



A BLUEPRINT FOR THROWING A FANTASTIC CHILDREN'S PARTY

TOP-NOTCH PARTY TIPS FROM CAPTAIN FANTASTIC

Hello!

Hi all, we're guessing that if you've chosen to download our blueprint to 'Planning the Perfect Children's Party', you're looking for a step-by-step guide on how you can plan, and host, a party that dreams are made of. If so, you've come to the right place!

We're Tommy Balaam and Ricky Fox, and since founding Captain Fantastic Children's Parties in 2010, we have organised and performed at over 2500 children's events nationwide, per year. As well as organising parties for well-known companies such as the BBC and Nickelodeon, we've also been hired by celebrities such as Hugh Grant, Ronnie O'Sullivan and the Al-Fayed's.

We've developed this useful step-by-step guide to put your event planning worries at ease and share our successful P.A.R.T.I.E.S. process with you. By reading this you will learn how to design and orchestrate a party that will create lifelong memories for loved ones.



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Our P.A.R.T.I.E.S. process shows you how to consider every element involved with planning a successful party; it guides you to becoming “the host with the most”. Our step-by-step guide will help you easily understand what’s required to make sure your event is fun, runs smoothly, and is the most talked-about party on everyone’s lips! Of course, if you need a helping hand with your party, feel free to get in touch with us at www.captain-fantastic.co.uk, but for now let’s jump straight in!

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PREPARATION

We all know that preparation is key. Take the time to plan ahead and avoid any last-minute changes or additions. Spending time at the start to get your ideas together can save you time, stress and money in the long run.

WHAT'S YOUR PARTY GOAL?

Apart from wanting laughing children, zero temper tantrums or glitches, envious parents and being able to enjoy the party yourself, what is your actual party goal?

Be realistic. Your child may want a party with unicorns and castles, or even their favourite pop star, but that's not always achievable. Listen to your child's ideas but guide them in choosing a party that you can manage.

Remember that children change their minds; it could be a super-hero party one week and a pirate party the next! Chat with them before you book anything, explaining that their choice now is the final decision.

TIMINGS

Before you jump to book the venue of your dreams, check the best time and date to host your party. Ensure it doesn't clash with local or national events, school events, holidays or other parties that could prevent guests from attending. The last thing you want is to change the party date, particularly if you've already booked a venue, paid for caterers or entertainers, and sent out the invites!

Consider the age group of the guests before deciding on the length and time of the party. Toddlers and pre-schoolers often have afternoon naps between 12pm and 2pm, so it may be better to host your party between 3pm

and 5pm. Generally, we recommend up to two hours for children under nine years old, and up to three hours for older children.

Remember, when booking a party, to ensure time for a short break in the middle; even if it's only for ten minutes. This break allows the kids to refresh, re-energise and, of course, have some much needed drink or food!

HOW MANY GUESTS?

Decide on how many children are to be invited – your child may be considering inviting the whole class, or even the whole school! Check that the number of invitees are suitable with the venue you're planning to book with, as some venues may restrict the numbers. If possible, allow some spare places for siblings of those invited.

WHAT'S THE AGE GROUP?

Consider the party theme and the entertainment; especially if a mix of ages and genders are on your guest list. After all, not all teenage boys will want to attend a princess-themed party! By taking the time to consider who's been invited, you can ensure that everyone has a cracking time! But what happens if you're stuck? Ask your chosen entertainer, venue or other parents what they feel might work - two minds are better than one!

Pro Party Tip!

Don't have everything going on at once as the children will run riot. The more focused you can make each activity, the smoother the party will run.

PREPARATION

WANTS AND NEEDS

It's important to separate the two. Some people feel that the venue is most important, whilst others prioritise entertainment. Whatever you choose, make sure you've covered the necessities first, before going all out on adding the bells and whistles.

SHARED BIRTHDAY PARTIES

When it comes to shared parties, ensure that everyone involved is kept up to date. The budget, guest list, food, venue, entertainment, party theme and even the birthday cakes are all important party planning items that everyone should be kept aware of, throughout planning! A shared messaging group, event page or shared spreadsheet is a great way for everyone to be able to keep up to date with what's going on.

ONE STEP AHEAD

It's important that you leave yourself enough time to plan all aspects of the party, and finalise the bookings at least two weeks before the date. These bookings may include: the venue, caterer, entertainer/musicians etc.

BUDGET

No matter the party, big or small, it helps to understand your budget.

Recent research at vouchercloud.com showed that entertainment was the most expensive aspect of throwing children's parties, but that doesn't mean that your party needs to cost an arm and a leg!

