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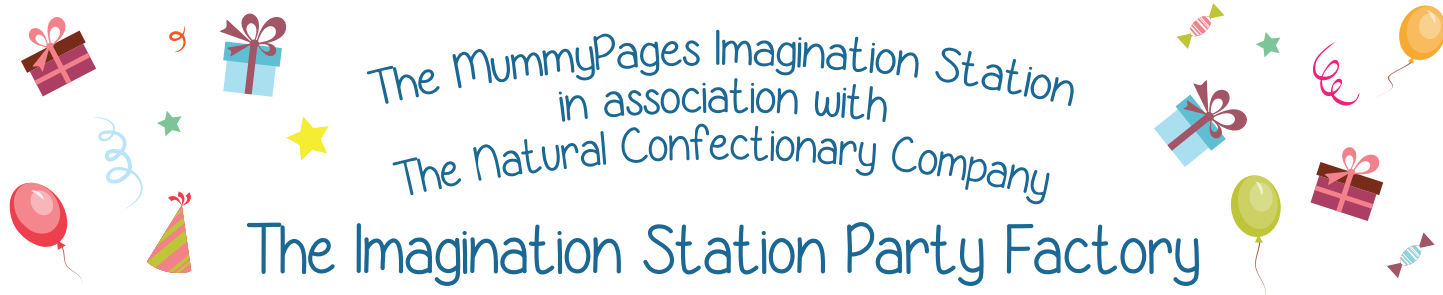
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THE FRIDGE



Fun and imaginative play ideas for you
and your little ones





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Planning a party for little ones doesn't need to be stressful for mum. The secret to a smooth and successful birthday bash is all in the planning. Whether you are time-rich or budget-poor, you can throw a memorable birthday party with our handy guide. We've identified the main components of a successful party, so just pick a cog from each section and slot them all together to get your party machine rolling.

The theme

Specific

Lots of children have specific shows or characters they love but just remember that decorations and costumes will be more difficult to find when the theme is very specific, so it's best suited to mums with a little extra time.

General

A theme like 'animals' or 'superheroes' is fun and general enough that it won't be too difficult to create.

No theme

Who says a party needs a theme? A few balloons and a Happy Birthday banner will make the occasion festive.

The invitations

Written

You can buy ready-made versions or involve your child in the planning process by getting them to make the invitations themselves. Kids love craft time and your little one will enjoy the excitement of handing them out.

Email

There are plenty of e-vite options you can send out. It does involve getting other parents' email addresses, but it's cost effective and your child can help you pick the design.





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Word of mouth

It's also perfectly fine to get your child to simply ask their friends to come. It's also a good idea for you to tell their parents too – little ones can be iffy when it comes to remembering details...

The menu

Hot food

If you're a whizz in the kitchen (or feel confident enough to heat up some pizzas), hot food is always enjoyed at parties. You can make a proper dinner or go for hot finger food. You should also match your food with the party theme if possible (eg: Sloppy Joes or beans for a cowboy party).

Cold food

You can make cupcakes and biscuits in advance, along with other tasty sweet and savoury treats that can be served cold like sausage rolls. Perfect if you are short on time on the day of the party.

Simple treats

Kids are happy just spending time with their friends and will be completely satisfied with bowls of jellies, crisps and even fruit wedges. You don't need to go overboard to give your little ones a good time.

Decorations

Elaborate

Depending on your theme, there are a number of party shops where you can buy impressive decorations from wall hangings to inflatable props.

DIY

We're big fans of crafty solutions, especially when we can involve the kids. Spend a Saturday afternoon making paper chains, party masks, bunting and themed props for your party. All you'll need is a good stock of craft supplies and some imagination.

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Simple

Balloons, a banner and some cute paper cups and plates can easily create a party atmosphere.

Entertainment

Big spender

If you want to take the pressure off the grown-ups, you can hire a clown, magician or a celebrity/character impersonator to entertain the kids. Bouncing castles and sumo suits have also become increasingly popular for family events.

Crafty

You can get the kids to make masks with paper plates, decorate cookies or even design t-shirts with fabric paints. They'll be entertained and have something to take home with them.

Sweet and simple

Kids will love fun and imaginative games like musical chairs, charades, blind man's bluff, musical statues or even relay races if the weather is nice.

The cake

Speciality cakes

There are a number of small businesses that can create astounding cakes for your little one's birthday. Pirate ships, Disney castles, minions – the possibilities are endless.

