

Disability Campaign.org

7 Inclusive Birthday Party Tips

Birthday parties are so important to children. Unfortunately, sometimes children with disabilities are not invited to birthday parties. It may be that your child who is being celebrated isn't "friends" with the child who has a disability. Or perhaps, it is you, the parent, who is hesitant about having a kid with a disability at the party — after all, you haven't really been around children with

special needs or maybe your house isn't that accessible. Whichever the case, as the parent, you can make a difference in instilling an attitude of inclusion in your children. Below are 7 tips on how you can put together a more inclusive birthday party that allows children with and without disabilities to participate in the fun and celebrate your little one.



1. **Invite the child.** It sounds pretty self-explanatory — and it is! If you're inviting all your son or daughter's classmates, make sure you include the classmate with a disability. Also, remember to consider the child's parent's approval. Understand that the child and/or his parent(s) may choose to not attend, but at least the simple act of extending an invitation to a birthday party can mean the world of a difference for a family affected by disability. Every parent wants to know their children are included and thought of.

2. **Don't make assumptions.** The fact that the child has autism doesn't necessarily mean he or she will be antisocial at the party ... or, just because the child is in a wheelchair doesn't mean he or she is going to need assistance with everything. Talk to the child's parent(s) to see if there is anything you should be mindful of, including dietary restrictions and food allergies, medical illnesses that may require emergency treatment (for example, juvenile diabetes), and any physical limitations, such as a sensitivity to sunlight. Also ask what are some favorite activities in which the child can partake and enjoy. This will let the parents know you care about their child and that you want to make sure their child is included in a safe and fun manner.



3. **Choose an accessible venue or take simple steps to make your home a little more accessible.** If the child is in a wheelchair, uses a mobility device or white cane, consider the venue in which the party will be held and inquire about the accessibility. If the party

will be held at your house, you can take simple measures such as moving furniture a bit so that the child can move around the house, and creating a spot at the table without a chair so that the child can wheel him or herself over to the table to eat or draw. Lookout for areas that could be a trip hazard if the child uses a walker or white cane.

4. **Have a variety of activity and game options.** For example, you may have a slip 'n slide for the children who are mobile and a "Let's Go Fishing" board game or ring toss for the children who cannot use their legs. If the child is blind or visually impaired, play a "Guess This Song" game. Or, if the child is nonverbal, a game of charades can be fun for all!

5. **Provide food that all the children can eat.** Children with food allergies or sensitivities are at risk of consuming foods that may be harmful to them. For example, a peanut allergy could lead to an anaphylactic reaction, or consumption of gluten could cause severe intestinal damage for a child with Celiac disease. If after conversing with the child's parent, you learn the child cannot eat certain foods, make sure such foods are not available at the party. This will reduce temptation and minimize health hazards.

6. **Understand that the child may get tired and/or want or need to leave early.** He or she may not have the same stamina as the rest of the children. If the child has autism or a mental health disorder, too much activity or noise could be overwhelming. Any physical health conditions could make a child fatigue quicker. If the child must leave early, do not see it as a total reflection of you not having been able to accommodate the child. It may simply be that he or she needs a break — and that's ok (don't we all from time to time?).



7. **Keep an eye out for bullying.** Children with disabilities are often targeted for bullying because of their differences. If you notice any sign of bullying, stop it right away. Rather than focus on the differences, remind the children of their similarities and that we are to treat people with kindness and respect. After all, you wouldn't like it if your child was being picked on. Remember, as the adult, you can help educate young ones on how to treat people with disabilities.

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