

# *Playtime and Party Adult Party Planning Guide*

*Here's how to plan an adult party that runs smoothly, thrills your guests and amazes even you as host! This ultimate party planning guide goes beyond the what-to-do-when step-by-step reminder & helps you add wow to create a party they'll never forget.*

## 6 Weeks Before

Six weeks before you'd like to hold your party, make the foundational decisions that will help you make choices later.

### **Decide on the guest list.**

Decide on your guest list and contact your most important guests to see what dates they're available for a party. (You or the guest of honor don't want to be disappointed if best friends aren't able to come to the party.)

It's the interaction between guests that makes or breaks a party: take another look at your guest list. Do these people get along? Is it going to be a blast – or are they going to be reluctant to participate because they don't know each other or – even worse – don't mesh as a group?

Is there someone on the guest list that just doesn't like another guest? If you invite both people, will there be a Team A versus Team B situation at the party? Or a battle royale?

Were you or the guest of honor invited to a party and need to reciprocate an invite?

Need help making your guest list? See [How to Create the Perfect Party Guest List](#) with a FREE guest list printable for your party planning binder.

## **Set Your budget.**

Life is short; we want every party to be the ultimate party but sometimes that means more creativity than cash. Be realistic. Set a budget that you know you can afford without the crying-cringing credit card invoice the month after your soirée.

Our finances fluctuate from year to year. If you're short on cash right now, that's okay. Work around it with freebies and clearance sales, by hosting the party in your own home, and maybe inviting fewer people this year.

Being realistic about where you want to spend your budget takes the pressure off. What is more important to you and your guests: the food, the entertainment or the ambiance?

What is it about parties that is the most fun, the most memorable for you or the guest of honor:

- the venue
- the decorations
- the food
- the entertainment
- the interaction with other guests

This is where you devote the most of your budget.

Is the food – either quality or creative themed food – one of the most important parts of the party, or will you find ways to keep the menu simple? (An adult party celebrating the first show of the season just begs for theme-named munchies but not much else. Maybe a dessert bar is all you really need for a birthday party.)

Will you be serving a meal, appetizers, or snacks & nibbles? If you are trying to get more people into your apartment or rec room, a stand-up appetizer party makes sense. Make sure the guests know what you'll be serving so they'll know if they should eat before the party, or save room for your dinner.

(The time you set for the party will be a good indication – right after meal time for an only-munchies party – but its best to be clear upfront so you don't have grumpy whiny guests that are "hangry".)

There are lots of ways to save money on your party without anyone noticing.

- have an appetizer party instead of a sit-down meal
- have an ice cream bar or hot chocolate bar as party decorations and food
- ask everyone to bring their best goodie tray and share
- have a costume party – they're exciting for everyone but guests are responsible for the cost of the costume & you need less decorations

Need help setting a party budget? See [How to Set a Party Budget](#) with a FREE budget printable.

## **Decide on a party theme.**

Before you go ahead with your fantastic theme, think for one more moment. Is it going to be a blast or are the participants going to whine and complain about the party theme you've chosen? What excites you might not work so well when you bring a group together.

If you want to have a karkoke party and invite people who hate to sing, the party will end early. Or they'll all stand around talking so loudly you can't hear the one singing. It's happened. Many a time.

There are so many themes out there. The goal is to choose the perfect one for your group. (See [Ultimate List of Party Theme Ideas](#) for ideas.)

Can't decide? See [How to Decide on a Party Theme](#) with a list of questions to help you narrow down the choices.

## **Arrange the entertainment.**

You need to book your date now if you're going big:

- musical group to play for a dance
- hold your party at the movie theater, restaurant or playland
- want an outdoor theater in your backyard
- have a professional bartender for an adult party
- rent a karaoke machine

Research your choices and book it now!

Need help? See [How to Choose the Party Entertainment](#).

## **Plan the party schedule while arranging/planning the entertainment because they go hand-in-hand.**

You want this to be a party they talk about on social media, tell their friends and family about, and maybe even remember for years to come. That doesn't happen by accident. However, mishaps are usually remembered forever. . .

*Don't count on sterling conversation among guests to be your only activity.*

A great adult party will have planned activities. (Plus: activities look better in the photos and videos shared on social media that show how great your party was!)

