



Birthday Party Ideas

A Complete Guide To Help You Design Fun
And Memorable Birthday Parties

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Excerpt of Original Text

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*The older we grow the greater becomes our wonder at how much ignorance one can
contain without bursting one's clothes.*

Mark Twain

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Introduction

Remember when going to a birthday party as a kid was the highlight of the week? Whether it was a pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey and cupcakes party or a no-adult teen bash, the anticipation and getting ready was part of the fun. Getting older rarely inspires excitement. Add in work, kids, laundry, grocery shopping and more obligations than there are hours in the day. Who has time, not to mention desire, to plan a party?

That's where *Birthday Party Ideas* comes in. This e-book is designed to help put the fun back into birthdays. From poking fun at the number of candles on the cake to helpful hints, the following pages will get your creative juices flowing with party themes and paraphernalia, gag gift suggestions and places to find all the things you'll need.

Divided into four sections, *Birthday Party Ideas* begins with **Party Planning**: suggested themes for aging family, friends and coworkers in your life ranging from the traditional, such as a scavenger hunt, to the remaking of a kids birthday favorite – the slumber party – including tips for how to get party-goers into the spirit, decorations, games and other ideas for creating a festive atmosphere.

Marking the occasion of another passing year with the perfect gift is an opportunity to continue the theme of a party or just tease the aging adult in your life. So we've included a list of presents the birthday boy or girl simply can't (or shouldn't) do without. Whether you're struggling to find a unique gag gift or helping guests figure out what to get, **Gifts** offers ideas from a single item to a gift basket.

The **Bonus** section will make finding party supplies, decorations, accessories and games a breeze. Access to the Internet makes a variety of specialty stores and retailers available regardless of location. However, sometimes exploring local shops is more inspiring and fun, so we've included some places to begin your quest.

Whether you need a quote to add to the cake, a thought to include with the invitation to help set the tone for guests or a party banner, **Pearls of Wisdom** includes fun and serious thoughts on aging from a variety of people.

The clock is ticking!

Party Planning

Costume Chaos

Pirates of the Caribbean



Inviting Guests: Ahoy, Mates! Come aboard in yar best pirate duds or be prepared to walk the plank! Cap'n Hook, Tinker Bell, mermaids and deck hands are headed to an island paradise to celebrate _____ 's birthday.

Party Essentials:

Site: If possible, hang a skull and cross-bones flag to identify the berth for your crew.

Set Up: Use red and black as the colors for decorations – balloons, streamers, cups, plates, etc. Use red and white striped table cloths, or better yet, find some skull and cross bones fabric and throw that over flat surfaces. Use pirate hats, bandanas, gold chocolate coins and fake swords to decorate food tables. Anything with a nautical theme will also work – anchors, sails, life ring, etc.

Use inflatable palm trees, shark and crocodile pool toys – hang them from the ceiling or place them strategically near food tables or activities. Hang rope lines and rigging and scatter wooden whiskey barrels, use them as tables or hors d'oeuvres stations.

If you're feeling adventurous, find a telescope to set up for scanning the horizon, create some treasure chests filled with loot, find a talking parrot to squawk at guests or create a ship galley for a food buffet.

Be sure to have some seafarin' tunes for background noise.

Games: X Marks the Spot: A fun twist on Pin the Tail on the Donkey – place a treasure map on the wall and have blindfolded guests try to put the X closest to the treasure.

Treasure Hunt: Create a treasure map of the party site. Choose starting point (where guests pick up their treasure map) then pick 5 or 6 places to hide clues, each leading to the next piece of information. At the end of the trail should be a treasure trove of gifts from which the searcher may choose – such as plastic necklaces or bags of chocolate coins.

Walk the Plank: After the party has been going on for a while, challenge your guests to walk heel-to-toe on a narrow board

Prizes: The age and mix of people who are attending will guide the kinds of prizes you want to give out: bottles of rum, plastic trinkets, silk scarves and other "pirate booty."

Birth-Year/Generation



Inviting Guests: Remind the birthday boy/girl of her origins by dressing in clothing of the year/era in which the birthday boy/girl was born. Come dressed as a greaser or in a poodle skirt ('50s), hippies ('60s) disco ('70s) or sweat-bands-gone-fashionable ('80s).

Party Essentials:

Site: The year/generation will determine what kind of decorations, music and other paraphernalia you'll need.

1950: Set up a soda fountain style buffet for food. Better yet, serve root beer floats, sundaes and milk shakes. Or go all out and recreate Arnold's Restaurant from "Happy Days". Have some contests set up: hula hoop, Bazooka Bubble Gum Blowing, best hand jive or fastest sundae assembly.

Music is critical - rent a juke box filled with the right 45's to add to the atmosphere or have a lot of CD's with classic rock: the soundtrack from the movie Grease, the jitter bug and don't forget Elvis!