Homemade

If you're a talented baker, you'll probably be well equipped to make a fantastic cake for the party. If you're a little nervous in the kitchen, but still want to try, there are plenty of simple, no-bake options like cheesecake.

Shop bought

All supermarkets and grocery stores stock nice cakes that are perfect for a child's birthday. You can add your own touches if you want to dress it up – a ribbon or maybe your child's name spelled with jelly worms.

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Party favours

Splurge

This new trend has seen kids sent home with some amazing things, such as toys, art supplies and foodie treats, so the world is your oyster. Put your imagination to work!

Personal touch

Buy some colourful paper bags, fill with sweet treats like jellies and attach a balloon or ribbon. Your bags don't need to be solid gold – kids will be chuffed just to get a present.

Old school

Party favours are new on the kids party scene, so don't feel like you need to do this. Once you've fed and entertained your child's friends, they'll be more than happy with you. Remember how excited you were at parties when you were their age?

Party Food

Fairy Bread

This fairy bread is so easy to make and will be a great hit at parties.

Ingredients:

10 slices of white bread
200g Nutella
Hundreds and thousands sprinkles

Method:

- Spread each slice of bread generously with Nutella.
- Cut into triangles and press face down into the sprinkles



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Puffed Rice Doughnut Cake

Ingredients:

Oil spray
80g unsalted butter
300g marshmallows
225g puffed rice
350g icing sugar
1 - 2 tbsp boiling water
1 tbsp cocoa powder
Hundreds and thousands to decorate



Method:

- You will need a Big Top Donut silicone baking tin or similar mould
- Spray the inside of each of the moulds lightly with the oil spray.
- Melt together the butter and marshmallows. To use the hob, melt the butter in a large pan over a low heat. Add the marshmallows and stir until they have also fully melted. To use a microwave, melt the butter in a heatproof bowl for 5 – 10 seconds. Stir then repeat until melted. Add the marshmallows to the bowl and microwave again for about 1 – 2 minutes, until the marshmallows are soft and liquid.
- Add the puffed rice to the marshmallow mixture and fold through with a wooden spoon until everything is combined.
- Divide this mixture evenly between the two moulds. Gently press the mixture into the moulds until the surfaces are even, using a piece of greaseproof paper to avoid getting your hands stuck to it.
- Place one half of the mould on top of the other and press down gently. Leave to set in the mould for at least an hour or until the mixture hardens. You can speed up the process by putting it into the refrigerator.
- Remove the cake from the mould (it should come out easily) and prepare the icing. Beat the icing sugar, water and cocoa powder together with an electric hand beater until smooth. Spoon over the doughnut, allowing the icing to drip down the sides. Sprinkle with hundreds and thousands or decorate with sweets.

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Mini Pitta Pizzas

Ingredients:

2 round pitta
2 tbsp tomato purée
Grated cheese
Shredded ham

Method:

- Lightly sprinkle the pitta with water and place under the grill for 2mins, turning once.
- Remove from the grill.
- Spread the tomato purée onto (not into!) the pitta.
- Sprinkle over the cheese and shredded ham.
- Return to the grill until the cheese has melted and is bubbling and golden.



Pesto Cheese Pinwheels

Ingredients:

250g self-raising flour
500g Greek-style yoghurt
1 jar (190g) basil pesto
250g mozzarella cheese
Extra flour for kneading

Method:

- Preheat oven to 190°C, 170°C for fan assisted ovens. Line a baking tray with baking parchment and set aside.
- In a large bowl, combine the yoghurt and self-raising flour and mix until a ball forms.



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- Turn out onto a floured bench and knead for 5 minutes. Add extra flour if the dough is too sticky.
- Roll out into a large rectangle of even thickness using a rolling pin.
- Spread the pesto evenly over the entire dough surface.
- Sprinkle 2 cups of cheese all over the pesto.
- Roll into a log and slice into 2cm pieces and place on tray.
- Sprinkle with remaining cheese.
- Bake for 20-25 mins until golden and bubbling.

