



SMART

PARTY PLANNING

**HOW TO SAVE MONEY WHEN
PLANNING YOUR PARTY**

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From Birthday Parties to Baby Showers, we all love parties and we throw a lot of them!

But it is easy to get carried away with your budget, especially when you have spent hours in Pinterest getting party inspiration!

Read on to discover our 20 best ways to save money on your party...

1. Set a Budget

The first step to save money on parties is to set a realistic budget for it.

Ask yourself how much are you happy to spend on the party? If you don't have time to save for it, ask yourself what can you afford right now?

If you have some time to save, how much can you save until the event and how much would you like to spend?

Work out how much you can spend and then make that work. Set your budget and stick to it! You can do it if you follow our next tips!

2. Choosing your theme

When choosing your theme, keep in mind who the party is for and what the purpose is. At a simple level, it is usually to celebrate special someone or a special occasion. It's also for family and friends to enjoy some time together.

You don't need a fancy theme for either of these things to be achieved if you don't want to.

Some party themes require much more work and expense than others. For example, one of my favorite party themes is a [Tea Party](#). This can be easily put together using your own china, flowers from your garden and your Mom's lace tablecloth.

3. Use what you already have

Use items for decorations that you already have. You can use decor from your home or from close friends or family. Party supplies leftover from a previous party can easily be re-used from your own parties or friends.

4. Use white crockery and serving dishes

Buy simple white tableware that can be re-used in different parties. You can even share it amongst friends! You can reuse the same tableware for every party while adding color elsewhere with other décor and balloons.

5. Ditch the party supply stores

Avoid party supply stores which tend to be expensive. Instead, visit your local dollar stores or Kmart. There you will find heaps of balloons, tablecloths and other decor items for much less than party supply stores. I am often horrified at the prices in our local party store!



6. Bulk Buy

Bulk discount stores like Costco are great for bulk supplies for large parties. Bulk buying is also good for items you can use for multiple parties, such as plates, cutlery, and napkins.

If you don't have a membership, ask a friend who does to come with you!

7. Thrift stores

Thrift stores are the perfect place to look for platters, trays, bowls, tea sets, decanters, jugs, glasses. You may also find re-usable party decor like picture frames, candles, vases, table cloths and more. You can often find so many great party items at bargain prices in thrift stores.

8. Avoid themed decorations

Don't buy themed decorations. Party supplies saying "40th Birthday" or "Happy First Birthday" are tricky to re-use and will likely be a one-use item. For specific party messages, consider making a homemade banner stating "Happy First Birthday", or hang balloons on the wall in the shape of the birthday number.

9. Find Freebies

Get onto Google and start looking for free printables that you can download and print. There are heaps available, in all kinds of party themes and colors. You can get designs for invites, favors, party games and signs. All you have to pay for is the paper and ink!

10. Keep it small

Some of the best parties are the smallest. It is often said that a child should only have the number of guests the same as his age. So a three-year-old needs 3 guests to avoid being overwhelmed. It's not necessary to invite your child's entire class and will blow the budget.

Limit the guest list to lower the cost and increase the fun.

11. Email invites

You will save time and money if you avoid posting paper invitations. Inviting your guests using emailable invites is better for the environment too!

12. Thank you cards

Save money by making your own simple thank you cards. Alternatively, you can download free printables that you can use. The same goes for thank you cards.



13. Stay home!

If feasible, host the party at your house.

Booking a hall or children's party location can be expensive and have time restrictions.

If your home is not suitable or you just don't want the party there, consider a local park, woodland, beach or recreational area. We have had some beautiful parties at our local lake.

14. Avoid meals

Unless you are having a dinner party, try to organize your party outside of mealtimes so you can offer lighter food options instead. Mid-afternoon parties mean that your Guests have already eaten lunch and will likely eat dinner later so only need a small food offering.

Great budget-conscious food options are:

- Homemade pizzas
- Mini Hot dogs
- Homemade savory muffins
- Vegetable crudité's and dip
- Potato wedges with sour cream
- Fruit platters

15. Go DIY

You can make big savings by making your own food and drinks for your party. Forget the caterer, serve up simple snacks you prepare yourself. A bit of prep work will save you a lot of money on food.

16. Go alcohol-free

If you aren't worried about serving alcohol, you can make big savings here. Inexpensive drinks options are:

- Tea
- Ice Tea
- Sparkling water with a dash of fruit juice
- Fruit mocktail
- Homemade lemonade

Making a party punch is much cheaper than individual servings of wine, juice, or alcohol. Large jugs of water can be served alongside, with some lemon instead of bottled water.

17. Get baking

I always make my own cakes for my parties. A homemade cake tastes so much better than store-bought and is a lot cheaper! Stick to a simple theme and classic decorations of sugar flowers or pretty sprinkles. Even if you are not much of a baker, grab a box of cake mix from the supermarket and use that!

18. Cupcakes

I love making cupcakes and they can be easier than a cake to make yourself. Making your own is much cheaper than buying from a bakery. Use an icing bag to add a swirl of frosting on the top of the cupcake and decorate with simple toppers.

19. Play games

Forget hiring entertainment. Kids especially are more than happy with a few old-fashioned party games or crafts. Think musical statues, pass the parcel, dancing contests or Chinese whispers.

20. Edible favors

There's no need to provide expensive gifts for party favors. Homemade candies or a wrapped cookie are a great budget-friendly option and loved by kids! Make some little thank you tags to add a personalized touch. Other budget-friendly favor ideas include:

- Shop bought candies in a little bag. Tie with ribbon and add a handwritten thank you note.
- A single flower with a handwritten thank you note attached.
- A homemade cupcake in a mini cardboard box.
- A homemade gingerbread cookie in a clear bag. Use a fun shaped cutter like a heart or star.
- A mini bag of homemade peppermint creams, coconut ice or fudge.

If you follow all (or just some) of these ideas, you will certainly be able to make considerable savings on your party. Remember, it's not about how much you spend, but how much fun you all have!

PARTY PLANNING

Checklist

3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Work out budget & number of guests
- Choose a date, time & place
- Reserve the location

1-2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose your theme or color palette
- Send invites. If you're asking guests to RSVP, include a date 1 week before the party
- Plan the menu, make a shopping list, & order food (or choose a caterer)
- Take inventory of supplies you have & what you'll need to get. Consider: serving pieces, flatware, glasses, linens, tables, tent and seating
- Book entertainment if applicable



2-3 WEEKS BEFORE

- Choose decorations & party favors
- Plan party activities, games or crafts
- Order the cake or decide what cake if you are making it
- Organise any help you'll need

1 WEEK BEFORE

- Chase up anyone who hasn't RSVP'd to get a final headcount
- Write out the schedule of events
- If you're serving alcohol, stock the bar. For a 2-3 hour party, plan 3 bottles of wine for every 4 people.

2-3 DAYS BEFORE

- Let your non-invited neighbors know about the party, especially if you expect noise or a lot of cars
- Create a music playlist
- Make room in the fridge/freezer
- Wash dishes and iron linens
- Finish grocery shopping



1 DAY BEFORE

- Set out tables and chairs. Putting out fewer chairs than guests will encourage mingling
- Finish any cooking that can be done ahead of time
- Set up extra trash cans & garbage bags
- Assemble party favors & decorate the party space
- Choose a spot for cards & gifts

DAY OF THE PARTY

- Finish last-minute cooking
- Buy ice and chill beverages
- Set out appetizers or snacks
- Greet guests as they arrive
- Have FUN!