1960: Create the ultimate '60s pad by hanging strings of plastic or wooden beads in every doorway for guests to pass through; put colored light bulbs in some lamps and place colorful scarves over others (make sure there's enough air circulating so they don't catch on fire). If you feel bold, break out the incense. Use poster board or banner paper and neon paint to make peace symbols, daisies, and Yin/yang symbols to scatter around.

The sixties aren't complete unless you have music by Motown, Jefferson Airplane, The Animals, Ohio Express, Little Peggy March, and Neil Sedaka.

1970: Turn your space into a club from the '70s. Turn off all the lights. Block out all daylight with dark curtains or fabric and replace it with a spotlight on a disco ball and stage lights with primary color bulbs. Scatter bistro tables and chairs around the perimeter of a huge dance floor. Use lots of speakers and crank up the volume.

The Bee Gees, K C and the Sun Shine Band, Donna Summer and the Village People are just a few musicians to consider.

1980: Host a Valley Girl house party with neon colored streamers and balloons, Brat Pack movie posters and pop videos on the tube. Give prizes for the best "Material Girl" look or the "best use of underwear as a fashion statement" and hold a "Walk Like an Egyptian" contest.

Be sure to invite Billy Idol, Elvis Costello, Psychedelic Furs, Madonna and the Talking Heads. Don't forget the "Walk Like an Egyptian" – it's more than just a contest!

Nostalgia

Beach Blanket Bingo



Inviting Guests: Beach balls, bathing suits, sand in your food and dancing the night away next to a driftwood fire inspired a few really bad movies and a lot of fun. Grab your zinc oxide and put on your flip flops before coming over to enjoy a birthday beach party you won't soon forget!

Party Essentials:

Site: Host your party on a sand volleyball court, at the beach (if you live near one), next to a lake, or transform your back yard or your basement. Another alternative is finding a parking lot where you can have a truckload of sand delivered – be sure there is some grass nearby in case the beach gets too hot. A blow up pool with water is also a must if there isn't any water nearby.

Set Up: Greet guests with a bowl full of zinc oxide, sun screen and coconut oil.

Have lots of colorful blankets to spread out. Drop some pillows on the blankets and place folding chairs, umbrellas and lounge chairs in clusters to create places for guests to sit and relax.

If fire code allows, have plenty of wood on hand to keep a bonfire going all night. A fire pit will also work. Be sure to have plenty of marshmallow roasting sticks on hand and a fire extinguisher nearby, just in case.

Decorations: Scatter sunglasses, visors, beach hats, flip flops and bottles of suntan lotion anywhere there's room, including food and bar tables.

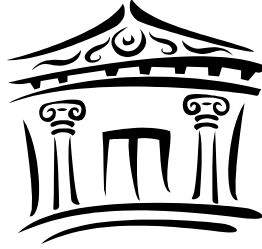
Functional items can reinforce the theme like plastic shell plates, coconut cups and colorful plastic silverware and napkins.

A "Please don't feed the seagulls!" sign with a number of the fake bird nearby and scattered around the area remind guests to watch out for the pesky water fowl.

Games: Multiple beach balls are a must for impromptu fun. However games such as "Keep Off the Ground" and "Longest Volley" can encourage guests to use the beach balls. Keep track of the longest time and the highest number of volleys on a chalkboard on an easel for bragging rights. Do the same for football and Frisbee competitions.

Have a sandcastle building contest – prizes for the most creative, bizarre, etc.

Toga!



Inviting Guests: Whether you feel inspired to pull the Mickey Mouse sheet off your kid's bed or simply come as you are, join us for an "old fashioned" college party in the true spirit of "Animal House." The keg will be tapped early and flow all night long, as will the music and dancing. But there won't be any mashed potatoes for miles!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Turn your home into a frat house! Put away any important breakables or rugs that you don't want damaged by spills.

Create a space for food and munches. Find a place for the requisite keg that won't be damaged by beer or over-flowing cups (the kitchen or a deck/patio). Cheap plastic cups are a must.

Arrange furniture so that it's against the walls with space in the center of each room for dancing

Decorations: Place some Greek letters out in the front to let guests know they've arrived at the right house; use those of your fraternity or sorority, or better yet – make up your own.

Add some fake pillars on either side of the front door. Greet each guest with a crown of laurel leaves.

Make a list of "house rules" and post them near the front entrance: Only "Greeks" allowed; Never let the keg run dry; Everyone MUST shout when "Shout" is played, etc.

Put mini-togas on statuary around the house, tape paper togas over pictures hanging around the house and hang togas on the wall for decoration.

Drape food tables with lots of fabric to mirror a toga look and use Grecian items throughout for center pieces as well as throughout the house – urns, pillars, and busts with a crown of laurel leaves.

Add the extra cheesy touches only if you're feeling bold: a female mannequin, park a motorcycle in the living room, hang a cheerleader skirt from the dining room light fixture and drop the pom-poms in an unusual place.

Music: If you have live music, ask the musicians to dress in togas. Regardless of recorded or live the evening must include frequent playings of "Shout" by Lloyd Williams.

