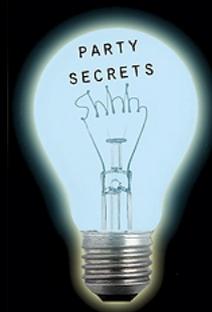


Children's Magic Party Secrets

This page of the site covers less frequently documented tips, tactics and honest answers to frequently asked magic party questions that I have accumulated through experience as a magician and mentalist for many varied (children's and adult) events over the years.

I am certain you will find some revelations of use - certainly those holding a magic party for the first time - and understand why it pays to have an experienced performer, rather than a 'children's entertainer' who makes silly noises at an event. Nothing against clowns - I just think they belong at the circus!

So what's covered here



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- ▶ Magic party, activity party or treat ?
 - ▶ Party food
 - ▶ Party decorations
 - ▶ Party invitations
 - ▶ Party date
 - ▶ Party bags and prizes
 - ▶ Party duration
 - ▶ Party planning
 - ▶ Party location
 - ▶ Other successful party secrets

Magic party, activity party or treat ?

If you are planning on inviting a group of children - take into account the average ages of those attending - not just the birthday child's age.

During your child's pre school years the party usually consists of family and friend's children - in which case either a family magic show (with age appropriate magic for all ages) - or an activity party of games just for the children works well.

Don't book a magic show just for children of less than age 3

Similarly as your children get older, ask them well in advance of their birthday what s/he would like to do - by all means give suggestions, set numbers of friends they can have - but the older they are the more varied a magic or mind reading show can be a success (and great surprise for all ages!).

Party date

Essentially (if your child is 5 or less), time, date and location is insignificant to most younger children - so why not pick a date that fits in with other considerations such as when family or special guests can make it, when it's cheapest to book a hall, or when the magician (Steve Drury!) is available.

Remember younger children have no concept of time or calendars - their birthday is when mummy or daddy says it is. So a party a month or so either side will still be acceptable to them. (This is harder to accept as parents than for your child - but is true!)

If your child is 6 or over - s/he will have an awareness of their birthday, so an event nearer is usually expected. From this age onwards also - (unless there are party secrets,) involve your children with your plans.

Younger children tend to remember only three things about a party :

- How much fun they had.
- How special they were made to feel
- What presents they received!

- ▶ See also [Magic Party Planner](#)

Party location

The most obvious options are whether to hold this at home or hire a hall - but don't overlook the variety of alternate spaces now available for event hire - pubs, restaurants, boats, nightclubs, church halls - so do check local magazines and the internet for ideas.

Home Vs hall / external venue, considerations :

- ▶ Home
 - No associated venue costs
 - You make the rules - unlike venue hire
 - You can't leave anything at home
 - Toilets are clean
 - Emergency change of clothes readily available
 - Easy to provide directions to.
- ▶ Venue
 - More room. (Too large can lack atmosphere)
 - Less worry about what the children do
 - Check cooking facilities are ample
 - Check tables and chairs are provided
 - Is there sufficient parking for you and guests
 - Check for any potential safety or security issues.



Party invitations

Ideally invites should be sent out 4/5 weeks before a party to ensure a reasonable response and allow for following up on late respondents. With most families the first thing in their social diary takes precedent - so best to get in there first!

For your children's pre-school ages invites are usually extended to family and close friends.

School reception age and year 1 tends to include mostly who s/he plays with, likes and talks about - if not all of the class!. If you do restrict numbers it is better not to ask the teacher to hand out the invites for you !

If you invite the whole class make sure you know how many you are inviting and that you can cope.

Also inviting the whole class may result in being invited to nearly each other child's party - all of which will need to transport to/from - and a present. Your weekend arrangements will change!

Remember it is your child's special celebration - invite who you want!. Don't bow to pressure from other parties. You never need to feel obliged to invite the 'one' in the class with the bad reputation.

Make it clear on your invitations whether you are inviting parents to stay.

- From age 6 and up most parents are happy to leave and collect later.

- If younger children are present I would advise insisting that their parents stay.

- Shy/nervous children. If mum/dad stays the child won't let go. If mum / dad goes - so does the problem.

Go the extra mile and add to the the reply part of your invites a section to find out about any food intolerance's or any latex / balloon allergies.

Party planning

What should you book first - date, hall, magic entertainer?.

The thing that you book first is the thing that is most important for you.

I would advise that if the magic entertainment is important and you are seeking to [book Steve Drury](#) do bear in mind that he performs for many varieties of show, demand is often high, so bookings are only made on a first confirm basis, availability cannot be promised on a reservation basis.

▶ See also [Magic Party Planner](#)

Party decorations

Honestly - decorations are often important to adults, but not to younger children. I have never heard any child comment on the decorations! Also I have never heard a child comment on the state of a hall! They are simply too excited about the party, the prospect of meeting their school friends out of the playground, and the pending presents!

Do remember to check with the venues rules on decorations

Balloons are what most children love. (Do be aware of any allergies). Tie them to the entrance door of the party, also in the trees if an outdoor party! Generally keep them out of reach - but hand out at the end of the party.

Two COMMON MISTAKES :

To leave balloons on the floor at party. They are a distraction, sooner or later they will burst and can be frightening for very young children. Also be aware that the pieces of a popped balloon are a choking hazard to small children, so should be tidied up promptly.

To tie helium balloons to the backs of chairs whilst the children are eating. Added to the distraction, table cloths can be pulled when children turn around to play with them - so food, drink everywhere and stained clothes ensues!



