

# Planning a birthday party for your 1-year-old

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A baby's first birthday is always something special. It is also potentially costly, but don't feel pressured into going over the top. Your baby won't appreciate such extravagance and small is definitely beautiful at this age! Parents want to celebrate this significant milestone, but at this stage, you and your husband, as well as your friends and family, will probably enjoy it more than your baby, who won't really understand what all the fuss is about!

## Understanding your 1-year-old

Your 1-year-old may be fearful of strangers, and strange or new places. Despite liking other babies, she won't understand how to play with them yet. She will enjoy individual attention and likes to make you laugh. All of which can add up to an intimate, low-budget family party!

## Who to invite

At the closely-attached-to-Mom stage, the best way you can make this a special day for your 1-year-old is by offering her loads of undiluted attention. Her social network will be small and intimate, and that's how she likes it. She won't thank you for a house full of strangers, so stick to close friends and relatives.

This is a party that grandparents will not want to miss, cameras at the ready, either. You may want to invite some friends from your old [childbirth or postnatal classes](#), too. Why not buy or make some really special invitations -- you won't need many for a small gathering.

## Getting the timing right

By age one, your baby may be in a daytime nap routine. The worst time for the excitement of a party is when your baby is tired, so merienda, after nap time, works well. If you are inviting other baby guests, check out their nap times with their parents. Once one starts wailing, they all will! Keep the party brief -- an hour or so is quite long enough at this age.

## Games and activities

Loud bangs from party poppers and bursting balloons may frighten your baby, and discarded poppers and balloons are a serious [choking](#) hazard at this age, so leave them until next year. Why not have some musical fun, such as dancing with your baby, or a nursery rhyme tape on in the background. She'll appreciate a few simple games, such as *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* or *Round and Round the Garden* with plenty of tickles, too. She'll also enjoy peek-a-boo games, finding toys hidden in a box or under a cloth and, of course, she'll enjoy helping you to open her presents (although the wrapping paper will be far more fun than the gift!).

## Choosing a venue

Home is the place where your baby will feel most secure. She'll appreciate a few colorful decorations or, if you want something more adventurous, you could buy a baby ball pool.

## What food to serve

Keep food simple -- most of it will probably end up on the floor in any case!

Finger foods will be excellent for both babies and adults, as eating them won't interrupt play or interaction. Parents may well have brought a bottle or feeder cup with them containing the drink of their choice for their baby, but have water, milk and diluted fruit juices at the ready. If you're providing food for grown ups keep it simple. Avoid peanuts and other foods which may present a choking hazard to little ones.

Some babies will have quite a few [teeth](#) and be able to bite into food; others may still be toothless, so cater for both extremes: organic bread sticks, tiny sandwiches with cheese spread, cut into shapes, cubes of mild cheese, and mini fresh milk cartons. Chocolate fingers are yummy, but messy; plain biscuits may suffice. Jelly tends to be more of a play material at this age and is very messy. Your mini guests will probably eat very little food, so aim for a variety of taste, texture and color rather than quantity.

[Aim for a wonderful cake](#) -- a homemade one is special, but cake or dessert specialists now have a great variety available, or try a bakery. You will need to order this in advance. Don't let your baby near the candle as she will want to grab, not blow, it.

## Choosing a theme

Party themes aren't important to a 1-year-old. You might want to aim for a color-coordinated look, but it's more for the benefit of the keepsake photos than your baby at this stage.

## The party bags

Party bags are really superfluous at this age, and the usual goodies like sweets and balloons are downright dangerous. If you really want to give a going away present to your little guests, opt for a small, safe soft toy each or a board book to chew on.

## Choosing presents

By now, your baby will appreciate something which makes a noise or lights up, or both, so activity centers are a good choice. It's never too early to read, and textured board books are great fun for your tactile baby. A push-along to aid walking skills will be popular, and new bath toys are always welcome. You may want to consider a big, lasting present, such as a baby swing for outdoors or a rocking horse. If you already have loads of toys, she won't object if some people buy her clothes! Check out our other [gift ideas](#).

## Top tips for a successful party

- Have somewhere clean, handy and well-equipped for diaper changing.
- [Breastfeeding](#) moms may appreciate somewhere quiet and private to feed.
- It's [crawling](#), [walking](#) and [climbing](#) time -- stair gates and fireguards are essential.
- Stow away precious ornaments and breakables.
- Keep [pets](#) well out of the way (for their own protection!).
- Keep a very watchful eye on the party area for hazards, such as forks or small swallowable objects, and clear them quickly away.
- Babies will play alongside each other, not together, so keep a variety of toys available within a large, safe floor space.
- Relax -- let your baby and her guests set the pace.
- Make sure you have a willing volunteer to take plenty of photos or unobtrusively wield a camcorder -- you'll be too busy!

Ref.: <http://www.babycenter.com.ph/baby/traditions/1yrpartyguide/>