Black Light Party

Inviting Guests: How long has it been since you wore that tie-die t-shirt and saw it transformed under the influence of a black light? Did you know some face paints also glow under that particular bulb? Step back in time and find some new ways to have fun with that unique blue bulb we call "black."

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Put black light bulbs in as many fixtures as you can find – including the front porch and deck lights!

A variety of colors look great under black light but none is better than white. Use white everywhere you have the black color.

If possible, hold your party at night to ensure as much visual "oomph" as possible.

Decorations: Greet guests with white plastic beaded necklaces and bracelets, white hats (baseball caps, top hats, etc.), white feather boas or bandanas to ensure a colorful crowd.

Drape white sheets or light colored fabric over furniture to fill a darkened room with the eerie black light.

Tie-die fabrics with white, yellow and day-glo colors make for decorative table coverings, regardless of the lighting. White bowls, serving dishes and platters will enhance the display.

White plates, plastic silverware and cups are a fun touch.

Use glow-in-the-dark accents as well. Glow in the dark necklaces and beads can be used with centerpieces or hang them on the liquor bottles in the bar (or any where else for that matter!)

Hang white streamers or bead curtains in doorways and from light fixtures with black light bulbs in them.

Make signs directing people to different rooms using light colored gel pens on black paper or poster-board so the words glow.

If you want to go the creepy route in one room, hang a plastic skeleton, fabric ghosts and use a smoke machine.

Party Fun: Play Hot Potato with a glow-in-the-dark ball or a white ball under a black light.

Have light colored face paints and body pencils for to guest to draw on themselves.

Create a new version of "Twister" with a dark piece of fabric using light colored shapes of fabric (white circles, yellow squares, peach triangles and pale green rectangles) and play in a black-lit room.

“Over the Hill” Parties

Centurion Party



Inviting Guests: What would it be like to reach 100 years of age? With almost everyone you know being dead and not being able to remember many of your relatives it could make for an interesting event. Most of us will never find out but we've decided to pretend _____ has reached that milestone this year. Come join us in wishing the old girl/boy 100 more!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Ask your guests to treat the birthday girl/boy like she/he is 100 years old. Shouting, exaggerated speech and offer of assistance with feeding her/him are recommended.

Keep the 100 year mark in mind when making preparations too. Exaggerate and use the number 100 as much as possible and follow the “It could always be worse” rule of false optimism.

Use a disposable cake with 100 candles, light them all and give a fire extinguisher to the birthday girl/boy for “blowing” them out. Have a second cake for eating.

Decorations: Use huge letter for the “happy birthday” sign.

Find things that are 100 years old or older and use them for decorating tables. Hang signs on them that say: At least you aren't ____ years old like _____. Some ideas to use:

Tallest tree, Redwood 367' 6" (1,000 years old +)

Edinburgh Castle, Scotland (1368 to 1371-ish)

U.S. Constitution ratification (1791)

Lewis and Clark expedition (1803)

Central Park (1858)

Whitefish, Montana settled (1883)

Statue of Liberty (1886)

Eiffel Tower (1889)

Harley Davidson founded (1903)

Dr. Seuss (born March 2, 1904)

Senior Olympics



Inviting Guests: Bring your walkers, canes and wheelchairs to compete in the obstacle course, relay and other games of the Senior Olympics. Don't want to run the risk of damaging your equipment? Not to worry, we'll let you use ours. Please wear proper competition clothing to avoid disqualification.

Party Essentials:

Site: You'll need lots of space – a big back yard, the field of a local school, a park or indoor arena (make sure it's okay to bring in your own equipment and set up the competition areas).

Set Up: Arrange a "First Aid" tent/area for the food and beverages using the trappings of a first aid kit: Hang gauze like streamers, sprinkle Band-Aids over the tables with Ace bandages wrapped around plastic hospital water pitchers filled with flowers

Designate specific areas for various events with signs propped up on easels

Decorations: Use the Olympic flag and balloons in the Olympic colors (blue, yellow, black, green, red) everywhere. Use paper products with sports images.

A torch burning near the field of competition is a must – whether paper or real; have a presentation platform nearby, too.

Use the three-tiered award platform for table displays.

Music: The National Anthem, "Chariots of Fire," "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," "Centerfield" and other songs with sports in the lyrics.

Games: Wheelchair Obstacle Course: Set up cones, trash cans or anything else that competitors will have to wheel around before making it back to the finish line.

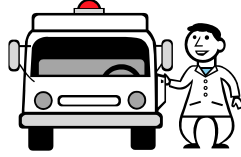
Crutch Races: Set up a starting line and have racers hobble one-footed to a finish line.

Walker Relay: Have teams break up into two groups racing from the starting point, using proper walker usage technique, handing off their walker to a teammate until the last walker crosses the finish line.

Cane Egg Walk: using a cane correctly, have competitor carry a raw egg on a spoon from one end of the race course to the other. Anyone who drops an egg or is caught using their cane incorrectly must return to the beginning and start again.

