



INTRODUCTION AND PARTY INVITATIONS

Are you looking for a great way to celebrate a summer birthday? Or perhaps your child's big day falls during the winter and he or she wants to escape the cold for a little while. Whatever the reason or season, a beach-themed bash or pool party is always a big hit with kids.

Don't worry if you don't live near the beach or have a pool in your yard. You can still throw a pool party by reserving time at a community pool or local swim club. Even better, with the right decorations, food, and activities you can plan a rockin' beach party at home any time of the year. This is a wonderful idea for kids with birthdays in the middle of winter: a perfect little taste of summer during the coldest time of the year.

Ready to hang ten? Read on for more pool and beach party how-to's.

Decide on a Location

The first decision you need to make is what form your child's birthday bash will take. Here are some options:

- A swimming party around your backyard pool
- A swimming party at a local pool (outdoors in warm weather; indoors in cold weather)
- An outdoor beach bash without a pool, but with a sprinkler and water toys
- An indoor beach-themed party that evokes sand and sea

Safety First

Children always need supervision, but especially when they are around water. Ask the parents of young guests to stick around to keep an eye on their child, or arrange for other adults to help chaperone. If you are hosting the party at home with your own pool, you may want to consider hiring a lifeguard during the party for added pool safety.



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Sea-Worthy Invitations

Your party invitations are a great way to alert guests to your pool or beach theme. You can purchase ready-made invitations and fill in the details, or you can make your own custom invitations by cutting cardstock or poster board into sand- and sea-themed shapes.

Some possibilities:

- Inner tubes
- Fish
- Sunglasses
- The sun
- A wave
- A beach ball
- A surf board

Alternatively, create **Beach Ball Invitations**. Buy small, inexpensive beach balls, write the party details on each ball with a permanent marker, and mail them to each guest in a padded envelope. Have the guests bring the ball to the party.

In your invitation, ask the guests to wear their bathing suits and cover-ups (or under their warm clothes if it is winter), and bring a change of clothes, beach towels, sunscreen, sunglasses, and hats; alternatively, you can provide these items for all the guests.

DECORATIONS

At the front entrance to the party, bunch blue, white, and green balloons together to create a beach effect.

Buy plastic fish and put them on the fence, hang them in trees, or place them on the party table.

Create jellyfish by attaching blue and green streamers to dinner-sized paper plates with tape. Hang them from your ceiling with fishing line at the front entrance to create a floating jellyfish effect.

Fill the kiddie pool with plastic fish.

Set out colorful beach towels.

Make a giant sun from yellow poster board and tack it up on a tree or the fence. For your party table, use blue, green, and white tableware to evoke a beach theme. Scatter sand and small shells for confetti, and use a sun Mylar® balloon attached to an oceanic stuffed animal as your table centerpiece.



For more great birthday party planning tips and advice online, visit www.birthdaysrus.com. For the best party supplies and gifts go to www.toysrus.com, or shop at a Toys"R"Us store near you.

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GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

The entire party time will be taken with the kids swimming and playing together in the pool. Hopefully, you will dive right in and lead some games, or have a few parents who are interested in getting in as well so they can lead games too:

Marco Polo. One child closes his eyes and tries to find and tag other kids by following the sound of their voices. The child who is "it" says "Marco," and the other kids respond by saying "Polo."

Hold a **Rubber Duck Race.** Give each child a rubber duck and have them use their noses to move it to the other side of the pool. First one there wins!

Play **Shark!** Have the birthday kid start off as the shark and tag the fish (the rest of the kids in the pool). As the fish are tagged, they also become sharks. The game is over when the pool is full of sharks!

Have a splash contest to see who can make the biggest splash! Make sure to follow pool rules, however!

Place floating toys throughout the pool and divide the kids into two teams. Blow a whistle and see which team can gather the most floaters in two minutes.

Have the kids swim through rings, i.e. hula hoops.

Play water volleyball.

For younger children, have a water balloon toss.

Splash Tag. Divide the players into two teams. Give each team a tub of water and each player a large sponge. Have them try to tag each other with the wet sponges.

Splash Machine. Divide the kids into two teams and have them line up. Have the players pass a bucket of water down the line and dump it into a tub. Rotate the line so everyone has a turn at the front. The team with the most water in the tub at the end wins the game. The other team will be the wettest!

Balloon Pop. Fill a kiddie pool with water and throw in enough balloons for each player. Have the kids try to pop the slippery, wet balloons in the water by sitting on them.

And if you don't have a pool, the kids can cool themselves off in a lawn sprinkler or an inflatable water slide (you may be able to rent these at your local rental center).

Place small toys in balloons, fill the balloons with water, and freeze them. The kids will



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have to pop the balloon and let the ice melt before they can retrieve their toys.

PARTY MENU

Grilled food and cold treats really say summer. Here's what to serve at your beach bash:

Hot dogs

Hamburgers and cheeseburgers

Bite-sized veggies with ranch dressing for dipping

Corn on the cob

Chips and pretzels (serve them in new beach buckets)

Watermelon (make sure the seeds are removed if you're serving it to young children)

Fish Chow. Combine popcorn, raisins, gummy fish, Goldfish® crackers, and chocolate chips. What a yummy snack!

Small sandwiches cut into little fish shapes and filled with your favorites.

Pizza would be an easy option for this party too.

Blue Jell-O® with gummy fish inside.

Sunflower Cake. Bake a round cake and frost it with yellow-tinted icing. Place Twinkies® around the cake and frost them green to make petals. Top cake with chocolate kisses.

Arctic Oranges. Cut off the tops of oranges, using a zigzag cut. Hollow the oranges and fill them with orange sherbet. Replace the tops of the oranges and keep frozen until ready to serve.

Frozen Slushies. Fill paper cups with fruit juice. Freeze two hours, then stir. Refreeze another hour, stir again, and serve.

Lemonade and water.

Juice boxes and small water bottles would be easy to have on hand if you are at a party venue.

No summer gathering is complete without ice cream! Get your guests involved in dessert by setting up a make-your-own sundae bar. Arm each child with a cone or bowl



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and a spoon and let them choose from several ice cream flavors as well as toppings such as hot fudge, caramel, sprinkles, chocolate chips, nuts, coconut, crushed candy, and whipped cream. Yum!

PARTY FAVORS

Kids love getting goody bags, and a beach/pool party theme lends itself to plenty of cute, inexpensive giveaway items. Skip the traditional goody "bag" and instead stock a plastic bucket (you can use child-safe paint to monogram each bucket with a child's name, if you're feeling crafty) with a plastic shovel and some of these items:

- Plastic sunglasses
- A sun visor or cap
- A jar of bubbles
- Pencils with fish or mermaid decorations
- Fish-shaped foods like Goldfish® crackers or gummy fish
- Plastic beach ball

Be sure to take pictures of the Splash 'n' fun and include them in your party thank you notes.



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