

HALF-A-DOZEN PARTIES

FOR CHILDREN ONE TO SIX

Here are simple, inexpensive, and sure-to-be-enjoyed parties for each birthday up to six

By MARGARET S. YOUNG and ANDRE NORTON
Children's Librarians, Cleveland

TO ANY CHILD a birthday party is particularly his personal possession, and he gains more pleasure from this celebration of His Own Day than he does from the more general family holidays. Since it comes but once a year, a celebration should never be considered too much trouble. But birthday parties which fall on dates between September to May present problems to parents.

This is partly because too many mothers have come to think of a birthday party for younger members of the family as an occasion requiring elaborate preparations, an affair including all the children of the neighborhood in spite of their age range. (It is next to impossible to make a party including four-year-olds, ten-year-olds, and teen-agers a success.) They also think it should be a meeting of fond mothers who are apt to take over the party, and a chance to pay back social debts.

But remember, it is not Mother's party but that of the birthday child. If you remember that, a much more simple entertainment is possible.

We are offering you a series of tried and true birthday parties, all put to the test of actual enjoyment by children in the stated age groups. None involves much expense, although they do demand some time and thought in planning.

There are seven basic rules which apply to all these parties:

(1) The birthday child must be the center of the party and should enjoy it.

(2) The guests should all be within a year of the age of the child giving the party. (Older guests tend to dominate the party and rob the young host or hostess of his or her right of being as important and as adept at the games as are the guests.)

(3) No matter how many party invitations your child owes, do not pay them back by inviting a collection of uncongenial guests to his birthday party. Limit the number of mothers invited to two who can help you.

(4) If it is necessary for adults to accompany the children to the party, pro-

vide some entertainment for them in another room.

(5) Prizes should be inexpensive. Try to select something which will give the child something to do with his or her hands, such as: pencils, plain and colored, crayons, coloring books, paper doll books, small packages of construction paper in variegated colors (very popular), beads to string. Be liberal in your prize giving. Each guest will love to carry home a souvenir.

(6) Timing of games depends entirely upon the popularity of any one game. Drop at once any game which does not hold the children's attention, and prolong one which does.

(7) Children have no sense of time. It is best for the adult hostess to announce firmly that the party is over, and she must have no qualms about speeding parting guests. No feelings will be hurt and other mothers will thank her for getting their children home on time.

These rules apply to all parties within the age limits set, and are as important as are the following more detailed instructions for each party.

For a Two-Year-Old

This party begins at about eleven in the morning with two or three guests present. Afternoon naps are still necessary and the regular routine should not be too disturbed by any social gathering.

Entertainment: Clear a large space in the living or dining room and place suitable toys around to attract attention. Borrow freely in order to have several identical ones. This duplication will prevent unhappiness. Have blocks, pull toys, soft toys, pegboards and big soft balls. Let the children play at will individually. Social, cooperative playing together and taking turns do not begin until about five years of age. Be prepared for some conflicts, and perhaps even tears. Do not take such reactions too seriously. Offer the distraction of another toy.

Luncheon should be served at noon, preferably in the kitchen at the hostess' own little table. Have a very small





amount of milk in a little glass and a small pitcher of milk to pour one's self. This is a very popular, if somewhat sloppy, occupation.

Pull down the blinds or curtains before you bring in the small sponge cake with two lighted candles. Invite the birthday child to blow out the candles while the others sing "Happy Birthday."

When the guests are through eating, the party is officially over and it will be time to go home.

Menu: Baked potato, carrots, egg or broiled minced meat, gelatine, birthday cake.

For the Three-Year-Old

Make this a morning party also. It may begin about ten-thirty with the arrival of three or four guests. At this hour they are all apt to be at their brightest and best, and are ready to enjoy such a gathering.

Entertainment: Again clear space in one of your larger rooms and bring out toys. Blocks, trucks, wooden trains, pegboards, hammer and peg sets, and if you are lucky, a rocking horse—perhaps you can borrow another such steed. Let host and guests play at will for about thirty minutes and then some social games can be tried.

Marching. (Three to five minutes.) Equipped with paper hats, Jackie and his friends can march around the room in preparation for the next game which is the old, well-loved ring-around-a-rosy (six minutes). Join hands to form a circle and march slowly around singing: "Ring-around-a-rosy, ring-around-a-rosy, all fall down!" You will discover this to be considered a gem of wit and the attendant action will send three-year-olds into gales of laughter. Not too much of this or they will become overexcited.

Instead, pass along to train or automobile. Use grocery store pasteboard cartons—one for each child. They must be low enough and large enough so that the child can crawl in and kneel down. Let them then push themselves with their hands around the floor as trains or automobiles.

At twelve o'clock, luncheon can be served at low tables or on boxes put together. (Continued on page 142)



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"Let's pour milk from small pitchers into our own glasses" is still great fun. Perhaps this meal should be served in the kitchen where the linoleum-covered floor can simplify the problem of one too-enthusiastic pourer.