A bit of creativity can go a long way. Make your own DIY costumes, fairy wings or paper crowns! Not everything has to be bought and this can be a great activity for you and your child to do together!

At Captain Fantastic we've seen it all! We've had Santa fly in on a helicopter, ice rinks built in back gardens, and designed fully immersive experiences in the most luxurious venues across the country.

That being said, these types of party are only achievable when being smart with your available budget. From the grand-scale to the intimate it's important to keep your costs in mind, to make your dream party a reality. If you're not sure what you can accomplish, big or small, get in touch with us at info@captain-fantastic.co.uk for a helping hand!

Pro Party Tip!

Remember to book the venue with extra time before and after the party to allow for setting up and tidying away. Keep in mind that these things might take longer than you think!

AREA

Location, location, location! An important aspect of party planning, and one that often doesn't get enough consideration, is where the party is going to be held.

VENUE

If you're planning on hiring a venue, make sure you check that you have everything that you're going to need. Are there are kitchen facilities for food to be prepared? Power sockets for DJs or generators for bouncy castles? Is the venue large enough for the number of invited guests? - Venues that are too large could mean children get lost or run amok! Make sure there are sufficient cloakroom and baby changing facilities, if needed, as well as facilities for your entertainers and musicians. Does the venue have tables and chairs for you to use or will you need to hire these? Check access for guests with restricted mobility, such as those using wheelchairs. Last, but not least, don't forget to consider the weather! If you're planning an outdoor party, check with the venue to make sure they have an indoor area, as a plan-B in the event of bad weather.

DÉCOR

Any children's party needs decorations, but they need to be well-thought through. Some venues may have a say in how much decoration is allowed, so check with the venue first before leaping in and booking anything extravagant.

Consider tables and chairs – how many and where they will be placed. Dress the room according to your budget and skills - some people thrive on being creative, whilst others like to keep it simple but both are absolutely fine.

Why not try to match the décor colours with any party themes? For example, you might opt for a red and black colour scheme if you are hosting a Spiderman themed party. There are many party suppliers who provide a wide range of party items, so it's good to shop around to find options that suit your needs best.

Remember, when it comes to balloons it's not always advisable to buy the cheapest option available. These weaker balloons may pop unexpectedly, resulting in scared children and a distraction from activities that you're in the midst of. With distractions in mind, try to avoid having balloons too close to any entertainment areas, as they will no doubt be a tempting distraction from activities for any child, or even some parents! As a side-note, ensure that your balloons are suitable for children who may have latex allergies and be wary of children who may have globophobia - a fear of balloons. In both of these instances, it's worthwhile checking with parents to ensure that you're in the all-clear!

Pro Party Tip!

Ask the venue to send you a floor plan in order to work out what elements of your party will go where within the space.

REFRESHMENTS

Food glorious food! It's not a party without some delicious treats to get everyone excited. But how does one rustle up such a feast? What about allergies, dietary requirements and the likes?

FOOD

Are you providing food for the party or are you hiring caterers? Will you have a buffet or sit down food? Is the food going to be hot or cold? If hot, does the venue have suitable kitchen facilities?

Try to ensure the food is as healthy as possible; avoiding E-numbers and allowing for 'fussy' eaters. Don't forget to include vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, or options for other special dietary requirements. Check whether any of the children have food allergies, and ensure that you've catered for children who need their meals already plated. Ensure to keep those foods for children with special dietary requirements, or allergies, in separately sealed, named, Tupperware boxes so as to avoid cross-contamination with other foods.

Often, excited kids don't eat as much as you think they will, so don't plan for feeding 5,000! However, it's a good idea to make sure there is a selection of finger-foods for the parents to snack on – these will definitely be appreciated!

As a side-note, we highly recommend covering any food that's out on the tables before the break. Children will more often than not try to eat it before the allocated time, which can be a big distraction when the entertainer is trying to lead party games.

TIMINGS

Consider the timings for the food and drinks. Work around entertainers and/or musicians, but also think about when the children will become hungry. Don't forget to allow time for the blowing out candles and cutting the birthday cake.



Pro Party Tip!

If you're ordering food in, ensure to allow time for the food to arrive, as well as cool down, before serving.

REFRESHMENTS

DRINKS

For parties aimed at children under the age of 10, avoid providing fizzy drinks. Children are less tolerant of sugar-filled pops, so healthy alternatives are recommended. However, be wary of some fruit juices or smoothies, as these often contain just as much sugar as fizzy drinks!

With any jugs of squash, keep it fairly weak, and make sure there's always water available. Always make sure there is a good, plentiful supply of drinks, cups and straws at all times – kids and adults alike both get thirsty from the activities at energetic parties!

