



Rabbat

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Rules for a Successful Children's Party

1. Include your child in the planning. Ask them who they wish to invite, what kind of refreshments, decorations, games or theme they want. If your child is young, give them two or three options to choose from for an easier decision.

2. Decide the best time of day for the party. For little ones early in the day may be better than a time which conflicts with afternoon nap time. Older children will enjoy afternoon or after school parties and pre-teens will enjoy evening or sleep over parties. There should be a beginning and ending time for the party. Be sure parents are aware when to pick up their children. Don't make the party too long, especially for younger children. A typical two hour party for 5-9 year olds might have the following schedule: 12:30pm - 1:00pm Guests arrive, put away coats and gifts, initial play time, perhaps a game or two; 1:00pm - 2:00pm Entertainment, Games, Activity; 2:00pm - 2:30pm cake, ice cream.

Whether or not the opening of gifts should be done during the party is up to you. Some people think it is part of the fun, others like to leave it until after the guests leave. There are several reasons you might want to leave the opening of gifts until after the party: 1) the extra time it takes; 2) you can better keep track of cards and tags for writing thank you notes later; 3) because children can sometimes be very frank and demonstrative in their reactions to gifts and waiting can avoid hurting the givers feelings and 4) the chance of a guest accidentally breaking a gift is eliminated.

3. Send invitations through the mail or hand deliver them. Don't send them home via school. This can manufacture hard feelings if you don't invite the whole class. And even if you do invite everyone, there is always some invitation which doesn't make it home or gets lost in the child's book bag.

4. Do your homework before hiring an entertainer - magician, clown, pony rides, etc. Ask the entertainer how long they have been entertaining children and specifically what they will provide. How long will the program last and what will it cost. Remember that although you may not need the most expensive act in town, the least expensive program is not always the best value. Hiring a professional may give you further assurances of quality. Be careful though, many entertainers claim to be professionals. A simple question like, "Are you a full time entertainer?" or "Is this your full time business?" can help separate the professionals from the "weekend wannabes". Ask for references. No legitimate performer will mind.

Make sure the entertainment is age appropriate. While clowns are great for younger children (4-8), pre-teens will most likely be bored. Magic acts are generally inappropriate for children below kindergarten age, they lack the life experience to really appreciate magic and will get more out of it later. Ask the entertainer what age groups they do most of their work for. For example, Magic can be great for a teen or pre-teen party, but must be presented in an age appropriate manner or the performance will be a dud.

5. Plan only one special event for the party. Do not have a clown, pony rides and a space walk for the same party. Too much activity, excitement and choices can be overwhelming, particularly for children.

6. **If you are playing games**, you'll probably give out prizes. However, if you are giving out prizes, find a way, like goody bags, a treasure dig, etc. to make sure everyone gets a "prize".
7. **Put special toys up and away from party guests.** (Along with any particular special items of your own.) Let your child pick which toys will be shared and played with.
8. **Place a special marker by your drive or on your home**, a sign, a bunch of balloons, cut out figure, etc. to help guests (and your entertainer) identify the party site.
9. **When the kids arrive set the ground rules** - where they are allowed to go, what they can play with and what activities and games are planned.
10. **Don't start any major special activity (entertainment, cake, games, etc.) until at least thirty (30) minutes into the party.** This gives all the guests time to put away coats and gifts, greet the birthday child, and allows time for late arrivals.
11. **Plan a calm-down time at the end of the party.** A video, a storytelling or quiet game are great ways to calm down a group of excited children.
12. **Don't forget the thank you notes.** Even little ones can "send" thank you notes - make a hand print on a piece of paper and then write "Thank you" on it. Instant pictures of each child at the party makes a great beginning for thank you notes.