



## INTRODUCTION AND PARTY INVITATIONS

The Fourth of July may make some people think of the Liberty Bell, the American flag, and the Statue of Liberty. But if your child shares our nation's birthday (or if it falls around the same day), it's time to plan an Independence Day party.

Red, white, and blue is a great all-American color motif for a birthday bash. And since stores are filled with such seasonal paper products and decorations, it will be a breeze to set your table.

Make your own **Flag Invitations** by folding a piece of red construction paper in half. Cut out and glue white stripes horizontally on the front (with the fold to your left) and a blue square in the upper left corner. Use a star-shaped hole punch to cut out stars in the blue paper, or use star stickers. Include the party details inside.

Alternatively, make **Popper Invitations** by writing your Fourth of July party details on small cards, stuffing them inside paper tubes, and wrapping them with crepe paper. Tie the ends off with a ribbon, and fringe them with scissors. Mail the poppers in a cardboard tube or hand-deliver them to your guests.

## DECORATIONS

Instead of filling vases with flowers, fill them with yummy and festive-looking blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries. Guests can scoop the berries out and add whipped cream for a truly red, white, and blue treat!

Use different-shaped vases to hold dips and chips. These make great centerpieces as well as unique serving dishes.

Mix and match red, white, and blue colored tableware. Cloth napkins in the same colors add an elegant touch.

Cover the tables with red-checked tablecloths, or buy inexpensive fabric in red, white, and blue to make your own tablecloths.



## Party Theme Planning From **BIRTHDAYS**

Roll out butcher paper on your party table. Scatter red, white, and blue crayons across the table so the kids can color while eating.

Fill balloons with red, white, and blue crinkled paper. Have the kids pop them for festive explosions of color.

Use pop cork place mats with the party guests' names attached to the pop cork for easy seating arrangements. The kids can take their pop cork home along with their tags, so make them festive using red, white, and blue.

Sprinkle red, white, and blue confetti and candies around the table.

Hang red, white, and blue crepe paper streamers from the ceiling.

Decorate the patio or backyard with red, white, and blue Christmas lights.

If you're planning to have a birthday parade, hold an informal float-making and bicycle-decorating session in your driveway an hour before the big event. Kids and parents can bring their own tape, streamers, and signs, and you can share ideas and lend a hand to help create some fantastic floats.

**Red, White, and Blue Windsock.** Decorate your patio or front door with all-American windsocks. Roll pieces of red, white, or blue construction paper lengthwise and tape or staple the edges together. Punch two holes across from each other at the top of the tube and thread string through them. Knot the string to make a handle on one end. Attach red, white, and blue streamers to the other end.

### GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

When the kids arrive to your Fourth of July party, paint small American flags onto their faces.

**Stars and Stripes T-Shirts.** Get everyone in the Independence Day mood with a T-shirt craft that doubles as your party favor. Make these at the beginning of the party so they dry and the kids can wear them for a great group photo at party's end.

You will need:

- Newspaper and cardboard
- Plain white T-shirts
- Pencils, masking tape, and large star stickers
- Small sponges
- Red and blue fabric paint
- Paper plates



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Cover your work area with newspaper and place pieces of cardboard inside each T-shirt to keep the paint from bleeding through. Use the pencil to lightly sketch out your design on the shirt. Apply long strips of tape where the white stripes will go and stickers where the stars will be. Use your imagination and make an offbeat flag design. (You can use strips of tape to create straight lines for the stars if you're doing a traditional flag.)

Pour fabric paint on the paper plates for easy dipping. Dip a sponge into red paint and then onto the design where you want stripes. Dip a different sponge into the blue paint and paint around the star stickers. You can also make star stamps by cutting a raised star shape into half a raw potato and dipping it in blue paint.

**Hats Off To America.** To make an easy hatband, cut two strips of red, white, or blue paper about 2" wide. Staple the ends together and fit the band around each child's head. Tape the strips together to hold the size of the child's head, and then staple the paper in place. Decorate these hatbands with stars and stripes, stickers, glitter, etc. Hang pieces of red, white, and blue crepe paper along the top of the band (but not blocking the face). Make small slits about 2"-3" long at the ends of the crepe paper for fringe. The kids will look like walking firecrackers!

To become a real star, make a hatband as above, but cut out red, white, and blue triangles and staple the wide ends around the band. Fold them down so the kids' heads look like one giant star with many points.

**U.S. Flag Relay.** Have the kids make small U.S. flags and place them in red, white, and blue sand pails with sand filler at the bottom. Turn this decoration into a game. Divide the kids into two teams and have them run, grab a flag, and quickly walk back to the team line. The next person must do the same. The team with all of the flags in hand the quickest wins! Let the kids take the flags home as a goody.

