



Playful Birthday Party Ideas & Tips for Young Children

Parents planning a birthday party for their children generally fall into one of two distinct categories: "Can't wait to do it!" versus "Can somebody else do it?"

But party planning for kids' birthday parties doesn't have to be stressful. Think of it as a chance for kids to get together and do what they do best: play ([/English/family-life/power-of-play/Pages/the-power-of-play-how-fun-and-games-help-children-thrive.aspx](#)). Here are some tips to keep in mind when planning parties for young children, and ideas for kid-favorite, festive activities.

Birthday party planning tips for young children

Guest count guidelines

The rule of thumb for babies and toddlers is your child's age, plus one. So, if your kiddo is turning 3, four attendees is a good number of kid guests. If they're turning 4, try to keep the guest list to five kids. Remember, big crowds can overwhelm young kids—not to mention the party-throwing parents.

How long the party should last

Keep the party under 90 minutes for toddlers; school-aged kids can last about 2-3 hours. And be mindful of naptime ([/English/healthy-living/sleep/Pages/healthy-sleep-habits-how-many-hours-does-your-child-need.aspx](#)) if your child is at that stage.

Structured but flexible

Plan for around 10-15 minutes for each game or activity to keep kids engaged, but if the kiddos are really enjoying something in particular, let 'em play!

3 kids' birthday party ideas

1. Art for all



Build the party around some standing or tabletop easels, give every kid a protective smock and plenty of art supplies and let the creative fun begin. This is a great to do outdoors when weather permits. Kids can paint individual masterpieces, or even work together on a mural!

Play station activities

- **Pass the picture:** One kid starts a drawing, then passes it to friends to see what they get at the end!
- **Sidewalk chalk "canvas":** This one's a no-brainer for open-ended creativity, especially if you've got the space.
- **Kids draw-off:** Split kids into two teams, give them cards with simple items to draw, and see how many each team can get.

2. Obstacle action

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Set up several stations that'll keep kids moving the whole party—cardboard box "tunnels" to crawl through, hopscotch or a beanbag toss will provide plenty of fun and action for kids. It's always a good idea to have some playground balls on hand.

Play station activities

- **Limbo line:** How low can kids go? They're closer to the ground, so it's hysterical to watch, and even better to participate.
- **Bubble zone:** The bubbles bubble never seems to burst for younger kids, so just make sure you've got enough soap solution on hand; you'd be surprised how fast it goes. (And gets spilled!)
- **Red light, green light:** The classic stop-and-go game builds will keep them guessing when the "light" will change.

3. Fun on the farm

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Let the kids fill a few cups with dirt and choose from a variety of vegetable seeds to plant (</English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Talking-with-Children-about-Climate-Change.aspx>) for their "crops." Let them sample "harvested" versions of what they're planting—carrots, green beans and cherry tomatoes, for example. You can have another area where they can create fun farm animal puppets and masks. All you need is paper plates, paper bags or felt, markers & crayons, bits & bobs from your craft closet, glue, safety scissors and some adult supervision.

Play station activities

- **Chicken dance:** Before it's time for food and cake, they'll build up an appetite flapping their little wings to this iconic wedding reception staple.
- **Duck duck goose:** Running in circles with a group of toddlers is a sure-fire way to tucker kids out before they head home.
- **Pin (or tape) the tail on the donkey:** Have the kids close their eyes, turn around and put donkey's tail back where it goes!

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