Prizes: Gold, silver and bronze medals for each event can be creative and theme oriented: Tie ribbons around a container of powder with gold in the name, a bottle of vitamins with silver in the name and bronze tinted hair color.

Emergency Room



Inviting Guests: Considering that _____ is facing a life in which a broken hip, a twisted ankle and high blood pressure are likely to land him/her in the hospital on a regular basis we thought we'd celebrate his/her birthday in his/her new home away from home, but with better food. Come learn how to properly apply an Ace bandage and spike the fruit punch in the cafeteria!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: If you want to get into it, rent a hall and set up an emergency room with a reception desk, waiting area and individual exam areas. You can rent some hospital equipment or rig up your own.

For the reception area, use white table clothes and skirting on long tables. The waiting area can be rows and rows of folding chairs – don't forget the table with old magazines and pharmaceutical brochures. Hang clothes lines and drape them with white sheets and blankets at regular intervals along the side walls to create exam areas. Use cafeteria type tables in each for them tables; cover them with cheap, white paper table clothes and toss a pillow at the head.

Use the exam areas for food table, the bar and birthday gift collection.

You can do all of the above in your home as well, using different rooms for different areas. Make the kitchen the cafeteria.

Decorations: Make signs for each of the areas, don't forget the health posters!

Use what hospital supplies you can in a fun way; fill IV bags with catsup and mustard and hang them near the food table; use cotton ball boxes for holding silverware; use empty peroxide bottles for bud vases.

Strategically place a few cut outs or mannequins in hospital staff garb.

Games: Ace Bandage Wrapping Contest: The person who wraps the "injured person's" ankles, elbows and wrists the fastest (without falling off when the victims walks around) wins.

Band-Aid Art Contest: Have guests use band-aids to create pictures.

Bed Pan Relay: The team that successfully reaches the finish line first wearing bed pans for shoes wins.

Prizes: The Golden Bed Pan, Silver Bed Pan and Bronze Bed Pan (bed pans spray painted) can serve as the top achievement awards if you track who wins the most events.

Books on first-aid, boxes of Band-Aids, an enema, bottles of an upset stomach remedy, plastic daily pill boxes and other medical products related to seniors and emergencies can be used for individual tournament prizes.

Ethnic

Boxing Day



Inviting Guests: Boxing Day is typically held on December 26 and might have begun with the gentry of England who gave their unwanted Christmas boxes/gifts to their servants on that day. Another variation suggests wealthy families sent servants home on the 26th with boxes of left over food so they could celebrate Christmas with their families. Come see what's in our boxes!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Decide if you want to have guests bring unwanted stuff to the party. If so, make sure you have a table set up near the entrance for guests to deposit their treasures on the way in and pick something up on the way out.

Boxes, boxes everywhere! You'll need lots of flat surfaces and places to display boxes and use boxes for party needs. While you're preparing ask yourself, "How can I incorporate/use a box?"

Decorations: Decorate cardboard boxes with wrapping paper, ribbons and bows. Have the kids paint plain boxes in funky colors or gaudy them up with fake jewels, glitter, sequins or anything else that can be attached with glue or tape. Use these to hold flower bouquets or just pile them up by themselves for centerpieces or table decorations.

Wrap or decorate large boxes, like moving cartons, and pile them on the front porch or line the front walk. Wrap the front door in paper and ribbon and hang ribbons on outdoor lights.

Replace functional containers with boxes as a way to augment decorations. Use old moving cardboard boxes for trash receptacles. Anything that requires a container, use a box: small decorative boxes for holding utensils and cocktail napkins; nuts, mints and other snack food bowls can be placed into ornate boxes.

Create some unexpected surprises in the boxes you use for decorations and casually encourage guests to check them out. In the boxes with lids, rig them with things that will pop out when opened (a jack in the box set to spring, attach the lid of a "can of worms" to the underside of the box lid) so they spring out at unsuspecting guests.

Make other boxes that are specifically designed to engage your guests. Write silly instructions on other such as "shake three times, turn upside down and open over the head of another person." Leave some of them empty but fill others with packing popcorn or streamers. Fill others with trivia cards or games they can play during the evening.

Luau



Inviting Guests: Put on your grass skirt or your favorite Hawaiian shirt, dig your flip-flops out of the closet, practice for the limbo and come ready to drink from a coconut. All our tropical paradise needs is you!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Best held outside during warm weather seasons however, indoor arrangements can be made for this kind of shin-dig.

Greet guests with flower leis, grass skirts and/or big floppy woven sun hats

Create a beach area (either in a large plastic/blow-up pool or better yet, host the party on a sand volleyball court!) with folding chairs, umbrellas and sand toys for building castles.

If there's room, set up a volleyball or badminton court.

Hang paper lanterns for evening lighting. Tiki torches also work well and can be used to ring the beach area or other places you want to highlight.

If you're feeling adventurous, include a traditional pig roast; a feast of native foods eaten while sitting on the ground is fun.