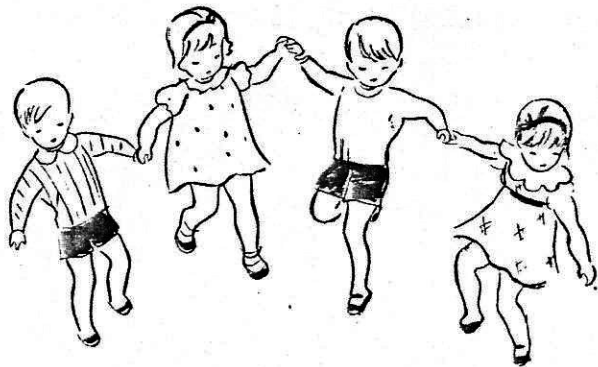
When the birthday cake is served in the glory of its lighted candles, the singing of "Happy Birthday" is again on the program. And then it will be

And here's the steeple, (Index fingers rise to a point)

Open the door, (Keep fingers interlocked but turn palms up)

And see all the people (Wiggle fingers).

Now the children will be ready for another active game. Remember that it is hard to hold attention for quiet



time to see the guests on their way home at one o'clock.

Menu: Baked potato, spinach, minced meat, sliced banana, small piece of birthday cake.

For the Four-Year-Old

Ask four or five guests to come at ten-thirty on the birthday morning. Since four-year-olds are much more active, it might be well to move to the recreation room if you are lucky enough to have one.

Entertainment: This is the year that you start the perennial Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey game. Buy a good one—it will have to last a long time and stand a lot of hard usage. A blindfolded child pins the tail where he thinks it ought to be—this charms the four-year-olds completely. Be liberal with prizes for good efforts.

Then comes Farmer in the Dell. Form a circle, hand in hand, and march around, one child in the center according to the song.

Singing games will be new to some of the children, so they will move slowly but they will enjoy them. So you may also add London Bridge. Two children facing each other clasp hands to form a bridge. The others line up to pass under, all singing. Each prisoner in turn chooses one side or other of the bridge and a gentle tug of war ends the game.

A quiet game should now follow these two active ones, so here are two finger plays which the children will like to play several times each:

Jack-in-the-box, (Hands closed with thumb inside)

Sits so still,

Won't you come out?

Yes! I will. (Thumb jumps out)

Here's the church. (Fingers interlocked, palms down)

games at this age. So try playing Train. Choose a child to be the engine. Tie the center of a fifteen-foot light rope around his waist; line the other children up behind him as passengers inside the rope, and have the last child hold the rope ends. He is the caboose. Another is the conductor who marches beside the engine and calls the station stops. The train then moves around the room with the engine saying "chug-chug" to a sign that says "Station." At each station the rope is dropped and the passengers get off. Everyone, of course, must have a turn as engine, conductor and caboose. It is even more fun for the conductor to wear a special paper hat and collect paper money fares. The stations may be named for the streets where the children live.

After this try Animal Chase. Pig (a bean bag) is passed around a circle of children seated on the floor. The pig is closely pursued by a wolf in the form of a block. Both can be passed either way and the children try to keep the wolf from catching the pig.

At luncheon there are fancy paper hats and napkins and candy baskets to take home. Inexpensive favors may now make their appearance along with the ice cream and cake.

Menu: Creamed potatoes, broiled bacon, buttered green beans, milk, birthday cake and ice cream.

For the Five-Year-Old

Have this party for six or seven guests early in the afternoon before the school children come home. And this is the year when special entertainment can be offered. So we have three different parties to suggest, two unusual ones and one of the ordinary party-game sort.

THE COOKIE PARTY: When the guests arrive they are provided with gay

washed aprons, and their hands washed before they are sent to the kitchen. (The aprons might also be the party favors, or each guest might bring one from home.) In the kitchen a simple cookie dough is ready.

Each child rolls out a small amount of dough on a play board or bread board and then cuts his own cookies with small, fancy cutters. (Well-washed pint milk bottles make good rolling pins.) Cookies may be decorated according to the guests' desire with raisins, nuts and colored sugar. The work may be done on small tables and boxes as well as at the big table. The high point of the party may be the fashioning of a cookie man with raisin features. Songs while cookies bake.

Menu: Sandwiches, cookies, ice cream, birthday cake.

THE CONSTRUCTION PARTY: This is an especially nice party for little girls. Each guest will be furnished with a set of toy furniture—the cardboard sort. With scissors, each child cuts out her set and puts together a roomful which is displayed with all the others on a table. The furniture set is the party favor and goes home with the guest.

Menu: Ice cream, birthday cake, simple candy to be taken home.

THE GAME PARTY: Five-year-olds ready for kindergarten are more cooperative in play. Start with last year's singing games; they are more familiar now with London Bridge and The Farmer in the Dell. To these add Drop the Handkerchief and Charlie over the Water.

