



INTRODUCTION AND PARTY INVITATION

Thomas the Tank Engine™ is one of the most beloved characters of preschool children who are enthralled with trains and all things related to the railroad. This is a wonderful character party theme to throw for your little train engineer and his friends. All aboard for a great time with Thomas and his friends.

Create a Train Ticket Invitation. Using heavy blue cardstock, create a train ticket and write the pertinent party details on it.

Alternatively, hand deliver small engineer caps with a small card attached to the inside portion of the cap. On a small blue or red card, write your party details. Make sure to ask your guests to wear their caps to the party.

Use thematic language: *All aboard to celebrate _____ 's birthday!*

DECORATIONS

Mark the party location by hanging balloons around the front of your home.

Use chalk to draw tracks up to your front door.

Tape a sign saying, "Welcome to the Island of Sodor" to your front door.

Tape homemade signs (Railroad Crossing, Kids Crossing, Stop Sign, Light Signal, Knapford Station, and Cake Time & Departure) around the party area.

Cover the party table with a *Thomas the Tank Engine* table cover and ensure each place setting has a *Thomas the Tank Engine* plate, napkin, cup and utensils.

Alternatively, cover your party table with a white sheet and create train tracks down the center of the party table using black streamers. Place small train toys on the tracks and attach balloons to the toys for added décor.



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Place a *Thomas the Tank Engine* stadium cup at the head of the table to mark the birthday child's spot.

Add a *Thomas the Tank Engine* toy to the table as a centerpiece.

Hang balloons in bunches for best effect by tying a colorful ribbon around the strings of several balloons, so they hang together. Try blue, yellow, and red.

Attach streamers to a light fixture in the center of the party table to add to the festive environment. Create multicolor streamers by placing two different colored streamers back-to-back and twisting (try blue and red).

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Greet the party guests as they arrive by welcoming them to "An Island of Sodor Trip," and by giving them red bandanas, whistles, and engineer caps (if you didn't use the caps for your party invitation).

Have the guests guess how many nuts and bolts are in a jar you filled earlier. Award the guest with the closest guess a ribbon or Thomas bubble blower at the end of the party. While waiting for the guests to arrive, have the kids make a few thematic crafts to take home from the party:

Box Train Car Decoration. Paint large cardboard boxes blue and line them up like a train. Pre-cut train wheels, tank face, windows, numbers and other items from construction paper. Have the guests decorate the train cars.

Train Wheel Necklace. Dye pasta wheels black, blue and red by dipping in liquid dye or rubbing around in dye paste. Spread bowls of colored pasta wheels in front of the children. Hand guests a string and help them as they make their own train wheel necklace.

Start each activity by blowing a whistle and announcing, "All Aboard!"

Follow the Locomotive. Line up the guests with the birthday child at the head of the train. Turn on some fun music and have the birthday child lead the train of people by making creative moves that everyone must follow (jumping, hopping, skipping, spinning, rolling on the ground, waving arms and any other fun gesture) and train noises like "Peep Peep!"

Alternative: gather kid-size boxes, remove the tops and bottoms, and paint them to look like an engine, cars and caboose. Play "Follow the Locomotive" with guests holding up their own boxcar.



Red Light, Green Light. Lay two lengths of rope or crepe paper ribbon about twenty feet apart in the party area. The birthday child stands in front of one line acting as the Train Conductor, and the other guests stand behind the opposite line. The game begins when the Conductor turns his or her back on the guests and shouts, "Green Light!" The Conductor then counts to five as loud as possible. The other players must walk quickly toward the Conductor. When finished counting, the Conductor shouts, "Red Light!" and turns around quickly. The guests must freeze instantly. If the Conductor catches anyone moving, that player must return to the starting line.

Train Track Crossing. Cut out four large rectangles from the white cardboard (about 12" x 15"). Use black or brown marker to color in railroad rails and cross ties. Tape ribbon/crepe streamer across the floor to mark a start line (which will also serve as a finish line). Place two chairs about fifteen to twenty feet away from the start line.

Divide guests into two equal lines and give the first person in each line two cardboard cutout "train tracks." Explain that the train tracks are the only thing they can step on as they travel from the front of the line, around a chair and back to the line again. Begin the game by having the first child place one train track on the ground and step on it; then place the other train track on the ground in front and step on it. The player then picks up the first train track and places it on the ground in front of the other. When the player goes around the chair and back, they hand the two train tracks to the next player in line. The first team to get all members around the chair and return is the winner.