Don't forget the fake palm trees and pink flamingos.

Accessorizing: Skirt tables with grass skirting, beach towels or use fish netting.

For a rustic feel, use wooden bowls, fake coconut cups for holding condiments, silverwares, and wicker paper plate holders.

Decorate your food table with a big wicker basket filled with bananas, pineapples, coconuts, kiwi and other fruits. Add starfish, conch shells and/or fake parrots for more color.

Umbrellas for beverages are as essential as fruity and frozen drinks in hurricane glasses.

Entertainment: Hire dancers to perform traditional Hawaiian dances.

Drummers and other musicians can also play traditional island music.

Games: Limbo: How low can you go? Use a stick of bamboo, a broom or, for a more interesting challenge, a hose with the water on and two people who like to squirt people holding either end.

Coconut Races: Have contestants sweep a real coconut from the starting point, around some object (like a tree) and back to the start.

Conch Shell Blow: Find out who can make the best call.

Grown-Up Children's Parties

Slumber Party

(but everyone goes home)



Inviting Guests: Put on your comfy PJ's, grab your slippers and your favorite stuffed animal because you can't get through the door without them. Pizza, pop and way too much candy were the best parts about sleep-overs. Ghost stories, popcorn fights and who knows what else can happen when adults get to act like kids again.

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Collect a bunch of sleeping bags and pillows and set up one room as the boy's room and one as the girl's. Push all the furniture to the edges of the room. In the girl's room, circle the sleeping bags around a pile of girl toys (dolls, stuffed animals, boxes of costume jewelry and bowls of cheap make up and nail polish). In the boy's room set up two rows of sleeping bags facing each other with an aisle between them. Have piles of boy stuff scattered (comic books, Silly Putty, miniature cars).

If two TV rooms are possible, set up a girl's and boy's with a selection of gender specific movies, music and board games. If not, mix it all up in one space.

Stock the kitchen with all kinds of junk food from chips and candy to pizza and corn dogs. Nothing healthy allowed!

Decorations: Do gender specific decorating in rooms where this makes sense. Posters are an easy way to decorate. Some boy/girls specific tips include:

Girls

Place girl toys around:

Doll house, dress-up clothes & ballet shoes

Use floral print lamp shades

Make a tent out of blankets

Boys

Place boy toys around:

Cowboy hat, sling shot & sports stuff

Make a tent out of blankets

Use cowboy lamps

Activities: At some point have all the girls go to their space and all the boys go to theirs for girls/boys-only fun. Raids on the other group are not only allowed, they're encouraged.

Have everyone cram into one room, turn off all the lights, pass out a handful of flashlights and tell ghost stories.

Leave movies running throughout the night. Have bowls of popcorn and munchies immediately available.

Mad Hatter's Tea Party



Inviting Guests: Fall down our rabbit hole and see what silliness and fun adults can have when the children aren't around and there are all kinds of silly creatures coming out of the woodwork!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Here's your chance to get really bizarre and funky! You can use *Alice in Wonderland* as a guide for your party or create your own weirdness. Suggestions for both are included.

If you want to take the tea party theme literally, set up different kinds of tea rooms and

Funky Fun: Use the tea party theme for setting up a different kind of tea party in different rooms of the house.

The Chocolate Tea: Everything and anything chocolate goes: hot chocolate, bon bons, truffles, chocolate cake, chocolate chip cookies, etc. Use the same for decorations – Toll House cookie tins, Hershey memorabilia and anything Swiss will work.

The Fruity Tea: Everything and anything fruity goes: orange and lemon teas, fruit slice candies, strawberry shortcake, pineapple upside down cake. Fruit print table clothes, cups and saucers with fruit designs on them and bowls of fruit for centerpieces round out the decorations.

Alice Revisited: Use different elements of the story to decorate different rooms.

The playing card room: In addition to piles and piles of decks of playing card, *Hoyle's Hook of Games* and poker chips for betting, this room can use beach towels with images of playing cards and other paraphernalia to decorate the space.

The potions room: This room can be a place to just sit and socialize or serve as the bar. Fill it with all kinds of bottles – wine bottle, antique bottle, soda pop bottle, bottle of bubble blowing stuff. Use them for holding flowers or fill them with fun things like snacks (candy, nuts) or make games out of them – guess the number of gum balls, cotton balls, piece of popcorn.

Set up fun-house mirrors in different places so that as guests walk by they get a distorted views of themselves. Use your imagination to come up with other fun-house touches.

Cops & Robbers



Inviting Guests: The last time you wielded a cap gun and wore an “authentic” plastic silver star was probably close to the time you robbed the bank of play money and got away with it. We’re going to have plenty of money to snatch and damsels in distress as well as a jail in which you’ll cool your heels if you get caught. Good guys and bad guys, good girls and bad girls are all going to have such fun it ought to be illegal!

