

4 Easy Ways to Enjoy Active Fun at Kids' Parties

Want to throw an awesome children's party at home or at your child's school? Want to give parties where kids beg to stay for "just a little longer?" The simple secret to successful kids' parties isn't tons of foods or expensive goodie bags. It's plain old running-around, bouncing up-and-down, silly, giggling, physical fun. It's the kind of fun that every child knows how to enjoy naturally (and the kind that adults can get into once they relax a bit). It's easy and cheap to have fun at any children's party. All you have to do is pick the right games for the ages of kids - and make sure you have a safe place and any necessary equipment. Here's how to have a ton of fun for almost no money:

Have fun with OLD-FASHIONED FAVORITES.

The list of possibilities is long on fun and easy on wallets. With little or no equipment, kids (and adults) can have hours of fun with old-time games: kick the can, red rover, tug of war, leap frog, dodgeball, kickball, four-square, hopscotch, and all types of tag - freeze tag, flashlight tag, and Ultimate Tag (everyone walks in a circle; a few people have signs with activities - hop on one foot or walk backwards; tagged people must do the activity for 10 seconds; then resume walking).

Have fun with CREATIVE INDOOR ACTIVITIES.

Some traditional favorites - such as red light-green light and follow the leader - can just as easily be played in a classroom or living room. Many ball games can also be adapted for indoor play using foam balls. Creative team games are great for "indoor Olympics" with events like a shoebox relay. "Racers" take turns skating a set distance with shoeboxes on their feet, then passing a baton to the next team member. (Shoeboxes skate well on carpet, tile, or wood without scuffing.)

Have fun with HIGH-ENERGY BOX GAMES.

The oldie-but-goodie in this category is Twister® - fun for all ages since 1966. The game that "ties you up in knots" is fun for families or groups, and is played in tournaments around the world. Use multiple Twister mats for more laughs or try to beat the world record (hundreds of mats and thousands of players!). Hullabaloo, a creative combination of Simon says and freeze tag, is the popular new kid on the block. Both can be found for \$20 or less at retailers and online merchants.

Have fun with LOW TECH EQUIPMENT.

Children of the video game generation still get quite excited about some very low-tech toys, such as Frisbees® and hula hoops; Koosh®, Nerf, and foam balls; noodle pool toys (in and out of the water); and play tent parachutes (less than \$30). This equipment usually comes with cool ideas for activities. If you need some guaranteed games for a specific age group, check with an expert - the physical education (PE) or health enhancement teacher at your child's school.

NEED SOME CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR A PARTY? Eat Right Montana members and subscribers suggest *Games Kids Play* at www.centerofweb.com/kids/games/default.htm for 250+ mostly active games and variations (with basic descriptions and rules where appropriate). The mission of Streetplay (www.streetplay.com/thegames/) is "to document the great city games that we know and love." While these games have their beginnings in urban playgrounds, streets, stoops, and walls, they are universally appealing to young people and can be played anywhere children need something to do.