

# Planning the Perfect Baby Shower<sup>1</sup>

Planning a baby shower can be a joyous experience. After all, a new mom is going to have a baby – such an exciting time! On the other hand, actually throwing the party can be overwhelming. Do you need a theme? What games will everyone play? And what do people eat at these things? Below are some suggestions that may help you through each stage of planning, with some help from the creative party planners in the ParentsPlace.com Community!

## Themes give a party structure

Although themes aren't mandatory, they can help you structure the event. Coming up with invitations, menu ideas, games, favors, and gifts are easier if you have a theme to guide you.

Before selecting the theme, you must analyze your guest list. Take into account the number of attendees as well as the personalities of the guests. If your shower will be large, for example, you might want to avoid a personal, intimate theme. Otherwise, by the time you get through the 15th guest's discourse on what motherhood means to her, you'll have to awaken remaining guests with a real shower!

Here are some ideas for themes to jump start your baby shower planning:

- **The “Better Baby” baby shower:** This theme is designed to contribute to the baby's intellectual development. From food to decorations, think in terms of red, white and black with bold shapes.
- **The “Warm and Fuzzy” baby shower:** Intimacy is key. From activities to gifts, close friends can help prepare the mom-to-be for the upcoming addition with advice and stories.
- **Spa Day for Mommy:** Soon enough, the baby will be getting all the attention. This shower is for the mother and may even include a relaxing reflexology massage during the party! Gifts would be theme-based.
- **“Jack and Jill” baby shower:** Why leave the dad-to-be out of the fun? This type of shower is great for couples who have shared every step of the pregnancy. And when it comes to food, forego tea sandwiches and think barbecue!

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from ParentsPlace.com, written by Lisa Schulman.

## Planning the Perfect Baby Shower, continued...

### Invitations

If you are having a theme, carry over the concept to the invitations. Here are some other ideas to spark your creativity:

- **Decorate with stickers:** Numerous baby-themed stickers are available at your local office supply or drug store.
- **Use clip art:** Clip art from any program can add visual interest and humor to invitations.
- **Think beyond a square:** Complete the invitation, fold it up like a diaper, secure it with real diaper pins, and hand it out or mail it off in an envelope.
- **Reveal the theme:** Clue the guests in on the type of party – especially if you'd like the gifts to reflect the theme. You can also suggest items you know the mom-to-be needs, or tell guests to call you if they need ideas.

Don't forget to send mom a copy of the invitation for her records, but be sure to take out any information, such as gift ideas, that you don't want her to see.

### Activities and Games

There are many shower games you can play. If you have access to the Internet, you might want to check out [www.momsonline.com/hottips](http://www.momsonline.com/hottips) and select "Baby Shower Games & Gifts" for list of more than 75 baby shower games, or [www.ParentsPlace.com](http://www.ParentsPlace.com) and go to their "Baby Shower Bulletin Board." Here are some more favorites (from ParentsPlace.com):

- **The Beginning of Endless Advice:** Give mom a hint of what's to come – unsolicited advice! Have each guest write one parenting suggestion on an index card. Seal the cards in an envelope for the new mom to open after giving birth.
- **Who's Who:** All guests bring a snapshot of themselves as babies. Hang them up on the wall and have a contest to see who can correctly identify the most pictures.
- **Baby Bingo:** Play Bingo, but use baby words instead of letters or numbers. Instead of A-21, call out "Poopy Pacifier!" The winner has to yell out the baby's name.
- **No Baby Allowed:** Guests are instructed not to say the word 'baby' at the shower. If they slip up, they have to volunteer an hour of free baby-sitting to the mom-to-be.

## Planning the Perfect Baby Shower, continued...

### Favors and Food

Favors can be as simple as candy wrapped up in a napkin that's been folded and sealed to resemble a baby's diaper. Or you can buy inexpensive piggy banks and fill them with treats. Pacifier necklaces made of candy are also popular.

Food may be theme-based. Or, if the mom-to-be has craved beans throughout her pregnancy, make one heaping pot of chili to feed everyone. Check out some very easy recipe ideas offered by members of the ParentsPlace.com Community (web site address: [www.parentsplace.com/family/recipes](http://www.parentsplace.com/family/recipes)).

### Fabulous Gift Ideas

Here are some ideas for baby shower gifts that are sure to be hits:

- Gift certificate(s) to a local portrait store.
- Clothes for the older baby. Mom and child will get the most use out of outfits for 12 months and older, when baby's growth begins to slow down.
- Have everyone contribute one small package of diapers. Be sure to coordinate sizes to prevent returns. Ask guests to alternate brands so mom can experiment with all kinds.
- Baby-sitting certificates are always welcome. If, after six months, you haven't heard from the new parents, call! They may be reluctant to leave the baby, or hesitant about "cashing in" the certificate.
- A subscription to a parenting magazine.
- The best baby shower gift that one mother received was a three-month house-keeping gift certificate. This allowed her to concentrate on her newborn instead of having to clean house for incoming relatives.
- Gift certificates. Yes, they aren't the most exciting present in the world, but after a baby shower, mom will enjoy having some money to purchase remaining needs.

There are also gift don'ts:

- Don't buy a diaper bag unless you know the mom-to-be well. Because she will lug this bag around for the next three years, you'd better make certain that it reflects mom's style.
- Avoid buying a car seat. While this is a generous gift, there are many brands of seats out there, and each one has different features. In addition, some seats don't fit well into smaller cars. If you don't have the exact specifications, forget it.

## Throwing a Successful Baby Shower<sup>2</sup>

Baby showers are an important rite of passage for pregnant women. They give the mom-to-be a chance to receive some much-needed gifts and they also serve as an important ritual that allows us to honor our friends who are about to embark on the most important job of their lives. If you are planning a shower, here are some tips from the parents of Parent Soup on throwing a party that everyone will enjoy and remember.

### **A Special Activity Idea**

“For my sister’s shower, my mom handed each guest a piece of notebook paper and asked everyone to write a message to the baby for her 16th birthday. Then she sealed them all in a large envelope and wrote “Do not open until September 22, 2006.” I think this is a great idea because the notes will be something my niece can treasure.”

### **A Fun Game To Play**

“First you will need a large plastic Easter egg or one of these eggs that nylons come in. Next, start collecting things from around the house that you would not want the baby to pick up. Each item has to be small enough to fit in the egg. Some examples are: a safety pin, nail, key, coin, string, paper clip, button, pen cap, sewing needle, beans, grains of rice, or hard candy. Then, at the shower, give your guests a piece of paper, a pen, and a time limit and let them guess what is inside. The one who guesses the most wins! Make sure and put plenty of items in the egg so that it is more interesting and fun for the guests to guess.”

### **Including The Dad-To-Be In The Celebration**

“One way to include the Dad in the baby shower for his wife is to give him a hospital gift bag, including change for vending machines and the phone, a book, snacks, clean socks and even some Advil for that headache that is sure to come with so much to do. Another idea is to have a cookout baby shower and invite couples. My friends and I had a cookout shower with an Old West theme. The dads really enjoyed this one. The honorary couple was new to our area and it gave everyone a chance to get to know each other.”

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from parentsoup.com.