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Set up several popular places to “rob” in different rooms of your house and be sure to include a few stashes of loot – bank (a vault with money, safety deposit boxes, teller’s desk), jewelry store (jewelry case, cash register), pawn shop (shelves of items, safe).

Create a jail by hanging black crepe paper over the doorways of one room. Be sure to include the clerk’s desk for paying bail (or bribing the guard).

If you want to have a judge hear cases, set up a bench and rotate your guests as judges to hear the guilty plead their case. If the money for a dying mother’s medicine is an acceptable excuse, the judge has the power to issue probation over jail time or dismiss charges.

Use kids toy cash registers, junk jewelry, play money (or even make your own pretend cash) and other props for setting up the rooms and items to be pilfered.

The Guests: When your guests arrive divide them up into cops and robber by giving them a slip of paper or a prop that indicates they’re a cop (a badge or a squirt gun) and robbers (a bag for loot or file to pick locks). Instruct them to reveal or keep secret their identity as they choose.

The cops are supposed to catch robbers and throw them in jail and robbers are supposed to try to get away with stealing stuff throughout the night.

The Rules: Cops can be bribed – whether it’s to get out of jail or to look the other way. Robbers can work in teams – to distract the cops and split the loot or break out of jail.

Once caught, crooked cops and robbers have to spend time in the clink.

Prizes: At the end of the night, or a designated time, have the cops and robbers tally up their successes and award those with “The Stickiest Fingers,” “The Most Arrests” or “The One That Got Away.”

Traditional Favorites

Casino Night



Inviting Guests: Gamble the night away without losing your shirt or the family homestead. Be a high stakes gambler, check out the show girls and the male servers in form-fitting costumes while you live life in the lap of luxury.

Party Essentials:

Site: Hold this event in a hall where you can set up different gaming areas and a restaurant/bar area or set up different rooms in your home with different kind of games.

Set Up: Decide what games you want to have available: blackjack, roulette, slots, poker, craps, etc. Depending on space, have multiple table in each area/room. Make sure you have space for people to put down their drinks and munchies.

Set up the bar and food away from gaming areas to avoid creating congestion around either activity. Be sure to have some places set aside for socializing, eating and taking a break from the play.

If you have the budget, hire some dealers and other staff to manage the games so you're free to have fun. Having a few servers dressed as show girls and Chippendales will help keep the glasses and plates from piling up and add something extra to the night.

Decide if you want to keep track of the winners or just make it a night of fun. If you want guests to get a stack of chips at the door when they arrive (if so, have them pre-counted and in a velvet bag or a container that's easy to handle) or make sure each table has plenty of chips to hand out as people need them.

Decorations: Go Vegas style with lots of lights and gaudy. Fake gold lions, spot lights or neon signs in the front yard will let your guests know they're in the right place.

Posters of entertainers frequently found in Las Vegas add a nice touch. Large, colorful feathers and huge bouquets of flowers are reminiscent of Las Vegas. Use neon lights near the bar area and in each of the gaming areas/rooms.

If you want to go with a more sophisticated look, use an expensive motel as your guide for decorations. Nice china, tasteful flower bouquets and lots of candles.

Music: Keep it fun and lively to keep energy high. Choose Vegas style music if you choose to go that route for decorations.

If you choose to go with an elegant look, choose lively jazz tunes

Wine Tasting



Inviting Guests: Have you ever wondered what the difference is between variety kinds of white and red wines. And what's up with the pink stuff? Before diving into the birthday cake we're all going to get the gift of knowledge from a local wine connoisseur. If you have a favorite wine glass bring it along.

Party Essentials:

Set Up: Make arrangements with the wine connoisseur of a local store or distributor to attend the early part of the party to instruct guests on how to properly taste, smell and experience wine. Have your instructor bring several different bottles of new or unusual wines.

Work with your expert to create the kind of event you think your guests will enjoy. Find out what you need to have on hand – is it better to use disposable plastic tumblers or glass shot glasses? An official tasting uses spittoons, is it best to use those under these circumstances?

Make sure you have a space large enough for all guests to be seated or standing during the tasting so that they're comfortable and can hear the instructions. Arrange chairs and tables as needed based on the suggestions of your wine expert.

Have plenty of fresh breads, cheeses, fruit and crackers to sample during and after the tastings.

Decorations: Cover tables with decorative scarves or cloths, fabrics with a wine or grape motif. Rich jewel tones will work well as a setting for other decorations.

Empty wine bottles, corks, grape vines, baskets of plastic grapes and wine glasses can be used to create centerpieces for tables and decorate other surfaces.

Posters depicting different wineries, different wine producing regions and promotional posters of different wine varieties can be hung on walls or framed and propped up on easels.

Wine glass charms for helping guests identify their glass work well and add a festive touch.

Games: If you're in a fun mood, play spin the bottle with one of the empty bottles but make the person the bottle points to answer wine trivia questions.

Play Wine BINGO – replace BINGO with Wine names (Chianti, Shiraz, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel) and call out different years. Winners take home bottles of wine.

