



TIPS FOR A HAPPY BIRTHDAY PARTY

- A. Tie a bouquet of balloons on your mailbox, front porch or apartment door so it's easy for your guests to find the party (not to mention your entertainment!). Have the birthday child select the balloon colors.
- B. Involve the entire family in your child's party. Assign duties for each. Perhaps one parent can be in charge of taking pictures. Maybe one of the siblings can introduce the clown, when it's time for the entertainment. Another might hang up coats or prepare refreshments.
- C. Prepare your child for the party. You might play act or rehearse how you would like your child to answer the door, greet your guests and receive the presents. Discuss good manners and acceptable behavior for the party, and what areas are off limits (e.g. bedrooms). It's also important to give your other children a little extra love on the day of the party, remembering the limelight is on the birthday child.
- D. Protect your pets. I suggest that they be placed in a safe area away from the children. Some children like to play rough, and animals may bite if they feel threatened.
- E. Presents – You might want to consider having a large cardboard box handy to put presents in. The birthday child could decorate it with bright wrapping paper or simply color it. You might also purchase some stickers or labels, and put each invited child's name on two stickers. When the child arrives at the party, place one sticker on the present and the other on the card. That way, if the gift and the card get separated, you have two chances at being a little less creative with your thank you notes. Opening presents at the party is often a personal family tradition, but when asked, I suggest it be done after everyone has left. This allows you to record every gift and discuss how thoughtful each friend was in giving it. It further prevents lost or broken pieces, a not unlikely result with twenty children scattering your child's gifts all over your living room. By waiting until later, you can also make it a fun family time, with everyone sharing the moment.
- F. When I'm asked "What food should I serve, and when?", I usually suggest light snacks, such as small finger-size hot dogs or pizza squares. (Cutting the pizza in squares makes it easier for small children to handle.) Apple juice is also a parents' favorite. Most party foods have sugar, which tends to make children unruly and difficult to deal with. For this reason, the food should come at the end of the party. If you feed the children up front, the sugar kicks in and it's every adult for himself. So why not save that wonderful sugar high for later, when they go home! Another suggestion is that, instead of buying a great big birthday cake, you might purchase or make a small cake, just big enough for the family. Use this cake to light candles and sing 'Happy Birthday', then serve individual cupcakes, which can be handed out quickly and are less messy. And by saving the real cake for the family dinner hour, the whole family can share the birthday cake, a much appreciated plus, particularly if one of the parents must work at the time of the party and cannot attend.
- G. Let the birthday child select two friends to sit next to him/her when you serve the food. Have the birthday child sit down first, invite the two friends to join him, and then have all the other children find seats. Pre-assigned seating often results in tears for someone who wanted to sit with someone else. The only other suggestion here is that if it is a co-ed party, the birthday child might be asked to pick one male and one female friend to sit on each side.
- H. As an entertainer, my job is to make everyone at your party feel good. The more information I have, the better I can be of service to you. I like to get everyone involved. So it helps if I know whether your child is shy or has a special need, and who their best friend is. I would also appreciate it if you would take a moment when I arrive at the party to point out the who's-who in your family. In this age of stepparents, single parent families, and multiple sets of grandparents, it's important that I know who to include in family tricks and how to introduce them in my show.