To avoid any spillages, choose small bottles of water with sport style caps, or cartons of non-concentrated fruit juice, which can be placed on the table ready for the children, and don't forget teas and coffees! Parents will greatly appreciate the offer of a fresh brew or hot cuppa!

Where possible, keep the environment in mind! Finding recyclable water bottles, paper straws, paper or recyclable plastic cups and paper plates can be a small but great way to keep things eco-friendly!

Pro Party Tip!

Hosting a child's birthday? We recommend blowing out the candles during the party. This way, you're sure to have enough time to cut the cake for those all important party bags!

TIMING

Making sure that you've got a good timing structure in place for your party is a must! It doesn't have to be regimented, but by putting in a little bit of extra leg-work when planning your party will save you heaps of potential stress or worry on the day.

TIMING BASICS

Timing is everything and it takes some planning to get things right. Knowing when the food is being served, the cake is being cut, the entertainment is taking place and at what time the guests are arriving is essential to throwing a successful party. However, it's also important to create a relaxed atmosphere - this should take priority over a regimented timetable. It's good to have a plan, but if things don't go to plan that's okay. Some guests will probably turn up late and activities might run over, but try to go with the flow and enjoy the party regardless

ENTERTAINMENT

The trick to any successful party is keeping the children busy and out of mischief! But don't be tempted to add too much to the list of activities as these distractions will make it more difficult for your entertainer to keep the children's focus. The kids are more likely to enjoy a party with a few focussed activities than one with too many choices.

PARTY STRUCTURE

Children need time to refresh and recharge their batteries. Know when your entertainer is going to arrive and how long their show will last. Make sure this fits around food being served and other activities going on at the party, as it's important that they don't clash.

FOOD

If you're providing food at the party, allocate time for the birthday tea and inform your entertainers or DJs of when this will be so they can work their show around it. Children can become hungry quite quickly, leading to restlessness and tantrums. This also means that if food is left out on the tables throughout the party, rather than given out during a food break, kids are likely to crowd around it. Consequently, the kids won't spend as much time enjoying the specific birthday activity. Make sure any previously prepared food is ready to pass to the relevant child when food is being served. If it's seated, place names are an option worth thinking about.



Pro Party Tip!

***When working with children, remain flexible!
If things run a little behind, remain calm and
move on to the next activity.***

TIMING

SPEECHES

Not all parties have them, but if your party does, make sure you've allocated a set amount of time to this; don't forget to tell the people giving the speeches how long they have to talk.

PARTY TIMETABLE

Your timetable should include: decorating the hall, preparing the food, arranging the entertainment (taking into account the arrival, set-up, start, break and finish), giving out refreshments/snacks and packing down at the end of the party.



Pro Party Tip!

If you're planning for the children to sit down and watch a show, make sure that they eat after, and not before. After eating, they're far less likely to sit still and much more susceptible to distractions.

INVITATIONS

Once the venue has been organised and confirmed, and any party themes and entertainment decided upon, it's time to think about the party invitation.

WHO TO INVITE

This really depends on the type of party you're hosting and the size of your venue. The larger the space, particularly if it is open, the more children can be invited and often the more fun can be had! If you're hosting the party at home it may be wise to limit the numbers for manageability. Some parties, such as swimming, bowling or ceramic painting parties require smaller numbers - we recommend a group size of five or six to keep things manageable. These smaller gatherings are ideal for children who aren't keen on large, noisy discos!

INVITATION DETAILS

It's important to provide as much information as possible on the invitation, including the following details; the party host (your child's name), the type of party (such as a disco or themed party), the party day and/or date, the party location address with the postcode (it's also advisable to add the nearest available parking), start and finish times stated clearly and RSVP details (including your name, mobile number and email address).

Additional information might include: whether siblings are allowed as additional guests and any extra information such as bringing a swimming costume and towel, or wearing light colours for a UV disco. It's also advisable to request dietary requirements and information regarding any allergies that you may need to be aware of.

HOW TO INVITE PEOPLE

There are plenty of templates available online to create an invitation on your computer and print them at home, for your child to take into school. A word of warning: these traditional hand-out invites, whilst lovely, can often get forgotten at the bottom of school bags!

Alternatives to the traditional printed handouts include; email invitations, creating and using a WhatsApp messaging group or creating a group on your social media platform of choice. These are all useful choices, as it is easy to remind parents to RSVP, or to give a quick nudge on checking for any potential allergies; however, be cautious when using social media to announce a child's party, or you could end up with guests of guests turning up! We recommend setting any posts or groups relating to the party to a private setting so that only those invited can gain access.