Chicken dippers with garlic sauce

Ingredients:

4 large chicken fillets, cut into chunky slices
2 tsp olive oil
400g cornflakes, crushed
2 tbsp flour
2 eggs
250g natural yoghurt
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 tbsp lemon juice

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 180°C or gas mark 4. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
- Beat the two eggs together in a bowl.
- Spoon the flour into another bowl and the cornflakes into a third.
- Dip the chicken into the flour before coating with the egg and finally rolling in the cornflakes.
- Put onto the baking tray before placing in the oven for 20 minutes flipping half way.
- While the chicken is cooking you can make the garlic sauce. Spoon the yoghurt into a small bowl and stir in the lemon juice and garlic. Mix well to ensure it is well combined.
- Remove the chicken from the oven and serve with the garlic sauce



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Ice cream cupcakes

Ingredients:

For the cupcakes:

125g unsalted butter

125g caster sugar

2 large eggs

125g self-raising flour

1tbsp crème fraîche

1tbsp whole milk

2tsp vanilla extract

For the buttercream icing:

150g unsalted butter, softened

250g icing sugar

A few drops vanilla extract

To decorate:

12 ice-cream cones

Wafer daisies, glimmer hundreds & thousands



Method:

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan oven/350°F/gas 4. For the cupcakes, cream the butter and sugar together in a large bowl using a hand mixer until light and fluffy.
- Beat the eggs together, then gradually add the eggs to the butter and sugar mixture, beating well after each addition. Sift the flour and fold it in, beating until well mixed, then beat in the crème fraîche, milk and vanilla.
- Divide the mixture between a 12-hole cake tin lined with plain paper cases, then place in the oven and cook for 20 to 25 mins, until risen and lightly golden. Remove from the oven and leave to cool slightly, then remove from cake tin and leave to cool completely on a wire rack.
- For the icing, put the butter in a mixing bowl and beat until soft. Gradually sieve in the icing sugar, beating well. Add a few drops of vanilla essence. Mix together and spoon onto cakes as required.
- Peel the paper cases off the cakes and slot into the ice-cream cones. Pipe or spread the icing on top and add decorations.

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Smore sandwich

Ingredients:

24 wheat crackers or plain biscuits

48 medium sized marshmallows

Plain bar of chocolate, enough for 12 s'more sandwich

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 170°C or gas mark 3. Line a baking tray with baking parchment.
- Lay 12 of the crackers down on the baking tray. Place 2 marshmallows on top.
- Place into the oven for about 10 minutes or until the marshmallows are melted.
- Once melted remove from oven and leave to cool for about 5 minutes.
- Place one piece of the chocolate on the marshmallow and top with a cracker or biscuit.
- Slightly press together but be careful not to break the cracker.



DIY Decorations:

How to make DIY fabric bunting

What you'll need:

Scraps of material

Length of ribbon

Ruler

Sewing needle

Thread

Scissors



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Instructions:

- Cut your scraps of material into triangles of equal size.
- Starting at one end, sew each triangle to the ribbon, using a ruler ensure there's an equal distance between each one. Alternatively you can place them directly beside each other.
- Hang your bunting in your child's room or use to decorate a party

Flower fairy lights

1 string of fairy lights

Egg cartons

Paints

Scissors

Glitter (optional)

Instructions:

- Cut out the individual cups from each egg carton.
- Paint each cup whichever colour (or colours) you'd like and add some glitter if your little ones want them to sparkle.
- Once they've dried, cut small holes into the centre of each cup and thread a light through each one. You can attach an egg cup to every light or leave some lights free in between the 'flowers'.
- Hang them up, switch them on and remember never to leave fairy lights unattended.



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The cheats party balloon animals

What you need

Balloons
Coloured card
Pencil
Scissors
PVA glue

Instructions

- Blow up the appropriate balloon to match your animal's colour (or not - feel free to get creative with the colours!).
- Draw your chosen animal's identifying features, such as a nose or tail, onto the coloured card.
- Cut out the shapes using your scissors and glue to the balloon.
- Hang at your party to decorate or hand them out as party favours.



Party Themes:

Party Theme Ideas for your child's birthday

Choosing a theme for your little one's birthday party can make organising the event a lot easier for you and makes it even more special for your child.

