



INTRODUCTION AND PARTY INVITATIONS

If you're among the millions of parents shuffling their kids from one soccer field to another every weekend, throwing a soccer birthday party for your son or daughter is an ideal way to celebrate. After all, your child and his or her friends will not only be having fun, but also getting in some extra practice time. And this may be your only chance to shout "GOOOOOAAAALLL!"

Soccer Ball Invitations

You will need:

- White poster board or construction paper
- A bowl
- A photo of your child in his or her soccer uniform
- Pens or crayons
- Glue (if you plan on attaching photos to poster board)
- Scissors

Make an invitation in the shape of a soccer ball. Here's how: take a salad bowl, turn it upside down and trace a circle on construction paper. Use crayons or markers to make one side of the paper yellow, and write your party details on the other side. Or, try another idea: make photocopies of your child's soccer picture and write the party information on the back of each.

Be sure to request that the kids dress to participate in sporting activities, including wearing the right kind of footwear. Shin guards and soccer socks are optional.

DECORATIONS

Given the nature of the game, this party is best held outdoors in a park or a large backyard. Create party decorations that can be placed outdoors. Some ideas include:

- Balloons bunched together and weighted down in your favorite team colors.
- "Go Team" and "Great Season" banners hanging on a fence.



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Soccer gear.

A party table covered in a black- and white-checked tablecloth and partyware in your favorite team colors.

A soccer ball centerpiece that everyone can autograph while at the table.

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Wearable Party Favors

You will need:

Colored undershirts (boys size large)

Iron-on transfers and/or letters

For the party games, you will be dividing the guests into two teams, so it's a good idea to provide them with team shirts. Buy packages of T-shirts in two different colors. Decorate with iron-on transfers, one image for each team. You can also use iron-on letters to spell players' names across the back of the shirts. At the end of the party, these team shirts become party favors.

Remember to have the kids warm up by stretching because they can hurt their muscles if they don't prep them, and that would not make for a happy birthday. Here are six soccer games to try:

Soccer Croquet

This game works especially well for younger kids. Buy or make (with half of a hula-hoop) wickets or plastic hoops that can be pushed into soil like mini goal posts in your backyard or on a field. Set up these wickets in two lanes, one for each team. Line each team up behind its lane and have the first two kids dribble and kick a soccer ball through each of the wickets. Victory goes to the team with the most race winners.

Traffic Cone Target

First, get the players to line up one behind the other. Next, set up a small plastic traffic cone a challenging distance away. Competing as individuals or as teams, each child kicks the ball in hopes of knocking over the cone. For an added surprise, hide a few soccer-themed giveaways under the cone like headbands, sweatbands, or socks.

Monkey in the Middle

All the party guests stand in a circle while one person stands alone in the center. (Start with the birthday child in the center.) Players try to pass the soccer ball to each other



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while the center player tries to intercept it. Upon successfully doing so, he or she joins the circle and the person who last kicked the ball moves to the middle.

Air Ball

Here's a game inspired by actual practice drills done by many professional teams. Everyone stands in a circle and tries to keep the ball in the air using only feet and heads. Those who let the ball hit the ground are eliminated. The last player standing is the winner.

Indoor Soccer/Volleyball

If the weather isn't cooperating, try this indoor fusion of soccer and volleyball. Stretch a rope or net across a large room. Divide the guests into two teams, with an even number of players on each side. Play a game of soccer/volleyball where kids can only move around the floor on their hands and feet (facing skyward). Players are only allowed to contact the ball with feet and heads.

The Left Foot Approach

Put a fun spin on all these games by making the kids perform some of the kicks with their left feet only. Being able to handle a ball with the left as well as right foot is a big advantage when they actually play the sport.

PARTY MENU

Ordering a couple of pizzas or throwing burgers on the grill makes for the perfect menu, and you can reserve the fancy moves for the cake. Many bakeries offer cakes with soccer decorations. You can also make a rectangular cake yourself and frost it with vanilla icing dyed green with food coloring. You want your cake to look like a grass field.

You'll need:

- Rectangular cake
- Vanilla icing
- Green food coloring
- Plastic soccer figurines
- Photo paper
- Toothpicks

Decorate the cake with plastic soccer figurines purchased from a party store. Or, try to personalize it: using a computer and photo paper, print images of your child's favorite professional player or of the players on his or her own team. Cut out and tape the images to toothpicks and stick them into the cake. and you can reserve the fancy



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Remember to have plenty of water and Gatorade® on hand so the kids don't get dehydrated during the day's activities.

PARTY FAVORS

Send the kids home with their T-shirts, as well as water bottles filled with soccer decals and stickers. Print the kids' names onto each bottle.

Take a soccer team picture of the entire group and make multiple copies. Include the team pictures in your thank you notes so everyone can remember all of the soccer fun.



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