Plan your activities by the party theme and interests of your guests. The rule of thumb is to plan more activities than you think you'll need in case things move along faster than you anticipate or something is rejected outright by the group. (Yes, it happens. I was at an adult Christmas party where one woman declared, "We don't do games." All the hostess' plans went out the window – as well as my opportunity to win some great prizes.)

An adult party plan needs a pre-party ice breaker. Guests who arrive first get the nibbles if the food is out! It's also a good idea to encourage mingling right from the first moment with a fun open-ended event.

- photo booth with party theme
- games that can add people at any time & don't have a set ending
- munchies & cocktails
- guest book with best wishes
- fill-in cards that go with the theme (such a gratitude card for thanksgiving or child rearing tips for a baby shower) that can be read later or given to the guest of honor

It's always a good idea to transition to eating by playing a slow-down thinking game.

With entertainment there's usually a **big event**, and a **good-bye memorable event** that bonds the guests so they go home feeling connected and happy.

Need help? See [How to Choose the Party Entertainment](#).

## **Arrange the party venue.**

**The party venue is dictated by how many guests you'll have at the party:**

- a video game or American Idol karaoke party is best with just a couple of close friends
- if you're planning the ultimate party you may not have enough space in your rec room or backyard to contain it all so you'll need to find another venue

**Your budget also dictates your choice of party venue.** Did you decide it was the most important thing for this party? How much can you spend. Research to see what venues you can afford.

Need ideas for a venue? See [Free & Low Cost Venue Ideas](#).

## **Start looking for party favors, prizes for games & party decorations.**

It is a good idea to purchase your party supplies as early as possible.

- If buying online, it gives you time to purchase, receive and even return if necessary.

- It allows extra time for you to change themes if you're not satisfied with what's available.
- It also lets you spend time researching your options for the best or cheapest.

Look for these decorations:

- outdoor decorations so guests know which house
- for the walk-way to build anticipation
- the front door as a welcome
- the entrance way
- the party table and chairs
- the food serving or buffet table
- the party room – usually a feature wall reflecting the theme

What is the focal point: the table or the buffet?

Will the cake be the centerpiece or will you require a table centerpiece?

Are you going to have streamers and balloons? Will you do it yourself or get them from the Dollar Store or a party store?

Will you have prizes for the games you've planned?

Will you make take-home bags for your guests? Yes, adults love these too!

Do you require a background for your buffet table?

Are you going to put a clever themed sign on the bathroom door so guests know where to go?

What kind of themed serving dishes do you require? Themed paper plates, mason jars for beverages, wooden spoons for ice cream, patterned paper straws, napkins, etc.

Put 2 trash cans out for guests with clever signs such as a Christmas sign "Which are you?" with a naughty can and a nice can. Fun way to entice them to help clean up!

Will you need name tags?

Are you going to use party printables as decorations for your party theme?

## 4 Weeks Before

### **Send invitations.**

By inviting guests reasonably early you allow time for their schedule to still be open and to shop for a gift. (Don't you hate rushing to the store for that last minute present?)

Don't rely on a phone call as your invitation. People forget. They need something to put on their fridge or in their calendar – which also helps to build excitement every time they see it! Send it in writing so they can refer back to it, whether its an official written invitation, by creating an event on social media or by email.

If you do text or use social media, ask for an RSVP response so you know for sure if they can come to the party.

Want to send AMAZING invitations that will give guests a taste of the awesome party you've planned? See [How to Create Party Invitations that Excite](#). Send an invitation that appeals to their senses – and can even be a little gift.

## **Plan the party food.**

Are you the hostess with the mostest who likes to cook and serve the food while the guests are there? Or is the ease in serving the food is a major factor for you so you can spend time with your guests?

Can the darling hubby or a dear friend oversee the BBQ? Do you have a volunteer who will help serve the food? Can you set up a beverage bar and buffet table so everyone can easily serve themselves?

Make a grocery list while you're planning the menu to keep things easy. Now would also be a good time to test any new recipes you want to try for the party so you can tweak or replace them if necessary.

Make your party unique by having a menu that matches your party theme. See our article on creating a signature drink for your party – kids or adults. It's easier than you think!

And the pièce de résistance . . . the cake. Are you going to make it yourself? Will you order it? How big does it have to be? What will make it go with your party theme?

## **Make a party supplies list.**

Now that your party is planned make an extensive list of everything you'll need:

- sports equipment or game requirements
  - arts & crafts supplies
  - music
  - tables & enough chairs
  - serving dishes
  - serving utensils
  - plates, cups, tableware
  - table cloth and/or napkins
  - decorations for the walk-way, the front door, the party table and chairs, the food table, and party room
  - balloons, centerpieces, flowers
  - take-home bags & loot
- Line up your assistants.