Pro Party Tip!

Allow for extra people at your party, just in case. Even if you haven't received an RSVP from a guest, they may still turn up! Allow enough food, cups, plates, straw and party bags for the amount you've invited, plus a few extra.

ENTERTAINMENT

Whatever the party, the entertainment is an important aspect. Make sure to choose the right entertainment for the theme of the party and the age group of the guests! If

AGE GROUP

Toddlers and pre-schoolers will be more than happy with magicians, clowns and soft play whereas children aged five to eight will want to play more games - some traditional, some modern. These older children will enjoy face painting, arts 'n' crafts and maybe something a little more stimulating. For children above the age of eight, they will probably be more interested in discos, bowling or a pool party.

CHOICE OF ENTERTAINMENT

Before deciding on the entertainment, consider who the party is for. Just because you think hiring a clown would be fun, your child may not agree with you. Also, remember that sometimes parents will also be attending the party, particularly for the younger age groups. Many entertainers will try to include parents in their show if this is the case, but try to accommodate for as many of your guests as possible.

THE ENTERTAINER

Plan ahead and shop around. Get quotes and ask questions to make sure you're getting the best prices and entertainment that best suits you and your party needs. Ask friends and other parents for their recommendations, and check out review sites such as Trustpilot and FreeIndex.

Take into consideration what it is that the entertainer can offer you. Do they specialise in one age group, or do they have trained entertainers to accommodate a broad range ages? Do they offer highly interactive and engaging entertainment, which will keep guests of all ages entertained? Or do they offer a more passive form of entertainment, in the form of a disco DJ?

As the entertainment is at the heart of keeping your party feeling fresh and alive, as well as captivating the children's attention for several hours in some cases, it's worthwhile checking that your entertainer will be exactly that, truly entertaining!

Pro Party Tip!

Children want more than a family member acting as the entertainment, so it's time to bring in the pros! If you need any help with your entertainment get in touch with us at info@captain-fantastic.co.uk.

SAFETY

An area that's often forgotten about, but is of the utmost importance, is safety. Make sure to adopt sensible safety features, whether you're hosting the party at home or at a venue!

Here at Captain Fantastic, we ensure that we have all of the bases covered for the safety of everyone involved. Unfortunately there are service providers out there that don't cover those same bases. So, here's our breakdown of some key things to check with any venue or service provider, before booking.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

A tricky subject. Legally, you don't need public liability insurance but these days, with the 'blame and claim' culture, it might well stand you in good stead. If you're hiring a venue, ask to see their PLI before you sign any paperwork. If you're hosting at home, check your household insurance to see if PLI is included and, if so, what it covers. You may also decide to insure your party, which will provide you with financial protection should any disasters occur before or during your party. Check with your entertainers that they have the correct insurance too, including PLI.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Without a risk assessment, should an accident occur at your party, you may have to use your own PLI. In this case, your insurers would probably ask for your initial risk assessment to check you did all you could, within reason, to avoid accident or injury.

DBS CHECKS

Previously known as CBS (Criminal Records Bureau) checks, but nowadays known as DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks, these are used to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, such as children. Companies make these checks on employees to find out whether they have a criminal record and may potentially place others at risk.

If you're hiring an entertainer, ask if they are DBS checked and make sure you see their DBS certificate before you confirm any booking. However, unless they opt for the automatic updates, DBS checks are rarely updated by entertainers themselves; it will usually be the companies they work for who will carry out regular updates.

PAT TESTING

According to the Government's Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Portable Appliance Testing applies to electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use. Legally, you don't have to have your electrical equipment PAT tested before you host a party at home. However, venues that are hired, and DJs/entertainers with electrical equipment, do. This is something worth checking before you book your party.

Pro Party Tip!

Search online for 'risk assessment template' to find and create your own. It's not as scary as it sounds!

PARTY CHECKLIST!



Preparation:

- What's my party goal?
- Timings
- Budget
- How many guests?
- Age group
- Wants and needs
- Shared birthday parties
- One step ahead – finalise bookings

Area:

- Venue
- Location
- Décor

Refreshments:

- Food
- Drinks
- Timings

Timings:

- Venue
- Age Group
- Entertainment
- Food
- Speeches
- Party Timetable

Invitations:

- Who to invite
- Invitation details
- How to invite guests

Entertainment:

- Age Group
- Choice of entertainment
- Budget

Safety:

- Public Liability Insurance (PLI)
- Risk assessments
- Disclosure & Barring Service checks
- PAT testing

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