

James the Magician's Hints and Tips for a Great Children's Party

Party planning is important to ensure success, so here are some suggestions to help you maximise the enjoyment the children get from your party, and help YOU, the organisers, to enjoy it too. They are based on my experience gained whilst organising and performing at children's parties.

HOW MANY?

Don't invite more children than you have room for; don't invite 40 children if you only have room for 20.

AGE RANGE

Try if possible to restrict the party to those children who are within a year or two of the birthday child's age. Seven year old Jimmy may play with his three year old sister at home, but neither he nor his friends will play with younger children at a party.

INVITATIONS

Send your party invitations out EARLY. If someone else in your child's class plans a party on the same day, it can cause a lot of problems and may result in YOU having to change your plans. So, get your invitations out first and avoid this possible problem. I can supply fun themed invitations if you wish. There is a small additional cost, which I would be happy to discuss with you.

HOW LONG SHOULD THE PARTY BE?

Far too many parties are spoilt by going on for too long. Two hours is ideal for a really successful party.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Tie some colourful balloons to your front gate (if you have one) or door (if you don't); it guides guests – and me! - to the party and sets the mood.

TELEPHONES – MOBILE OR OTHERWISE

If you are at home please don't switch on the answerphone and if you are in a hall, please listen out for your mobile. I might be held up in traffic or other emergency and I may need to contact you. I can't if your phone is switched off or diverted.

PETS

Pets should be placed in a safe area away from the children. Some children are a little rowdy when they arrive and animals can attack if they feel threatened. Dogs, especially should be removed from the party area.

THE PARTY ROOM

Make as much space as possible by removing any coffee tables or other furniture from the centre of the room and remove any breakables to a safe place.

BALLOONS, WHISTLES & SQUEAKERS

By all means have balloons at your party but don't blow them up and leave them on the floor. Put them up on the walls (out of reach) as decorations. Don't let the children play with them during the party as the endless squeaking and banging is very distracting and some children are frightened of them. It's the same with whistles, squeakers and blowers. Don't put them on the food table, for example. If you wish to give them out after the party is over as a going home present, that's fine.



PARTY BAGS

If you have booked my Complete Two-Hour Party then all the children will end up with bags of prizes bearing their name – so there is no need for you to go to the added expense of buying 'going home presents' as well. Otherwise, have party bags ready to give out just before your guests leave. Fill them with just a few cheap but interesting items. Share out the birthday cake during the second half of the party and put a piece in each bag, too.

WHO'S WHO?

It's a good idea to supply name badges or stickers for the children as they arrive. It helps you – and me – to call them by their first name. How about TWO stickers per child – one goes on the child, the other on his or her present?

GIFT MANAGEMENT

Arrange with the birthday child where the presents guests bring will be placed. I always recommend a 'present table' is set aside somewhere. Keep the opening of any gifts until after the party is over. This will save any problems of broken presents, or opening just some of the gifts and upsetting the other children whose presents weren't opened. It also gives you the opportunity to record every gift so that 'thank you' letters become easy.



ADULT SUPERVISION

There MUST be a responsible adult in the room with me and the children at all times. This helps with safety, discipline and to assist any child who may need the loo, etc. Of course, should they wish to, adults can take it in turns supervising the children during the party.

ROLES FOR THE REST OF THE FAMILY

Why not involve the entire family in your child's party? Assign duties for each. Perhaps someone will take pictures, another can help lay the table and another might hang up coats.

YOUNGER GUESTS

It is usually unnecessary for mum to stay because her child looks tearful on arrival. They usually settle down within a very short while of mum leaving. It is wise to have a note of the telephone numbers of your younger party guests, so you can contact parents if required, although this is rarely necessary.

TODDLERS

I am at your party to entertain the children, not to baby-sit. While babies and toddlers are welcome, I cannot be held responsible for the safety of any such children at the party. They must not be allowed to wander and should be kept safely on an adult's lap for the duration. No prizes will be given to children under 3 years old except by special arrangement as they often contain small parts.

FOOD

Food should be a simple affair without too many frills, choice or ceremony. Sandwiches, on the whole, are not popular, but 'finger foods' such as nuggets, sausages, pizza squares, crisps, salad items and biscuits are easy and well-liked. Sometimes fizzy drinks and small children don't mix – it might be worth considering juices instead. Basically, children aren't fussy, they just want something quick and simple so they can get back to enjoying the party as soon as they can.

SWEETS & DRINKS DURING THE SHOW

Please DO NOT allow any food, drink or sweets to be available during the games or magic show as they are a distraction and may be dangerous, with children choking on food while laughing. Children can't shout the magic word with a mouth full of sweets, and this is when drinks will be spilt.



PARENTS & ADULT FRIENDS

From experience, I've found that shows can often be spoiled by parents and other adults talking amongst themselves. I cannot compete with the noise of parents and friends talking in the background. The children will struggle to hear me, and I won't hear the children. If adults wish to socialise during the party, especially during the magic show, they should do so in another room or a separate area. Having said that, parents and other adults are very welcome to stay and watch the show providing that they sit at the back and behave themselves! ☺

PHOTOGRAPHY

Make sure you have a still camera with you because you'll get lots of great photos of the children in all kinds of funny situations. During the magic show, please take all photos from the audience point of view and not from behind me as it can cause a distraction.

THE BIRTHDAY CHILD

Normally the birthday child helps out for the first and last magic tricks; however, birthdays can be very stressful for the child. If he or she does not want to help out in the show, they shouldn't. Sometimes it is best to let the child chill out and enjoy the performance. Having said that, after seeing his or her friends helping out and having a lovely time in silly situations, the birthday child is usually ready to assist me at the end.

EARLY LEAVERS

If children leave a magic show before the end they, quite naturally, get very upset and it disturbs the other children too. So try to get any parents that arrive early to wait until the performance is over.

BALLOON MODELS

If you would like to make the event even more memorable for your guests, I can provide a balloon model for each child to take home. There is an additional cost per balloon, which I would be happy to discuss with you.

MY INFORMATION

As an entertainer, my job is to make everyone at your party feel good. The more information I have, the better I can be of service to you. For example, it helps to know if your child is shy or has special needs – and precisely what these needs might be. I'd like to know who their best friend is. I would also appreciate it if you would take a moment when I arrive to point out the important members of your family and friends. In this cosmopolitan and culturally mixed age of step-parents, single parent families and multiple sets of cousins and grandparents, it's important that I know who's who, their names, and how they are related to the birthday child.



I hope you enjoy the party as much as your child does! ☺

REMEMBER - YOU CAN'T BEAT LIVE ENTERTAINMENT !