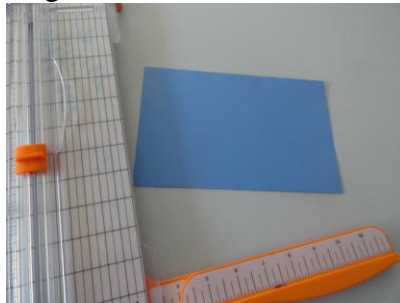


Summer Splash Party

First, you will need to make or buy invitations for your child's birthday party. They are easy to make, and cheaper – if you only need a few. Remember, you aren't going to invite half the neighborhood! Here's how:



1. Cut paper to 5 ½ x 8 ½, fold in half



2. Print information



3. Cut out information



4. Glue information inside



5. Decorate the front of card



6. Your child can add stickers



7. Choose paper for envelope



8. Cut to 8 ½ inch square



9. Cut off one corner



10. Fold in both sides



11. Fold up bottom, glue



12. Close top, address envelope

Next, gather your supplies. You will need at least one child-sized plastic splash pool. If you expect more than three children, you may want to have several splash pools – you can ask your friends to borrow theirs for the day. You can add a child-safe sprinkler, as well. You will want plenty of pool toys: watering cans, sand pails, measuring cups and spoons, inflated balls or floats, etc. You should stay away from watery slip-n-slides, as these are better for older children. Two year olds are less coordinated and may be hurt on them. Insist that all the moms stick around to help supervise your pool party.

On the morning of the party, you will arrange the splash pools in the back yard. Make at least one of them with warm water – some children will not play in a cold pool. You can add dish soap to one, to create a pool full of bubbles. You will want to have plenty of sunscreen available, or put large beach umbrellas around the pools for shade.

Arrival Activities:

None needed for this party. Your little guests will either come in their suits, or put them on as soon as they arrive. Most two-year-olds love water play and they will need very little guidance to get involved. Just hand them a watering can or pool toy and let them take it from there. All parents must keep a sharp eye on their child! Children can drown in an inch of water.

Games:

You might not need any games. The children may just invent their own, splashing, pouring, and drinking the pool water. But it always pays to have a few games, just in case. The weather could be too cool, or you might have an unusual child who does not enjoy water play.

Sandbox Hide ‘n Seek

This game, of course, is only good if you have a sandbox! (If you don't, I strongly encourage you to make it this year's birthday present!) Buy a package of cheap plastic toy figures, like small dinosaurs, or cowboys, or zoo animals. Be sure to have at least one per child – more is better. Bury them in the sandbox. Give each child a toy shovel and a pail, and let them hunt for them.

Bubble Play

You can buy or make some bubble solution. You can buy bubble wands, or find a variety of things in your kitchen to use for wands, like a potato masher or slotted spoon, canning jar lids, straws, pipe cleaners bent into odd shapes, etc. If using a straw, pierce a small hole near the top of the straw. The child will still be able to blow a bubble OUT, but will not be able to suck soapy water IN. A great bubble solution recipe is: one cup of warm water, one tablespoon of dish soap, and one teaspoon of glycerin. Mix and let it sit overnight. (Glycerin is available at pharmacies.)

Painting

Set up large sheets of paper in your yard. You might tape them to the side of the garage or house, or to a large sheet of plywood leaned against the side of the house (anchored so it will not fall down on top of a child). Tempra paint and large brushes are better than watercolors, but use

whatever you have available. The nice thing about painting outside is there is less to clean up! You don't have to protect the carpet, worry about spills, or where to put the pictures while they dry! If you have a large, sliding glass patio door in your backyard, mix a small squirt of dish soap into your tempera paint, and let the children paint their pictures right on the glass. You can leave the picture up all day or for several weeks, then when you are ready to clean it – spray with a garden hose. The squirt of soap will help the paint come off easier.

Tossing Games

You can set containers of different shapes and sizes close together, like a laundry basket, a clean waste basket, a bucket, a bowl. Then gather your mismatched socks and roll them into balls. Let the children practice tossing the sock balls into the buckets. Clap when they make it. Clap when they don't. Tossing sock balls (or bean bags) is better than throwing balls when there are a number of people in the yard. A sock won't hurt if it hits a child, and it is less likely to sail across the fence, over the roof, or be caught by the wind and wander across the street.

Foods:

Cubes of cheese
Cubes of watermelon
Grapes

Peanut butter balls
Animal crackers
Apple Juice or Milk

Birthday Cake
Ice cream

Peanut butter balls are lots of fun to make – you can even let your child help you make them the day before. Sometimes called “edible play dough”, you mix a cup of peanut butter, a cup of powdered milk, and a cup of honey together thoroughly. Then roll into small balls. You can roll the balls in powdered sugar, shredded coconut, or chopped nuts. Then refrigerate, and eat! If your dough is too dry, add more honey. If too sticky, add more powdered milk.

Presents:

A great present to give your child this year would be a sandbox, if you don't already have one. They are easy to make. You can get fancy, and build a wooden, bottomless box with seats, or simply dig a wide, shallow hole and fill it with sand. You can buy bags of sandbox sand, which is convenient, especially if you have a very small sandbox. You would need about 30 50 lb bags to fill a sandbox that is 8 feet by 4 feet. It may be cheaper for a larger sandbox to have a load of washed sand delivered. In my city, washed sand is only \$24.25 for a cubic yard (2700 pounds) with a \$40 delivery charge. Washed sand is perfect sandbox sand. For more information on building your sandbox, you can read my article at: <http://raisingcreativechildren.com/backyard-sandbox/>. If you plan to do this in advance, you could suggest to your guests' parents that your child could use sandbox toys for a birthday gift. You might get some duplicate gifts, but then your child would have some to share.

Departure:

After about two hours, you will want to wind the party down. It should be nap time, and you definitely want to end the party before anyone goes into an exhausted melt-down tantrum. You can empty the pools, and get your child changed into dry clothes, and gently inform your guests that it is nap time, if they haven't taken the hint. Don't forget to take lots of pictures! For young children it is customary to send them home with a small prize or goody bag. You can get an inexpensive package of bath-time squirt toys, open it and give one or two to each guest.