**Sidewalk Chalk Mural.** Have red, white, and blue sidewalk chalk available to give to the kids and let them create their own patriotic mural. They can create an American flag, fireworks, the Washington Monument, etc., whatever suits their fancy. This is a great activity for a dry Fourth of July day!

**Egg Spoon Relay Race.** Boil a dozen eggs and color some red and blue. (Be sure to keep some white!) Divide the kids into two teams, and provide each with a spoon and eggs. The kids must balance a colored egg on their spoon and walk quickly from one end of the yard to the other and return. If the egg drops, the team member must begin again. The first team with all members completing the relay race wins!

For older kids, **water balloons** will be loads of fun. A twist on traditional water balloon games is making a small hole in each balloon, then filling the balloon with water and letting the kids toss the leaking balloon. It becomes a bit of a time bomb, as you don't want to be the last one holding the balloon when it finally runs out of water! Quick, easy, and fun!



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Play classic relay races and picnic games, such as the ring toss, sack race, or three-legged race.

Have the girls add red, white, and blue star beads to shoe laces for added fun.

**Creative Rockets.** Provide each child with cardboard tubes, tin foil, craft paper, tissue paper, glue, markers, ribbon, and child-friendly scissors so they can make their own rockets.

**Red, White, and Blue Taste Test.** Put out all sorts of food and spices in a series of small dishes. Blindfold the kids and have them guess what each food is. Ideas for tasting include salt, ketchup, blueberries, strawberries, French salad dressing, mayonnaise, sponge cake, strawberry jam, pepper jack cheese, beets, tomatoes, garlic, bananas, cherries, etc.

End the evening with a bang if there's a local concert with fireworks nearby. Pile the kids into several cars and head to your local park for free entertainment that feels as if it's planned just for your child's big day. Don't forget the bug spray and sweaters for the evening chill under the sparkling skies.

### PARTY MENU

**Burger-mania.** Add a patriotic touch to the all-American burger: use a star-shaped 4" cookie cutter to make perfect Fourth of July patties and burger rolls. Or, star-spangle round burgers by topping them with the pre-cut star-shaped cheese pieces made by some companies.

Freeze blueberries and raspberries in ice cube trays to make star-spangled cubes.

Make a **rocket pop drink**. Fill a glass with ice cubes and pour in cranberry juice, blue Gatorade®, and finally, 7-Up®. Be sure to carefully pour each drink directly onto the ice cubes to maintain the patriotic colors.

Using blackberries and cut-up strawberries and bananas, have the kids **create a fruit flag using the fruit pieces**. They can place this on a cookie tray that will be laid out for serving to the rest of the guests. Second, provide lollipop sticks to the kids so they can skewer the fruits to make **patriotic fruit kabobs**.

Using a **star cookie cutter**, make up a batch of patriotic Jell-O® Jigglers®, star sugar cookies, star cheese slices, and star sandwiches filled with cream cheese and blackberry jam.

Make a batch of **favorite cupcakes** and have the kids frost and decorate them with red, white, and blue sprinkles and candies.



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### Fruity Flag Cake

Make your favorite cake mix or cake recipe in a large, rectangular pan. Once it's cool, ice with Cool Whip® or white frosting. Create stripes with rows of sliced strawberries and make a square of blueberries in the upper left-hand corner. Refrigerate until ready to serve. If carefully supervised, use sparklers as candles or get long skinny tapers in red, white, and blue.

### Red, White & Blueberry Freeze Pops

You will need:

- 1 quart raspberry juice
- 1 pint frozen vanilla yogurt
- 3/4 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 2 cups cold water
- 10 paper cups
- Popsicle® sticks

To Make:

Assemble the cups on a cookie tray.

Pour one inch of the raspberry juice into each cup and place the tray in the freezer. When the juice is partially frozen, set a Popsicle stick in the center of each cup and let the juice freeze solid.

Blend one cup of the water and four large scoops of frozen yogurt until smooth. Pour one inch of the yogurt mix on top of the frozen juice layer in each cup and freeze again.

Once the yogurt layer sets, blend the second cup of water, blueberries, and a large scoop of the frozen yogurt.

Spoon the blueberry mix into the cups and freeze overnight.

To serve, slide the pop out of the cup.



### PARTY FAVORS

#### Firecracker Party Favors

Save toilet paper rolls and make them into firecracker favors. Spray-paint some white and some blue. Wrap red ribbons around them on a diagonal and glue down ends. Take small toys and treats and roll them in red tissue paper. Stick the package into the paper rolls so that tissue paper sticks out each end. Twist the tissue paper and secure each end with white twist-ties.

This will be a holiday full of wonderful memories for the birthday child and guests.

Party Theme Planning From **BIRTHDAYS**  **US**

Make sure to take plenty of pictures throughout the party and send an assortment to the party guests in your red, white, and blue thank you notes.



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