Alternative: to make the game longer and more challenging, give overalls and a conductor's hat to each team. In addition to walking on train tracks, each child must first put on the train conductor outfit.

Engineer to Caboose Phone Message. Have the party guests sit in a circle. Instruct the birthday child to think of a message the Engineer would like to send to the Caboose (it can be any message – directions, friendly hello, observation about the scenery). Then tell the birthday child to whisper that message to the next child in the circle. The message must go all the way around the circle, whispered from one child to the next. The Caboose, the child on the opposite side of the birthday child, announces the message out loud. The birthday child then announces the original message. Prepare to be surprised at how the Engineer's message has changed as it was sent.

Pass the Tank. Classic "Hot Potato" game only using a *Thomas the Tank Engine* or other train car. Gather children in a circle. Hand them the train car and turn on the music. They are to pass the train car around quickly until the music stops. The person holding the train when the music stops must temporarily leave the circle. Explain before starting the game that throwing the train car is an automatic out. Award a series of prizes, such as stickers for eliminated players, so everyone feels included.

Beanbag Toss. Paint several shoeboxes blue and line them up like a Thomas train. Have guests take turns trying to throw a beanbag into the train cars. Reward guests with a



prize. Vary the prize depending on the train cars (a different prize for each shoebox).

Pin the Whistle on Thomas. Enlarge a *Thomas the Tank Engine* face. Cut circles out of the black construction paper for a train whistle. Place tape, or spray adhesive on the circular nose shapes so they stick (if using spray adhesive, let them dry sticky side up). Hand each child a nose. Tell them they are to pin the whistle on Thomas. Blindfold children one at a time, spin them, and point them in the direction of Thomas.

Train Talk. Gather the guests together and initiate a talk about trains. Ask what trains carry, where they go, what kinds of trains exist, what type of fuel trains need, and any other train information that you might know.

PARTY MENU

Train Car Sandwiches. Make triple-decker sandwiches using the birthday child's favorite fillings. Remove crusts. Slide two pretzel sticks through the middle of the sandwiches for axles. Place half an olive or gumdrop at the end of each pretzel stick for wheels. Lay licorice strings on a platter like train tracks. Use the remaining pretzel sticks for cross ties. Arrange the car sandwiches on the platter so it looks like they are moving around the platter.

Purchase a train cookie cutter, and cut out gelatin, brownies, cheese slices, and Kellogg's® Rice Krispies Treats® using the cutter to make it thematic.

Conductor's Snack Mix. Combine traditional Chex Mix® cereals, nuts, and pretzels and add BBQ sauce to make it a conductor's favorite.

Blue Train Sugar Cookies. Prepare sugar cookies according to recipe and cut into train shapes with cookie cutter. Decorate with blue icing.

Blue Slush. Using blue drink mix, 1-1/2 cups sugar, 2 cups pineapple juice or white grape juice, and ice cubes (approximately 4-6 cups), place all ingredients in blender on high until uniformly mixed. Serve immediately after blending.

Thomas Face Cake. Bake one large rectangular flat cake and one 9" round cake according to directions. Place round cake on top of flat cake. Frost round cake with white icing. Dye rest of icing blue and frost flat cake. Decorate the top of the round cake like Thomas' face.

Birthday Crossing Cake. Bake one large rectangular flat cake according to cake mix directions. After cake cools, cut crosswise into four 3" x 9" rectangles (save remainder). Place in X shape on serving plate, with corners touching and an empty square in the middle of the X. Fill in the square with leftover cake from previous step. Frost white.



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Outline top edges of the X with blue. Write "Birthday" on one half of the X, and "Crossing" on the other.

Toy Train Cake. Bake 1 large rectangular flat cake according to cake mix directions. Tint icing green and frost cake. Spread black sugar as wide as toy train across cake for the track bed. Draw cross ties with brown icing and rails with black/gray icing. Carefully clean toy train and place on tracks.

PARTY FAVORS

Send the kids home with their caps, bandanas, and whistles for the party favors. If you want to provide additional goodies, collect the bandanas during the party, and fill them with a few small *Thomas the Tank Engine* items such as stickers, blowouts, train whistles, bubbles, backpack clips, and train erasers. Tie up the bandanas with a blue ribbon for additional goody pouches.

Make sure to send thank you notes to all of the little engineers that attended your party with a picture of the kids together dressed up as train conductors with the birthday child.



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