



INTRODUCTION AND PARTY INVITATIONS

Your backyard is the perfect place to host a carnival party for kids. Get the whole family to help prepare by making booths, planning the games, and buying the prizes together.

Big Ticket Invitations. Cut out giant tickets from construction paper and write the party details using a real ticket as a model. Or, buy a roll of tickets at the party store and write the details on the back.

Big Tent Invitations. Using bright heavy cardstock, create an invitation in the shape of a circus tent. Draw curtain stripes with crayons, or use fabric scraps and a hot glue gun to give your invitation an authentic tent feel. Using a small wooden clip, attach an "Admit One" ticket to the big tent. In the center, write your party details.

Use thematic language to bring the carnival to life for your guest: *Come One! Come All! To ____'s Big Top Carnival Birthday Party!*

DECORATIONS

Rent a helium tank and blow up balloons. Make one large balloon arch and attach a few carnival Mylar® balloons to the birthday child's chair. Colorful sheets placed over the party chairs would add more color to your carnival.

Purchase streamers in an array of bright, primary colors and have them hanging bunched heavily together from the ceiling. When the kids enter the carnival they can walk through the streamers to the fun.

Post a bright yellow poster board with a large red arrow with the word "Carnival" written on it pointing the way to the fun.

For the big top, hang a large sheet over four standing poles to create a tent effect.

Purchase tableware in primary colors and set the table. Hang a mock trapeze with a stuffed monkey on it over the party table for added décor.



Party Theme Planning From **BIRTHDAYS**

Transform large appliance boxes into carnival booths. Help your birthday child decorate them with poster paints and add stars, flowers, and other designs. Set up booths around the yard. Blow up balloons and tie them to the booths. Make signs for each booth, such as "Balloon Pop" or "Win a Prize!"

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Hire a face painter (or volunteer who is creative with paint!) to paint little carnival animals on the guests' faces when they first enter the party.

Give the kids an empty popcorn box and a string of tickets to use at the different activity booths.

Run your party activities from the cardboard boxes you made into carnival booths. Ask for parent volunteers to run the various booths and hand out prizes. The prizes can be little toys found at a dollar store, such as spinning tops, bouncy balls, plastic animals, candy, etc. Organize the following games at the booths using stuff from around your house:

Fishing Game. Mock up a fishing pole with a paper clip on the end. Have the kids throw the line over the box. Have an adult put a prize on the paper clip and the kid reel it in.

Hula Hoop Throw. Have the kids throw a ball through hula hoops to win a prize.

Have a wading pool on hand with little rubber ducky toys floating in it. Little ones can pick up a rubber ducky, look for a number on the bottom, and receive a prize that correlates with the number.

Balloon Darts. Blow up balloons and tape them to a cardboard box. Have kids throw darts to see how many they can break. Make sure to have additional balloons on hand as the others pop away.

Guess the number of marbles in a jar.

Water Balloon Toss. Have kids pair off and start to throw water balloons to one another. After each successful toss, have the kids take a step back and continue with the toss. The last team still throwing the water balloon wins.

Balloon Pop. Write down the names of prizes on small pieces of paper and insert them into balloons. Blow up the balloons and have the kids try to pop them by stomping or sitting on them—blindfolded. Once they've popped, have the kids collect the prize written on the papers.

Nosy the Clown. Paint a box to look like a clown face. Cut out a hole for the nose. Have the kids throw beanbags or tennis balls into the hole to win prizes.



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Spray Away. Set up ping-pong balls on golf tees. Provide water toys to the kids and see who can knock the most balls off of their tees with the water.

Ping Pong Toss. Set up a large triangle of plastic clear tumblers on a low table. Cut out different colored circles and place them at the bottom of each tumbler. Assign different points to each color. Provide a set of ping-pong balls to your guests and see who can rack up the most points.

Who doesn't mind getting a **pie in the face**? Adult volunteers or party guests! Check to see who would be game for this. Fill tin foil pie tins with whipped cream and top with a cherry. Have the guests try to throw a pie into the volunteer's face.

Create a **Fortune Teller Stand.** Place a round fish bowl in an overturned dog dish. Fill the bowl with fortune cookies and read the kids' fortunes throughout the party.

Under the big top, have a volunteer or hired clown entertain kids with a silly routine.

PARTY MENU

Serve typical carnival treats, such as popcorn, peanuts, pretzels, snow cones, slushies, and lemonade. Make corn dogs on a stick and serve with corn on the cob.

Have a traditional BBQ with hot dogs and hamburgers. Line the party table with boxes of Cracker Jack®, animal crackers, and bags of cotton candy for additional treats.

Have the kids make sundaes by providing three flavors of ice cream, along with chocolate sauce, peanuts, cherries, and other fun toppings.

Make a **Carousel Cake.** Bake a round cake. Frost it with pastel icing and place animal crackers and peppermint sticks all around the cake to make it look like a carousel.

Serve old fashioned lemonade and cream sodas with curly straws.

PARTY FAVORS

Kids can take home a bright-colored cup filled with the prizes they won from the games, as well as extra boxes of Cracker Jack and animal crackers. Make sure to put the kids' names on the cups as a personal touch.

Alternatively, if you have given out tickets to the kids as they win games, set up a prize area and fill large clear jars with candies and small toys. Let the kids redeem their tickets for the prizes in this area.

Make sure to take pictures of the kids playing carnival games during your party and send the pictures in your thank you notes as a carnival party memento.

