



Best birthday behavior: Etiquette tips for party hosts

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Basic etiquette rules apply to kids' birthday parties whether it's responding to an RSVP in a timely fashion or helping your child write thank-you notes. Cindy Grosso, founder of the [Charleston School of Protocol and Etiquette](http://www.charlestonetiquette.com), offers the following advice and tips:

How many children should I invite?

For children younger than 5, the rule of thumb is to invite the birthday age, plus one. For little ones, keep the party to about an hour and avoid mid-afternoon naptime. Don't feel obligated to invite your child's whole class.

What if uninvited siblings show up?

First, make it clear on the invitation if siblings are welcome. If they aren't, make sure the invitation is addressed to the invited child only. Confirm that just one child is attending when the parent RSVPs. Just in case, have two or three extra goodie bags or crafts so an unexpected child isn't excluded.

Is it OK to send invitations via email?

Email invitations are acceptable, but, if you can, send a paper invitation. Kids love getting mail, plus the invitation sets the theme for the party.



Should we bother with thank-you notes?

Etiquette rules say that if you open a gift in front of the gift giver and offer a verbal “thank you,” you don’t have to send a card. But it’s never wrong to send a thank-you note, and it’s a great lesson for kids. Even if the child is too young to write a full message, let him draw a picture or sign her name.

Grosso said parents can often get so caught up in planning the perfect party, they miss the teachable moments, such as being a good host, graciously accepting a gift you may not like and writing thank-you notes.

“Don’t miss the life lesson of a birthday party,” she said. “It’s not over when you finish the cake.”