Garden Party



Inviting Guests: Genteel garden parties were hosted at the professionally manicured estates of the filthy rich. Well, we're not rich and our community needs a garden planted. Tuck your garden gloves into your pocket and slip into your yard clogs. Before we settle in for tea and cucumber sandwiches we're going to create a beautiful tapestry of color for everyone to enjoy.

Party Essentials:

Site: If you have a local park that needs some sprucing up or common areas in your neighborhood that would benefit from a green thumb, make it a volunteer project and make arrangements for your "crew" to do the work.

If not, have your friends help with your flower bed.

Set Up: Come up with a few simple projects – nothing too elaborate – for your guests: planting annual or perennial flowers, spreading mulch, adding a birdbath and some stepping stones. Draw up a map or prepare written directions so that everyone knows what they're going to be doing.

Purchase the things you'll need – plants, mulch, fertilizer, stones, yard ornamentalations, etc. and have them delivered a few days before the party. Do any prep necessary (e.g. removing brush, lining trash cans with lawn and leaf bags)?

Determine where you're going to gather after the work is done. If at all possible, set up table and chairs near the work area so everyone can sit back and enjoy their handy-work. If there isn't space, return to your back yard.

Have enough tables and chairs, picnic tables and/or lounge chairs for guests to relax while they eat and drink. If it's going to be a hot day, set up large shade umbrellas.

Decorations: Cover tables with brightly colored table clothes. If it's a windy day be sure to secure the fabric so it doesn't flop around.

To keep away bugs, have plenty of citronella candles in decorative buckets (avoid using spray chemicals in areas where you're going to eat, there are lots of environmentally safe, nontoxic alternatives.)

Use individual picnic baskets for table centerpieces but make them practical. Line each basket with several colorful cloth napkins and fill them with sandwiches, fruit, chips, cookies and other goodies for guests to enjoy (once the food is removed, drape the napkins over the edges of the basket and leave it in the center of the table).

Gifts



Gag Gifts

Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or prefer shopping for the perfect present, choosing gag gifts can be as much fun as receiving them. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Denture Care: Put together the ultimate denture kit with a denture holder, tooth brush, denture cleaner and adhesive and a set of fake teeth.

Electric Rolling Pin: Drill out the center of a wooden-handled rolling pin; cut the end off an extension chord; stuff the end of the extension cord into hole in the handle of the rolling pin so the plug hangs out.

Emergency Preparedness Kit: Decorate a box with a First Aid cross on it and fill it with a few adult under garments (a.k.a. adult diapers), smelly joint cream, vitamins for seniors, antacids, constipation and diarrhea medicines, magnifying reading glasses and other senior-specific products.

Vanity Gift Bag: For the beauty who's going down kicking and screaming, fill a tacky vinyl handbag with anti-wrinkle cream, hair color, false eye lashes and pamphlets for cosmetic surgery.

On-Line Shops:

These are a great resource when looking for ideas and purchasing gifts if you're pressed for time or can't find what you're looking for locally.

The Gag

<http://www.thegag.com/>

One man's love of practical jokes and magic combined with unemployment to make this Internet business a good place for goofy gifts.

Gag Works

<http://www.gagworks.com/>

Feature product lines they classify as "non stop riot; our novelty and toy lines bring to life all that you remember or would like to forget."

Over The Hill Gifts

<http://www.overthehillgifts.com/>

Organized by birth year and milestone birthdays (40, 50, 60 – up to 100!) this site has lots of ideas in addition to great gifts.

Party Supplies



Once you've decided on the ultimate birthday party, time and financial resources usually impact the end result. The Internet provides an amazing array of options for decorations, novelty paper products, balloons, gifts and everything else you need. Browsing local shops that are "off the beaten path" can inspire your imagination and make preparations more fun. Below you will find a number of resources to help get you started on your quest for the ultimate party supplies.

Local Stores:

Costume Shops

In addition to having racks and racks of costumes, these stores typically carry masks, make up, costume jewelry and other props.

Medical Supply Outlets

Bed pans, plastic pitchers and tongue depressors are among the items you'll find here for gag gifts, prizes and other senior needs.

Restaurant Supply

These places are typically open to the public and carry everything from the paper napkin dispensers needed for a soda fountain to a variety of paper products.

Thrift Stores

A great resource for filling a dress up box, these stores usually carry items that can be used for decorations or serving pieces (e.g. one large red serving bowl or a collection of bud vases that don't match). In some cases, your purchase goes to support a worthy cause.

Online Resources:

Invitation Professionals

<http://www.invitationprofessionals.com/>

Invitations are the first impression your guests have of the upcoming event so why not look into making that first impression impressive?

Kipp Brothers

<http://www.kippbro.com/>

Since 1880, Kipp Brothers has operated as a direct importer and wholesaler of quality value priced toys and novelties.

Oriental Trading Company

<http://www.orientaltrading.com>

Oriental Trading Company is one of the nation's leading direct marketers of value-priced novelties, toys, party supplies, crafts, gift items, home décor products and garden accents.

