

Should I invite ALL the kids in his class?

Throwing the perfect party

Do I plan for parents to stick around?

Start party etiquette early

BY RACHEL GENSLER

Gelebrating the day your child was born is a wonderful event, but as your child grows older, the event can also be used as a chance to teach your child a few lessons.

"Teaching your child to write thank-you notes is a gift that will last much longer than any of the brightly wrapped presents that he opens on the big day," says the Web site, www.pbs.com. "You'll be teaching consideration, gratitude, and writing skills."

The Web site also suggests using the party as time to teach your child etiquette about receiving gifts without hurting feelings, and properly thanking those people who have taken the time to come to the party and celebrate as well as giving a gift.

During the planning stages of the party, explain to your child the role of a host, which includes giving out goodie bags, possibly taking coats and helping to serve snacks, the site says.

During the planning stages, you might also run into some etiquette questions. Should you invite siblings?

Huntington residents Melissa Faulkner and Betsy Hager both say yes.

"We welcome parents and siblings," Faulkner said. "It would be hard for parents to work around the convenience of finding someone to watch the other children in order to take one child to a party or not take them because of the other children."

Faulkner also welcomes parents and likes to stay when she takes her 5-year-old son to a birthday party.

"When I take Dakota to a party, I always stay to keep an eye on him," she said. "In case he was to get hurt or if he was to (hurt) another kid or anything, I would like to be able to correct him."

Hager agrees. She has four children and says it works best when siblings are invited, especially if you are expecting parents to stay, too.

"Don't have a party where you

expect the parent to stay with their child if siblings are not allowed. It isn't fair to the parent who will either have to find and pay for childcare so that their child

can attend the party sibling-free, or the child who was invited will not be able to attend," Hager said.

"It annoys me when siblings are not planned for at this age because there are almost always younger siblings or siblings

of a similar age, and it is hard when they are not welcome."

When a parent is no longer needed to stay, this can change, however. But when is the right age?

Check with the parent hosting the party, according to the site www2.scholastic.com. If the invitation doesn't say "... and family" then chances are you do not need to stay. If you are uncomfortable leaving them, it is reasonable to call and see if it would be OK to stay.

When you call to R.S.V.P. is a great time to ask any questions and discuss any of your concerns.

And if the invitation requests you to R.S.V.P., do so in a timely manner. As soon as you know whether your child can attend is the best time to let the parent know.

It is also acceptable if you are the host and you haven't heard from people to call and check if they are planning to attend. This might be a good idea to make sure they received the invitation.

Do you need to invite a child's entire class?

"Don't have a party where you expect the parent to stay with their child if siblings are not allowed. It isn't fair to the parent who will either have to find ... childcare ... or the child who was invited will not be able to attend."

- Betsy Hager,
Huntington resident

PARTY IDEAS

Out of ideas for a party? Look at the Internet for ideas for games and themes. Sometimes you can also find good deals on party supplies here.

Sites for supplies:

- www.partysupplies-world.com

- www.partycheap.com

- www.shindigz.com

- www.partypro.com

- www.partysecret.com

Need ideas for activities?

Check out these Web sites:

- www.partygameideas.com

- www.partygamecentral.com

- www.amazingmoms.com

- www.simplifun.com

- www.party.kaboose.com

- www.familyfun.go.com

- www.celebrations.com

No, says the site www.Life123.com. But, take care to mail the invitations rather than sending them to school to avoid hurt feelings. Some schools and classrooms actually have a rule about this, so check with them before sending invitations to school anyway.

What should you do about those from divorced families? Make it about the birthday child, Hager says.

Hager and her husband are both from divorced families, and they used to host multiple parties to accommodate everyone.

She said it is unnecessary, time consuming, expensive and too difficult on the parents of the child.

"We finally decided that divorced or not, the grandparents could come to the big party where everyone was welcome or find time to throw their own party for the child," she said.

"Interestingly enough, it worked. Not without some irritation to the grandparents, but the child's birthday is not about them. It is about the child."