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Twenty Quick & Creative Ways to Make Your Child's Birthday Special

Your child's birthday is the most important day of the year! You can make it even more memorable by adding these easy, inexpensive and imaginative touches throughout the day.

1. **Make your child "King/Queen for a Day."** Let your child do whatever he or she wants all day – within reason, of course!
2. **Wake your child up with bunches of balloons.** About an hour or so before your child awakes, inflate a bunch of balloons, and while he or she is asleep fill up his or her closet, bathroom or even the whole bedroom with balloons.
3. **Give your child a birthday hat.** Buy or make a silly hat decorated with candles, balloons, ribbons, and so on. Or, make him or her a special birthday t-shirt or slippers using fabric paints, stick-on sequins, decals and ribbon ties.
4. **Do all your child's chores for the day.** Have fun with the tasks by asking your child how he or she does it.
5. **Bake the cake together.** Instead of ordering a cake from the bakery, make it yourselves, and let your child decorate it any way he or she wants, with colored icing, candies or little toys.
6. **Send your child on a present hunt.** Hide the birthday gifts and create a treasure hunt, leading from clue to clue, until he or she finds the loot.
7. **Gift wrap your child's lunch.** If it's a school day, wrap all your child's lunch foods in party paper and place them inside the lunchbox or bag to unwrap at lunchtime. For added fun, fill his or her backpack with birthday cards and balloons.
8. **Send your child a surprise package.** The day before your child's birthday, mail him or her a surprise package to be opened on his or her birthday. Insert a card, but sign it, "Secret Admirer" or "Mystery Friend" to keep your child guessing.

9. **Take your child to lunch.** Take the birthday child out for a special lunch at a fancy restaurant – just the two of you. Order a decadent dessert and tell the staff it's your child's birthday so they'll sing "Happy Birthday!"

10. **Create "Happy Birthday Coupons."** On colorful paper, write down a dozen suggestions for your child to enjoy, such as "Good for 1 Dozen Chocolate Chip Cookies," "Good for a Get-Out-Of-1-Bath Free" or "Good for 1 Hour of Game Playing." Assemble them in a coupon book, and give the book to your child on his or her birthday.

11. **Serve your child's favorite dinner.** Let your child choose the menu for his or her birthday and select all of his or her favorite foods.

12. **Bring your child breakfast in bed.** When he or she wakes up, bring him or her breakfast in bed. Fill the tray with your child's favorite breakfast items, a little gift and the comics page.

13. **Let your child design the decorations.** Have your child help you with the party decorations and turn it into a craft project. Inflate balloons and let your child decorate them with faces of the guests, using permanent markers or stickers with eyes, noses, and mouths.

14. **Pick a picnic place.** Instead of having a meal at the table, spread a blanket on the floor or lawn and have your breakfast, lunch, or dinner picnic-style.

15. **Make your child a "Personalized Picture Puzzle."** Surprise your child by having one of his or her photos enlarged and glued to cardstock paper. Cut the picture into puzzle shapes, place them in a small box or envelope and have him or her do the puzzle without telling your child what it is!

16. **Present your child a "My Life Retrospective" display.** Collect pictures of your child growing up, tape them onto colored construction paper, and stick them around the party room so everyone can see how much he or she has grown and changed over the years! Have the guests try to guess how old the birthday boy or girl is in each picture.

17. **Let your child break a rule.** On this special day, let your child break one rule, such as "Bedtime is 8:00 p.m." or "No elbows on the table."

18. **Videotape memorable messages.** Gather special messages from your child's friends and family members on videotape then play it back at the party.

19. **Birthday E-mail.** Before your child's birthday, e-mail friends and relatives and ask them to surprise your child by sending virtual birthday greeting cards throughout the day.

20. **Start a birthday ritual.** Choose any of the above tips and recreate it each year on your child's birthday.

Bonus Idea: Capture the Memories. Give your child a disposable camera and let him or her take pictures of everything that happens throughout the day. Then give your child a scrapbook to fill with snapshots of birthday memories.