Pearls of Wisdom

Humorous

I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.

– Woody Allen

Old age is, so to speak, the sanctuary of ills: they all take refuge in it.

– Antiphanes

I refuse to admit that I am more than 52, even if that makes my children illegitimate.

– Lady Nancy Astor

The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age.

– Lucille Ball

A man is not old until his regrets take the place of dreams.

– John Barrymore, "Good Night, Sweet Prince"

Always go to other people's funerals, otherwise they won't come to yours.

– Yogi Berra

When I was forty, my doctor advised me that a man in his forties shouldn't play tennis. I heeded his advice carefully and could hardly wait until I reached fifty to start again.

– Hugo Black

Age is something that doesn't matter, unless you are a cheese

– Billie Burke

Old age is when you resent the swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated because there are fewer articles to read.

– George Burns

I've often thought that the process of aging could be slowed down if it had to go through Congress.

– George Bush

Of all the barbarous Middle Ages, that which is most barbarous is the middle age of man!

– Lord Byron

I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older. Then it dawned on me . . . they're cramming for their final exam."

– George Carlin

Middle age is when a guy keeps turning off lights for economical rather than romantic reasons.

– Eli Cass

Old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternatives.
– Maurice Chevalier

An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have; the older she gets the more interested he is in her.
– Agatha Christie

I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter.
– Sir Winston Churchill

There are three classes into which all the women past 70 that ever I knew were to be divided: 1. That dear old soul; 2. That old woman; 3. That old witch.
– Samuel Taylor Coleridge

I'm aiming by the time I'm 50 to stop being an adolescent.
– Wendy Cope

He is so old that his blood type was discontinued.
– Bill Dana

I'm at the age where food has taken the place of sex in my life. In fact, I've just had a mirror put over my kitchen table.
Rodney Dangerfield

Old age ain't no place for sissies.
– Bette Davis

The really frightening thing about middle age is that you know you'll grow out of it!
Doris Day

Middle age is youth without levity, and age without decay.
– Daniel Defoe

Old age is an insult. It's like being smacked.
– Lawrence Durrell

The years between 50 and 70 are the hardest. You are always being asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down.
– T. S. Eliot

Life begins at 40—but so do fallen arches, rheumatism, faulty eyesight, and the tendency to tell a story to the same person, three or four times.
– William Feather

As you get older, the pickings get slimmer, but the people don't.
– Carrie Fisher

Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing.
– Redd Foxx

Serious

It is always in season for old men to learn.

– Aeschylus

I'm not interested in age. People who tell me their age are silly. You're as old as you feel.

– Elizabeth Arden

Old men are children for a second time.

– Aristophanes

Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it, you've got to start young.

– Fred Astaire

Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success.

– Francis Bacon

It is sad to grow old but nice to ripen.

– Brigitte Bardot

I will never be an old man. To me, old age is always 15 years older than I am.

– Bernard M. Baruch

We grow neither better or worse as we get old, but more like ourselves.

– May L. Becker

To think, when one is no longer young, when one is not yet old, that one is no longer young, that one is not yet old, that is perhaps something.

– Samuel Beckett

Age. That period of life in which we compound for the vices that remain by reviling those we have no longer the vigor to commit.

– Ambrose Bierce

I believe the true function of age is memory. I'm recording as fast as I can.

– Rita Mae Brown

A woman's always younger than a man at equal years.

– Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made.

– Robert Browning

Perhaps one has to be very old before one learns to be amused rather than shocked.

– Pearl S. Buck

Keep on raging - to stop the aging.
– Dale Carnegie

Every time I think that I'm getting old, and gradually going to the grave, something else happens.
– Lillian Carter

Nature gives you the face you have at twenty; it is up to you to merit the face you have at fifty.
– Coco Chanel

The heart never grows better by age; I fear rather worse, always harder. A young liar will be an old one, and a young knave will only be a greater knave as he grows older.
– Lord Chesterfield

We are happier in many ways when we are old than when we were young. The young sow wild oats. The old grow sage.
– Winston Churchill

One keeps forgetting old age up to the very brink of the grave.
– Sidonie Gabrielle Colette

Age is a matter of feeling, not of years.
– George William Curtis

At 20, you have many desires which hide the truth, but beyond 40 there are only real and fragile truths—your abilities and your failings.
– Gerard Depardieu

At 20 a man is full of fight and hope. He wants to reform the world. When he is 70 he still wants to reform the world, but he know he can't.
– Clarence Darrow

It is not how old you are, but how you are old.
– Marie Dressler

These are the effects of doting age; vain doubts and idle cares and over caution.
– John Dryden

I'm saving that rocker for the day when I feel as old as I really am.
– Dwight D. Eisenhower

Few women, I fear, have had such reason as I have to think the long sad years of youth were worth living for the sake of middle age.
– George Eliot

We do not count a man's years until he has nothing else to count.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson