How to Throw the Perfect Baby Shower
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Quick Checklist

Quick List of Possible Themes
Chapter One: So You’re Thinking of Throwing a Baby Shower…

And, of course, you don’t just want to have a nice party— you want to throw a memorable and entertaining event! The first and most important bit of advice in coordinating any party: don’t stress! Tell yourself now that it’s going to be a great party, and it will be. Whether you’re hosting the event for yourself, or are throwing it for a relative, friend, or colleague, with these few suggestions, you can be confident that you’ll throw an unforgettable party.

Should you be the one throwing the shower? Chances are, if you thought of it, yes! Etiquette dictates that you shouldn’t throw a shower for yourself, and that a family member shouldn’t throw it, as this suggests that you and your family are asking for gifts. But times are changing, and nobody’s going to turn down the chance to attend a good party.

Keep in mind, that while any excuse to throw a party is a good one, a baby shower is one of those once-in-a-lifetime events for most women. If you’ve had children, you know that it’s a rare treat to get to take time off from the stresses of pregnancy, spend time with your friends and loved ones, and, of course, be showered with gifts, advice, and affection!
Planning Ahead – Timing Is Everything

If you’ve been to a shower or have heard stories of elaborate showers, you may be a little overwhelmed at all the planning and coordination that seems to be involved. Guest lists, food, decorations, games and events—relax! Give yourself plenty of time to prepare, follow our checklists, and it’ll go smoothly.

As a general rule, a shower should be planned for 2-3 months before the expected arrival of the new baby. Any closer to the due date and you risk overtiring the mom-to-be. And you certainly don’t want to risk having the new baby turn up in the middle of your shower (though that, in itself, would make the event unforgettable)! So, using this as a general timeframe for your party date (you don’t have to set the exact date just yet), plan backwards to give yourself plenty of time to prepare. Here’s a general timeline to help you with planning:

- 1 to 2 months before the shower: Determine a date, make a guest list, coordinate and mail invitations. If you’re not hosting the party at a private house, find a location and make reservations. Don’t forget about your own gift for the shower!

- 2 weeks to 1 month before the shower: Start planning the event itself. Plan a theme and think of games. Decide what food to serve. If you plan to have food catered or a cake made for you, make plans with the catering company or restaurant.

- 1 to 2 weeks before the shower: Finalize your guest list based on RSVP lists. Buy decorations, food if you’re preparing it yourself, thank-you cards, prizes for your games, and anything special to go with your theme. Don’t forget plenty of film for your camera!
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• Day before the shower: Bake or pick up a cake, pick up any last food and drinks, decorate (may as well get the bulk of the work done the day before, so that you can take care of any last minute errands on the day of the party).

• Day of shower: Have a great time!

“When my sister asked me to plan her baby shower, I was very excited, but a bit overwhelmed about the entire process. You see, I don’t have any children, hadn’t been to many baby showers in the past, and I didn’t know the first thing about planning a shower. Well, I guess you can say that I delved right in and clumsily put it together. Although it worked out in the end, it wasn’t easy because I wasn’t prepared. My advice to you is to have a specific plan of action and stay on target and the shower will be wonderful!”-Alyson
Your first big task in planning any party is determining how many people, and which people, you want to invite. Typically, as the party’s for the mom-to-be, the easiest way to come up with a guest list is to ask the guest of honor. As a rule, a shower typically includes 5 to 25 of the expectant mom’s female family members, close friends, colleagues, and work acquaintances.

Don’t be overambitious! Make your guest list large enough so that the new mother is treated to a great bash, but keep it small enough to be intimate and manageable. And by all means, keep politics out of your guest list decision!

Your guests should be those whose company the new mother genuinely appreciates— if she expresses reservation about anyone, gently suggest that the name be moved to a “reserve” list, and added if you have room on your list when your “definite” guests are all accounted for.

A question to ask when thinking about whom to invite might be, “Will this person be honored to buy a present for the new mother, or will she feel burdened?” Chances are, if the intended guest is close enough to the mom-to-be, she’ll be delighted to buy a small present and come celebrate the occasion.

And don’t worry about inviting people who don’t necessarily know other guests well. Baby showers provide plenty of opportunities for people to get to know one another; and again, as long as your guests are all comfortable with the mother-to-be, they should feel more than welcome to participate in the occasion.
What about sending courtesy invitations to distant family and friends, so that they don’t feel left out? This is not essential, because it’s not as formal as a wedding. You can ask the mother-to-be for her advice. If she would like these people to know about her baby shower, by all means send them an invitation. Ask her to hand-write a note on the back saying something like “We know you might not be able to make it, and we’ll miss you. We’ll be thinking of you and we’d love to have you visit soon.”
Surprises and Other Questions

If you’re planning a surprise, work with a family member or another close friend of the mom-to-be for names and addresses of people to invite. Remember, if it’s going to be a surprise, be considerate: in the weeks before the party, make sure the mom-to-be is in good health and spirits, and make sure she’ll be available on the date you select. Also, think about the mother’s personality. Is she generally someone who enjoys surprises? Or is she the sort of person that planned her wedding down to the color of the forks at the meal? If that’s the case, chances are she’d like to have a hand in the planning of her shower, and a surprise might not be the best idea.

Thinking of inviting men? Traditionally, showers are events for women and serve as a chance for experienced moms to give advice to the new mom in a comfortable setting (without having to censor themselves about private women’s matters!) They also present an opportunity for the new mother to have a breather from the everyday stresses of her pregnancy (including having a man around!). That said, these aren’t traditional times! If the mom-to-be feels comfortable around men, and you’re thinking about it, invite them! Decide whether to invite all your guests as couples, or whether to invite select male friends individually.

Alternatively, if you’re hosting the party in a private home, perhaps you can simultaneously host a separate men’s party in a different room, so that you can benefit from both the intimacy of a women’s-only gathering, as well as the comfort of knowing that all your loved ones, men and women, are involved. The men can be in one room, watching a game, drinking beer, having a party of their own, and will certainly pop their heads in to provide amusement and fresh perspective throughout the celebration.

Should you have a shower if the couple is adopting? Can you have a shower for the second or third baby? Should you go ahead and plan a shower after the baby is born? What about inviting guests who have recently had miscarriages or problems with their own pregnancies? To all of these questions, of course, yes! If you have some of
these special considerations, it’s important that your guests are informed; you wouldn’t want to cause undue embarrassment or awkward moments. Some argue that after a first baby, the point of a shower (to provide a new mother with much-needed gifts) becomes void, but every new baby deserves a celebration of his or her own.

If this is a shower for a second-time mom, consider suggesting new gifts for the older child (as the mother-to-be is sure to have plenty of hand-me-downs and other staples from her first child). Or, make the shower a “sprinkle,” and have your guests restock the new mom with the little things—diapers, lotions, bottles, pacifiers, or bath soaps. If you’re planning a shower for a couple who’s adopting, make certain you plan to have the party after the adoption process has been successful, as adoptions can be unexpectedly delayed. Also, if the baby has already been born, or is an adopted child, keep in mind that the baby will likely be at the party. This itself is usually entertaining enough, so games can be kept to a minimum.

“Planning a baby shower can be so much fun! My advice is to find out what the mother wants and then to go from there. After all, this is her special day and she should have some input into the process!” - Christina