Charlie over the water

Charlie over the sea

Charlie can't catch a blackbird

And he can't catch me!

Again the players form a circle with one of their number as Charlie in the center of the ring. The circle moves to the left, chanting the song. As the last word is sung, all players squat. Charlie must try to tag one before he is fully down. If successfully tagged, that child becomes Charlie in turn.

For a sitting game repeat the Animal Chase of last year, but add another animal—the Dog. So that now Dog chases Wolf as Wolf pursues Pig around the seated circle.

Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey must not be forgotten either. You may start with this one again if you wish, or use it to conclude the afternoon's fun.

The third new game will be an action one, but without singing. It is Airport: Cut eye, nose and mouth holes in brown paper bags and put them over the children's heads. One child is the airport manager who directs traffic in and out on the runway. The "planes" squat until the airport manager sends them off to fly to California or New York or to some other destination. Wing banking and engine noises are part of the fun. The children will add such details themselves. Be sure that the manager does not forget to give the planes gas or start their engines properly.

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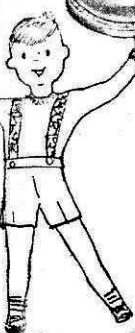
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HALF-A-DOZEN PARTIES

(Continued from page 143)

Menu: Ice cream, birthday cake, candy in baskets.

For Six-Year-Olds

Your six or seven guests are now bound by school hours, so the party time will be from three-forty-five to five-thirty or thereabouts, since busy mothers cannot plan dinner parties. Do not postpone the birthday party until Saturday just because the proper date falls upon a school day. The birthday is one certain date and that is the best time for the party. Chil-



dren are apt to feel that it is not truly a birthday party when it is a postponed one. Because of the lateness of the hour and because children coming home from school are unusually hungry children, it is well to start the party with the refreshments.

Menu: Small peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, birthday cake, ice cream.

Entertainment: The six-year-old is learning to read and is much better at following instructions, but he is not too old for the favorite singing games, so play them again this year. Add Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush, which is familiar to most parents and children.

Bean Bag Toss: Toss bean bags into a narrow wastebasket at a suitable distance. You may score this game for a prize.

Another active game requiring some room to play it in is Statues. Put down on the floor at one end of the room a rope or tape measure, its end secured with weights. Set a starting line at the other end of the room. In the center of the rope, with his back to the players at the starting line, stands "It." He counts aloud to ten and then swings around. The players must be motionless, posed as statues, when he sights them. If "It" sees any one move, that child must get safely to the finish line without "It" catching him on the move. The one who does so successfully wins.

Heel and Toe Race: Use the same start and finish lines as the ones put down for Statues. Players start off

with the right foot and must place the left heel in front of the right toe, touching it, then the right foot in front of the left in the same manner, and so on until one reaches the goal line.

Bean Bag Race: Again your starting line and goal marks are used. But this time bean bags are placed on the contestants' heads. If, while the child is moving at a fast walk, the bag falls off, he must return to the starting line and start again. No steadying hands allowed, of course.

After so many active games it might be well at this point to introduce a quiet one. So we suggest Charades.

Mother Goose charades are best, since all the guests will be familiar with the rhymes. Divide the children into two groups. Give one group some simple properties to work with and let them dramatize a rhyme of their choice. The audience group will then guess the proper verse. Good rhymes to suggest for use are: Old King Cole (requiring pipe, bowl, and one child making the motions of violin playing), Jack-Be-Nimble (candlestick with a boy jumping over it), Little Boy Blue (horn), Little Jack Horner (a pie tin), Jack and Jill (a pail). After each scene the audience and acting group change places.

Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey appears again to end the party. Since the refreshments have come first, it may be somewhat difficult to bring the party to a close. A tactful and pleasant way might be to bring out little crepe paper candy baskets on a tray and pass them around with the suggestion that they are to be taken home.

Treasure Trove

By BETH COX

ONE MORNING not long ago I kissed my little girl good-by at the door. My little girl with the long hair tied in pigtails. My little girl with the shining brown eyes and no teeth in front. Then I climbed the stairs to her rooms, for I had decided that this was the time to clean out Carolyn's toy box. In the depths of the toy box I found my long-lost garden gloves, the skeleton of an umbrella, and unearthed two battered mail-order catalogs, paper dolls without heads, and a lone skate wheel.

A manila envelope was labeled "Carolyn's Important Papers." Along with five chewed pencils were old receipts, used blotters, an assortment of colorful advertisements, Christmas cards and a limp tablet. On the tablet, in Carolyn's large crooked letters, was written: "dear mama i love you."

I sat there on the floor, surrounded by the things that to me had been junk—and to her were so important.

"I'll put them all back," I said softly. "They aren't mine—they're Carolyn's."

So everything went back, just as it had been. And there was the toy box, overflowing and untidy as usual. But buried deep and untouched in the midst of all that childish disorder were the words, "dear mama i love you."

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