Take the pressure off by asking family members, friends or even guests who attend the party to be helpers.

At an adult party, having others help with the food, music or volunteer to be the first to dance or play a game can make things run smoother. Anyone who helps with the cleanup afterward is worth their weight in gold!

## **Order the birthday cake, balloons & floral arrangements.**

If you're getting a specialty cake at the bakery or grocery store, order it well in advance to avoid disappointment. Order your balloons, flowers or other party decorations if getting them locally.

## 2 Weeks Before

### **Follow up RSVPs**

Contact anyone you haven't heard from to confirm your guest list. Two weeks feels less stressful to agree to attend if they've forgotten about it.

Purchase alcoholic beverages for an adult party.

If you need help to estimate how much beverage alcohol you require, use Evite's [Party Drink Calculator](#).

## 1 Week Before

### **Get printables & decorations ready.**

If using printables for your party decorations or cupcake toppers, take them to the printers or print them off at home now to make sure you have enough ink and paper.

Start putting your printables together – take your time and have fun!

Clean up the yard for an outdoor party

Clean up the backyard and add any plants that you'll require.

Arrange for professionals to do the work if you're using their services.

Make ahead any food that can be frozen.

If you have planned your menu with recipes that can be made in installments, make anything that can be frozen and kept until you need it now.

Confirm food made by others & your assistant's help.

If having a potluck or if family and friends are contributing to the party food, contact them to confirm that they are still able to do so and make sure you both understand who is providing the serving utensils, and other requirements such as an electrical socket for a crockpot.

Confirm your helpers at the party and tell them exactly what you expect of them.

## 2 Days Before

Go Grocery Shopping

Prepare Party Favor Bags

Mow the Lawn for an Outdoor Party

Get First Aid Kit – if you already have one, check the supplies and put it where it will be handy in the case of an emergency.

## The Day Before the Party

Remind assistants – contact your helpers to jog their memory and make sure they are available, know what is expected of them and when they are to show up.

Make or pick up the cake – also make sure you have candles & something to use to light them.

Prepare food for menu – make as much on the menu as possible now, or at least do the prep work in advance such as chopping vegetables, marinating meat, making sauces, etc.

Refrigerate beverages and chill wines & beer.

Buy ice. Plan on 1 pound per guest.

Clean and tidy rooms that will be used

Prepare bathroom & coat room – put a sign on the coat room and bathroom door so guests don't have to ask. Put out hand towels, soap and extra bathroom tissue.

Prepare name tags for guests if they don't know each other.

Prepare stations for food and beverages. Make sure you have clean serving dishes and utensils for everything you have planned to serve. Get crock pots ready to keep food hot.

## Day of the Party

Pick up balloons & flowers.

You can delegate this task if the person knows what the arrangements should look like.

If you pick the items up early enough, you leave time for mistakes to be fixed. It's always a good idea to call them and confirm the items are ready before you leave the house.

Organize the party areas & decorate.

If you're having the party at your house, arrange the furniture and set up the dining table, activity stations and gift table. Put up decorations.

If going to a different venue for the party, arrange everything you'll need for each area in different tote bags or storage boxes so you know if you have everything you'll need and make it easier to delegate jobs to your assistants. (I've even made a rough drawing of the activity

station with labels to put in the box so assistants know exactly what needs to be done with as little direction as possible in the chaos.)

Prepare the party food.

Set up the buffet or display table with your cupcakes, beverages, snacks, party favors and decorations.

Set cake on display table early enough that it will be room temperature when eating it.

Give directions to anyone who will be doing food preparation during the party.

Prepare the bar.

Make sure wine & beer are chilled.

Prepare the bar area:

- decorations
- straws
- glasses
- garnishes

Get things ready to make a list of gifts.

Have a pen and paper ready to write down gifts & giver when opened, and give instructions to your assistant if delegating this task.

## 2 to 3 Days Later

Write thank you notes.

Send thank you cards to guests for their gifts and mention something wonderful that happened with them at the party.

Thank assistants specifically for what they did & offer lots of praise so they'll be willing to do it again next party! (Even if you gave them a thank you gift at the end of the party, it never hurts to thank them profusely once again.)