Party duration

Generally people settle for a two hour party, occasionally a three hour party. The longer the party, the harder work it will be to keep the children entertained.

I have met with many inexperienced parents who have arranged a party from 2:00 - 4:00 pm on a Saturday or Sunday. The planning however is poor. With food at 3:00 pm - this is too late for lunch and too early for tea. Always try to plan for the food break (if there is one) in the middle of the event - or when children normally would have a meal.

A tip for children up to 6 years old - hold a lunchtime party. Younger children get so excited about parties. The less they have to wait the better (for everyone!) plus they have the best part of an afternoon to open and play with their presents (Don't forget the Thank you card list as they open them)

After school parties, especially on a Friday, work well and tend to get a better invitation response than weekends when other arrangements may have already been made. Timing also seems to work well when they come straight from school and can change at the venue / your house.

You might time an after school party something like this (adjust to suit) :

- School finish time is 3:15 pm
- Allow say 20 min's to travel to the venue
- 10 min's to find the venue and change clothes
- Start party at 3:45 pm (magic show) / party tea at 4:45pm / Finish 5:45 pm
- Leaving ample time for children to get home, do any homework required before bath and bed at normal time

Party food

The options are, do you provide and prepare the food yourself, buy it in prepared, or hire a caterer?

Dietary needs. Ask if any of the party guests have any special dietary requirements e.g. allergies to nuts, dairy, gluten, soya .. to be advised when RSVP. It is important especially for children with allergies to feel included. (If they are, read labels of any food you serve very carefully - you'd be surprised what goes into some foods.)

▶ Caterers.

- The best option for busy parents who wish to abdicate all involvement - but the most expensive.
- Party caterers will visit your venue provide any food you have planned with them, including the cake- A good caterer will leave the kitchen spotless.
- Remember you will need to budget 'per head'.
- Ensure your caterer has public liability insurance. You don't want to be charged for any breakages or an accident.

▶ Fast food takeaway.

- Don't wait until the day to order.
- Treat all the children (where possible) with the same food.
- Make sure your supplier understands when you will be in to collect the food - and emphasise that timing is critical to the success of your party.
- Agree on the final bill and exchange the correct amount on collection.
- This is not the best solution for those with intolerances and exclusion at a party can be difficult on the individual.
- Although a price package may seem inviting I would advise against accepting entertainment provided by fast food establishments however. Their motivation is always to sell food - not entertain children. Such packages will often be poor entertainment by a member of staff.

▶ Catering yourself.

- How to served the food? Will the children queue, will adults assist as servers, or will you prepare boxes? - Allow extra cooking time when cooking for larger number of guests.
- The only thing that can go wrong is the amount of food prepared!
- Ensure sweet things are not on the table with savoury foods at the beginning.

▶ Drinks.

Cartons work best. Keeps spillage to a minimum and are a healthier option to fizzy drinks.

Party bags and prizes

Prizes - Novelty toys and small sweets tend to work best. Visit your local party or novelty shops to get an idea of budget. Ideal as party bag fillers also.

Second to the food, party bags are now expected by children at all parties!

Don't be tempted to overlook this. Keep party bags simple - a trip to a novelty shop with your child will soon reveal what catches their imagination. You may be surprised how small an item they select!



Other party success secrets

This section assumes that you will be providing some of the childrens party entertainment yourself

Restrict the number of children and keep the party to a 2 hour maximum - the longer the party the harder it is to retain the entertainment without a professional entertainer. Also rally good parent friends in to help.

▶ Party games.

Plan games well in advance of the event. See : childrens party games ideas

Provide games based around teamwork, dancing and sitting down activities - some involving skill, some involving pure fluke - but ensure you AVOID elimination games. As well as the potential to cause upset, children hate sitting around waiting for games to finish and they will become restless.

Planning is key with childrens games:

- Decide on what you are going to do and in what order - and stick to it.
- Decide how long each activity will be.
- Ensure you have all equipment, balls, hoops, mats etc in place and have test everything beforehand.

▶ See also [Magic Party Games](#)

As an aside - keep a lookout for younger children who may need the toilet - BUT NEVER ask a group of five years and above if they need to go - as they will all want to and there will be a queue outside the toilets that will need supervising in itself!

▶ Prizes for games.

Don't award prizes for each game - especially sweets, as the winners will want to eat them, plus the rest will start asking for one! The solution is for you (or a nominated child) to keep a competition tally

- either a physical list - but you will need to frequently refer to it to ensure it is being completed
- by pinning rosettes or badges on them (not stickers as they will fall off / get lost)
- by placing a counter (say on a windowsill) against each person who 'wins'

▶ Music.

I suggest two types - general music to play / dance to and slow, lighter background sounds for the food break. Also let your child choose the music if that is important to them.

▶ Control.

It is important for you to enjoy yourself - as negative body language WILL communicate to the rest of the guests. However It is equally important to keep control at all times, set boundaries from the outset and stick to them. Children of school age like to know where they stand - once rules are in place everyone will be able to enjoy themselves.

▶ Bouncy Castles.

Although a great attraction, bouncy castles have a limited time span in appeal. All of the children will want to get on for the first 15-20 minutes, but after that the attraction reduces.

Do consider:

- that if it rains on the day of the party you will still need to pay for the hire.
- the safety implication. A medium to large number of children on a bouncy castle runs the risk (inevitability?) of smaller ones getting hurt.

Never book a bouncy castle if you are booking the magician to provide entertainment for the whole party. If however the bouncy castle is to be used at a different time - say before the magician arrives or after they leave, make sure it is deflated during the magicians performance.

