part of the secret of a well-organized party is a well-organized party area. Here are some suggestions to help you get and keep the party area organized.

Materials: Have materials for games and activities setup nearby ready to distribute and use as necessary. Lay them out in the order in which they will be used so that anyone can help distribute them.

Furnishings: Think about the height of furniture for kids. For making crafts, kids under 5 can easily use folding tables placed directly on the floor, or raise them up by placing on milk crates. Kid size plastic chairs are inexpensive; buy or borrow some to make guests feel more comfortable.

The Trash: Don't forget trash bins. At least two or three in the party area.

For Presents: Decorate a box or basket or set up a card table near the entry door. Have the guests put gifts there as they arrive. Later, when it's time to open the gifts, take them out of the box & place in front of birthday child (great photo-op). As the gifts are opened, put them back in the box, and the wrapping in the trash bin (or recycling bin)

Picture Time: Have your camera ready with plenty of film/video tape. Make sure batteries are charged and have an extra battery available for the camera/flash.

Free Photographers: Get about a half dozen of those inexpensive "cameras in a cardboard box" and leave them lying around the party area. Show the guests how to use them, and let them take pictures whenever they want. You'll get some interesting children's eye view photos!



For Spills: You can expect at least one spill. Have paper towels or cloths handy in several places (or kept in your pocket or draped over your belt) ready to do a quick pickup.

Put Fido Away: Make sure household pets are kept out of the party area out of harm's way and where you don't have to worry about bites, barks or scratches.

Child Proofing: Survey the area and make sure anything that is a hazard or that can become a hazard is removed. (Remember the bathroom too). Crawl on your hands and knees around the house to get a child's eye view of potential dangers.

Balloons: Make sure any broken or deflated balloons are picked up & thrown away so babies, toddlers or pets don't eat them. Make it a game; the child who picks up the most trash in 30 seconds wins a prize. Mister Greggy usually announces to the kids that broken balloons can be used to decorate their balloon animals. At that point the children are scrambling to pick up any they can find.

Quick Birthday Tips

Distribute invitations by mail, email or make phone calls. Do not pass invitations out at school unless every child in the class has been invited.

Keep the party short; the younger the child, the shorter the party.

Plan extra activities and have extra supplies on hand.

Remember that parties can be stressful for the birthday child and their behavior may reflect this. A "Party Practice Day" can help a lot!

Instant and Simple - Party Hits

Think about the interests and attention span of the guests when planning party activities. Are there a couple of super-active kids who need extra attention? A shy child who will need coaxing? A small, simple party makes it easier to accommodate different personalities.

One special activity or craft can give a party focus and provide the impact that will take the event from ordinary to awesome. Water, for example, adds sure-fire fun to summer outdoor birthdays. Include a few squirt guns, water balloons, sprinklers and you've got a party.

Arrange for your child's party to be held in their classroom immediately following school. The children stay for cake and ice cream, play "Hot Potato" with a beanbag, sing and play in the school playground until their parents came to pick them up an hour later. The kids thought it was great to have a party at the school, and the parents liked it because there were no transportation issues.

Party Alternatives

Go to a movie theater, a children's museum or a roller rink.

Let your child design a favorite meal.

Hang a banner outside your house announcing the birthday.

While your child is sleeping, sneak into the bedroom and decorate it with balloons and streamers. Put easy-to-clean confetti on the pillow. Tuck a tiny present inside the child's slippers.

Pull out the baby book and reminisce, or write a birthday letter of appreciation to your child.

Arrange for pizzas to be delivered to your child's classroom at lunchtime.



Birthday Sanity Savers

Here are more tips on keeping a birthday party simple and less stressful.

Let the guests make name tags as they arrive. This will really help keep track of who's who when it seems like there are thousands of them. It also is a great way for children to meet new friends. Set up a table near the entrance with tags, washable markers, and other craft items so the guests can make their own tags. Have an older child or adult nearby to help when needed.

Keep parties small. A rule of thumb is about one guest for every year being celebrated.

Keep parties short. One hour is plenty for toddlers. No party, except a sleep over, should exceed two and a half hours.

Check thrift stores and yard sales for gently used toys at terrific savings.

Have extra activities planned, but don't feel as though you need to do everything. Kids often begin to entertain themselves toward the end of a party.

Teach the birthday child simple hosting etiquette. Show appreciation for each gift and each guest. Have practice sessions during the days leading up to the party. Teach your child the importance of acknowledging each gift with a thank-you note.

Great Gifts Ideas that Don't Cost a Fortune

Craft supplies (paper, markers, pipe cleaners, clay) or a box of recycled art materials.

Office supply items (paper-clips, stapler, message pads, stick-on note paper).

A disposable camera and mini photo album for documenting the big day.

A roll of shelf paper and a set of markers to create a giant work of art.

A night at the movies: a packet of Jiffy-Pop, a deck of cards or checker set and a gift certificate to the local video store.

A box with a lock. Put a small item like a birthday card, pack of bubble gum or baseball cards inside.

A day at the beach -- a bucket and shovel stuffed with a beach towel, sunscreen, sunglasses and a certificate to the local ice cream parlor.

A bank with a roll of new pennies or nickels.

A hand-painted sleep shirt and matching socks. Buy a large men's T-shirt, a pair of white socks and some fabric paint for a do-it-yourself present.

Seeds and gardening tools.

A great book.

Some Unique Birthday Traditions & Activities for the Birthday Child.

It's your day; go ahead and share it. Here are some great ideas to help children spread the joy of their birthdays.

Keep a birthday journal to write in each year. How does it feel to be a year older? What are you looking forward to in the year ahead?

Go to a hospital to visit babies born on the same day you were. Bring a small gift to leave for the newborn.

Call a nursing home to see if any residents share your birthday. Send them a bouquet or small gift. Better yet, bring it yourself. Ask your new friend lots of questions about their childhood.

Send flowers to your mother as a thank-you on your birthday.