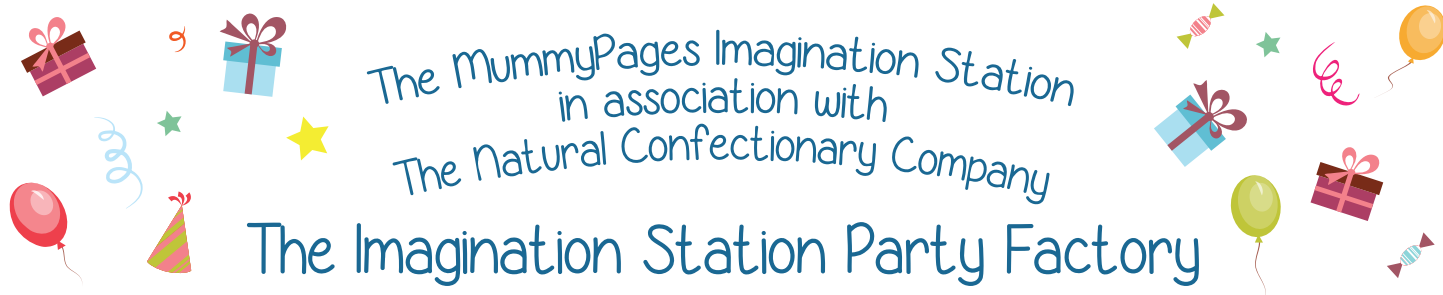
Zoo:

- Kids can come dressed as their favourite animals.
- Decorate the room with stuffed animals and animal-themed cups and napkins.
- Hang green crepe paper streamers to mimic



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jungle vines and make some basic balloon animals.

- Make homemade biscuits using animal-shaped cookie cutters.

Circus:

- Costumes can include clowns, acrobats, ring masters, lion tamers, strongmen and even bears.
- Use alternating lengths of red and white crepe paper along the ceiling and walls to create the effect of a circus tent.
- Serve popcorn, hot dogs and ice cream – typical circus food.

Pirates:

- Decorations and costumes for pirate parties are really easy to get so this is the perfect theme if you're stuck for time.
- Cover shoeboxes in brown paper to create DIY treasure chests, fill with gold paper and costume jewellery and place them around the room. Cover the table with a blue cloth and decorate with seashells. Oh and don't forget to hang your pirate flag on the wall!
- Chicken (gold) nuggets and shell pasta are a must. You can also make cupcakes with blue and black icing.

Disney:

- Children can come dressed as their favourite Disney character.
- Disney cups, plates and napkins are easy to find so you can use these to decorate. You can also hang Disney movie posters – and you can't go wrong with balloons.
- Play Disney movies in the background and the songs will be your party's soundtrack.
- For food, have a Mad Hatter Tea Party with cakes and tea or eat jelly insects like they do in The Lion King.

Superheroes:

- Get your little one's friends to come dressed as their favourite superhero.
- When decorating, base the colour scheme on your child's chosen hero. For example, if they love Superman, decorate with red and blue streamers.
- Use comic book pages as a cover for the food table and hang capes from the back of each chair.

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Cowboys and Indians:

- Make a Wanted poster for each child and hang these around the room. You can give them out as party favours at the end.
- Decorate the room in stuffed horses, toy guns and toy trains and cover tables in gingham tablecloths.
- Play country music and serve hamburgers, baked beans and (very mild) chilli. Don't forget the ice cream – we're certain that cowboys loved ice cream.

Lego:

- Lego has made a big comeback since the movie was released, so kids will love dressing like their favourite characters.
- Decorate the room in the typically bold Lego colours (red, green, blue, etc).
- Draw Lego faces on sheets of yellow paper and hang these around the room.
- All the food should be rectangular – you can even make Lego pizza by cutting it into rectangles and using pepperoni slices to create the studs.

Games:

Mad Scientist

A lot of kids love to be messy and this game will give them an excuse.

- Fill some jars with mixes of water and various food colours.
- Create slime by combining two-parts corn flour with one-part water. Add a few drops of food colouring.
- Let your scientists create something diabolical.



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Animal Masks

What You'll Need:

Cereal boxes
Markers

String/lollypop sticks
Glue/Sellotape



The Game:

- Draw animal faces onto the back of a cereal box.
- Carefully cut out the design, taking extra care with the eye holes.
- Puncture a hole in either side of the mask and secure around your child's head with string.
- If you don't want to use string, you can glue or tape a lollypop stick to the bottom of the plate so the kids can hold the mask up to their face.
- Go out into the garden and pretend to be jungle or farm animals.

Pin the tail on the donkey

What you need

Large drawing of a donkey
Coloured paper
Scarf

Scissors
Sellotape



Instructions

1. Draw/print a donkey onto a large sheet of paper and hang it on the wall.
2. Draw a donkey's tail on a sheet of coloured paper and cut it out. Attach some sellotape to the end of the tail - this will 'pin' the tail to the donkey.
3. Blindfold the first child, spin them once and then get them to pin the tail. The other kids can shout 'hot' and 'cold' to indicate how close they are.

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