



Sesame Family Newsletter

February 16, 2005

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

[Birthday Party Planning](#)
by Jordan Brown

Planning a party can be "wild" fun.

Featuring:

- Birthday "3-Bee-Jebies"
- Invitations and Decorations
- Zebras and Turtles and Snakes, Oh My!
- Let 'em Eat Cake... And Pizza

> [Read this issue](#)

Games and More: Beat the Winter Blahs!

Brighten up winter days with favorite Sesame pals.

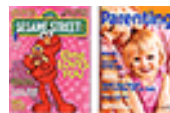
- [Elmo's Keyboard-O-Rama](#)
- [Make-A-Monster](#)
- [Check Out Cookie Collection](#)
- [Oscar's Trash](#)
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

From the Workshop



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Birthday Party Planning

BIRTHDAY "3-BEE-JEEBIES"

Last year, shortly before my son Finn turned 3, he announced to my wife Ellen and me, "I want to stay two!" Any talk of birthday cakes or presents or party hats made him anxious. Just singing "Happy Birthday to You!" to his stuffed animals, made Finn clamp his hands over his ears as he begged us to stop.

Aren't kids supposed to love birthdays? What was going on with our little boy? Our hunch was that Finn, like many kids his age, was scared of the unknown. Being 2 was something he was comfortable with. Being 3 was uncharted territory. So, for his third birthday, we stayed firmly in his comfort zone. To avoid tantrum-filled disaster, we had a small low-key family celebration.

Flash-forward a year...At the start of January, we reminded Finn that his 4th birthday was coming at the end of the month. Not only was he excited about this news, he ASKED us if we could have a party for his friends. Amazing. What a difference a year can make! Now it was time for the planning to begin.



TRANSITIONS: TWO TO FIVE

[How young children learn to handle change.](#)

"BUT IT'S MY PARTY!"

[Coping with great expectations for a child's birthday bash.](#)

"I CAN'T WAIT!"

[Handling your child's excitement about a special event.](#)

INVITATIONS AND DECORATIONS

Some people find the prospect of planning a party an invigorating, inspiring challenge. Not me. Fortunately, I'm married to such a person. Ellen is one of the all-time great list-makers. I'm constantly dazzled by her talent for breaking down a daunting project into bite-size tasks, anticipating possible snags, and figuring out detailed solutions.

Ellen and I began brainstorming what to do for Finn's party. Having attended several parties for Finn's friends over the past year, we knew the basic elements--invitations, decorations, food, activities, and favors. We also knew that it was a good idea to pick a theme. It makes it fun for guests, and actually simplifies some of the decision making. To help us we went online to Sesame Street Partyworks, clicked on the "Browse by Theme" link and were amazed to find tons of great ideas.

From a zoo theme to a Slime, Grime and Goo party, Partyworks offered up a bunch of cool possibilities. We eventually chose a Jungle party. Finn loves to roooaar like a lion, and often turns the lights off in his room to pretend



HAPPY HOMEMADE BIRTHDAY!

[Throw a party your child won't forget.](#)

SESAME STREET PARTYWORKS

[Hundreds of great ideas for birthdays and other celebrations.](#)

TAKE-AWAY TIPS:

it's a "spooky forest."

We picked a date, and made simple invitations on the computer, decorating them with wild animal stickers. Given the limited space in our apartment, and our wish to not overwhelm Finn, we invited just six children.

Unlike the invitations, the decorations were anything but simple. Several weeks before the party, Ellen boldly announced, "We're going to turn this apartment into a jungle." First we found some children's books with fun illustrations of jungle animals. Then, using her drawing and painting skills, Ellen turned rolls of butcher block paper and paint into palm trees, alligators, parrots, and much, much more! In the wee hours of the morning, I helped with cutting and painting, but mostly I just watched in amazement.

DECORATIONS

[Make your home a festive place with these decorating ideas.](#)

TAKE-AWAY TIPS: INVITATIONS

[Ideas for playful invitations.](#)

WHAT'S YOUR PARTY PERSONALITY?

[Take this quiz to determine your party personality.](#)

ZEBRAS AND TURTLES AND SNAKES, OH MY!

"**I can't believe it!**" "You guys are insane!" the guests said as they walked into our home. Ellen's handiwork was truly stunning. What started as fun idea had clearly spun out of control. Taped to the walls were more than seventy palm trees, stretches of tall grass, a herd of zebras, a family of friendly crocodiles, and several squawking birds! Popping out from behind the trees were clusters of curious giraffe heads.

Finn greeted everyone at the door, and handed each kid a pith helmet, a pair of binoculars, and a small plastic animal. They were told to search through the jungle grass to find the plastic animal's match. Next we played Pin-the-Trunk-on-the-Elephant. Taking turns, each child closed his or her eyes, was gently spun around, and tried to put a paper trunk onto the elephant's face. It was hilarious to see an elephant with six trunks!

The doorbell rang. It was Sam the Jungle Man--actually the owner of a local pet store. Thinking that paper animals are only so exciting, we hired the pet store guy to bring some of the real thing. Sam brought a guinea pig, a tiny turtle, a small lizard• and a 3-foot-long snake! I was surprised that many of the children let the snake wrap itself around their arms.



TAKE-AWAY TIPS: ACTIVITIES

[Keeping kids active and happy during a party.](#)

ANIMAL DANCING

[Get kids moving and grooving with this musical game of charades.](#)

LET 'EM EAT CAKE...AND PIZZA

After washing hands, Finn's friends enjoyed pizza and apple juice. For dessert, I had baked one of my son's favorites--homemade carrot cake cupcakes with cream cheese icing. We gave the kids bowls of tasty toppings to decorate their cupcakes. More toppings ended up on the table and floor than on the cupcakes--but making a mess was part of the fun. As the kids were about to eat their cupcakes, one mom asked, "Do these have nuts in them? Nicky is allergic to them." We quickly pulled the offending cupcake from his plate--but not before little Nicky began bawling. After some quick thinking, we grabbed a graham cracker, and spread some frosting on it. Nicky was a happy camper again.



Ellen and I were thrilled that when everyone sang "Happy Birthday!" to Finn, his face broke into an enormous grin. To our relief, the party was a huge success. Since all the painted trees and animals took weeks to create, we're in no hurry to take them down. Each morning, when our little explorer awakens, he can run and "roooooarr!" in our family's personal jungle. His party will live on for a long time.

Best of luck with your party planning this year.

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

Weekly Trivia

Do you remember when. . .

Ernie made a sculpture of Bert but ran out of clay? The Bert statue had no nose, so what did Ernie do? He borrowed Bert's real nose! Oh Ernie!

FROM THE WORKSHOP

Today, Sesame Street benefits more children in more countries across more cultures than any other children's program in history. Support from people like you is making this possible. Learn about what your gift will accomplish and how easy it is to give.



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COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

[Tell us what's on your mind.](#) Kindly note that we are unable to respond to every email received.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary Sesame Street. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like Dragon Tales and Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat, Pinky Dinky Doo and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of Sesame Street, Dragon Tales and Sagwa products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at www.sesameworkshop.org

Sesame Workshop

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