8 Tips

FOR CREATING AN **AWESOME** BIRTHDAY PARTY

1 Plan around your baby's schedule

You'll want your baby/toddler to be in good humor for the party, so plan it for a time of day that works for them. After nap is usually a safe bet! Sticking to your child's normal eating/napping schedule the day of the party will help.

Often immunizations are scheduled around birth dates, so be mindful of pediatric appointments when scheduling the party. Give your baby plenty of time to recover from the shots, just in case they feel a little crummy for a day or so afterwards.

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2

Include both adult and child-friendly foods

Depending on your child's age and the age of other children attending, have snacks that they'll enjoy. Simple finger foods are great, usually the plainer the better for this age group! Be sure to offer healthy options along with the cake. (Oh yeah, this is not a good time to introduce a new food to your baby)

For the grownups, of course you'll serve what you know they'd enjoy. I'd recommend this not be a party where there's lots of alcohol served ~ that way you're assured that children are the focus of the party.

3

Document the occasion with lots of pictures, designate a photographer

Take plenty of pictures before the party begins so you capture the cake, decorations, birthday boy/girl in their special outfit and pictures of you all together. Once guests arrive you might forget!

Designate someone to take lots of pictures and videos throughout the party so you can relax and be present, knowing that you don't have to worry about taking pictures. Your baby will likely want your full attention plus you don't want to miss anything!

4

Keep it simple ~ gifts, activities, guest list, decorations

Simplicity is important for babies. They really don't need a lot. Keeping the party simple will be great for your baby and so much easier for you!

Suggestions for keeping it simple:

- Have a designated spot for gifts and let your child open them later, over time so they can enjoy each toy
- Have 2 cakes: a smash cake and an eating cake
- Request "experience" gifts instead of toys
- Invite people who love your child that you want to be there. The benefit of keeping it small is you won't feel 'obliged' to invite anyone.
- Create a budget and don't overspend. Which is really easy to do, so be mindful (and disciplined!).

5

Don't expect your baby/toddler to interact much with the guests

This is a brand new experience for your child - having a party where they are the total center of attention. They might get clingy, be aloof or maybe they'll relish the attention and charm everyone. You just never know what will happen, so be ready for anything.

Check out the Developmental Stages of Play included below and use it to guide your planning. Expecting young children to interact or play in a way that's beyond their developmental level is frustrating for all.

6

Keep it pretty short

You know what happens when ANYTHING lasts too long when it comes to your child ~ fatigue and fussiness set in! Plan to end your party before this happens. My recommendation is about 2 hours maximum. That's usually a decent window of time for a rested, not hungry little one to manage. ☺

You can always invite a few close friends and family members to linger after the party. You'll both enjoy the smaller conversation, plus your baby will get the special attention they deserve from aunties, uncles and grandparents.

7

Outsource if that would be helpful & make it easier for you

Making the day special for your child doesn't mean that you have to prep for days and do things you really don't know how or want to do. Get help ~ either from friends or hire it out.

Here's some ideas: rent a bounce house, petting zoo, pony rides, face painter, balloon artist, character guests like a ninja warrior or princess, photo arch, caterer. All of these services will make the day festive and less stressful for you.

8

Ann's DIY party tips!

Here's a few ideas I found helpful over the years in planning parties for our 3 kids...

- Starting around age 3 I let the birthday kid decorate their own cake (if they wanted to, which they always did!)
- Size of guests list is dependent on your age: 1-2 guests per year old
- Keep activities simple, open-ended, hands on. Always have a backup plan (bubbles and a fan are always a hit!)

The thing to remember is that it's all about making your child feel loved and celebrated! It's NOT about over-spending, overextending yourself or stressing out.

My first baby's first birthday

BIRTHDAY PARTY
The Do's and Don'ts

Plan the party according what you think is best for your child. You know what they like and don't like!	Have a big bash if you know your little one gets stressed in crowds or around lots of noise.
Plan activities that are right for your child's age. Unstructured play is great for children. Toys & space to play with parents nearby - that's what they need.	Have so many toys out at a time that it's cluttered and overstimulating, including gifts they open. Having too much out actually decreases interest.
Hire a sitter to watch the children if there will be lots of kids. It's good to have someone whose only job is to make sure every child is safe and accounted for.	Don't forget: it takes about a millisecond for a toddler to wander off, bite another kid, climb up a shelf, fall down the stairs, etc.

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UNDERSTAND THE Developmental Stages of Play

(This helps with planning!)

There are 6 stages of play during early childhood, all of which are important for development. Each stage involves exploring, problem solving, creativity, developing an awareness of others and budding social skills.

1

Unoccupied play (birth-3 months)

At this stage, your baby makes lots of movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet. etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves. They love to look at objects and people.

2

Solitary play (birth-2 years)

This is the stage when a child plays alone. They are not interested in other children quite yet, although they want you to be nearby as they play.

3

Spectator play (2 years)

At this stage, your toddler loves to watch other children play but will not play with them in an interactive way yet. They're watching and learning, storing all that information for later!

4

Parallel play (2+ years)

At this stage your toddler will play alongside and near others with little interaction. They're fully focused on their own play and become aware of what their friend is doing beside them.

5

Associative play (3-4 years)

In this stage, your child starts to play with other children and there's not much interaction between them. For example, they might be playing on the same piece of playground equipment but all doing different things like climbing, swinging, etc.

6

Cooperative play (4+ years)

When a child plays together cooperatively with others and has interest in both the activity and the other children involved.

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EVEN IF YOU WONDER IF YOU CAN REALLY DO THIS AT TIMES, YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING IT TAKES TO BE THE BEST PARENT FOR YOUR CHILD.

I'm here to help at Nurtured Noggins, come find me. ♥

Ann

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