First Birthday Party Checklist for a 1-Year-Old Boy

A first birthday is really a party for the grown-ups who got him here. He won't remember it, but you will, and so will the photos. This guide is for the parent planning it around naps, nappies and a guest list that's mostly family.

👶 Age 1 · 📍 Woking · ⏱️ 60-90 minutes · ✅ Tick-off checklist

Updated October 2026. Prices and details were read from each business's own website on 24 October 2026. Always confirm before you book.

PICTURE THIS

A Sunday lunchtime in a Woking front room. Grandparents on the sofa, cousins on the floor, a high chair with a balloon tied well out of reach, and one baby who is far more interested in the wrapping paper than the presents. There's a small cake just for him, and nobody minds that most of it ends up in his hair. By three o'clock he'll be asleep. The best first birthdays are short, gentle and full of people who love him.

START HERE

What's different about a first birthday

He won't remember the party. You'll remember every minute of it.

A first birthday is less about entertaining a one-year-old and more about marking the year with the people who love him. Keep it short, keep it calm, and plan it around his day, not the other way round.

- **Keep it short and plan around naps.** HealthyChildren.org, from the American Academy of Pediatrics, suggests keeping parties for toddlers under 90 minutes and being mindful of nap time. A party that starts after his nap and ends before tea is usually the happiest one.
- **Keep the guest list small.** The same source's rule of thumb for babies and toddlers is the child's age plus one, so one or two little guests. Most first-birthday guests are family and close friends, and that's exactly right.

- **Plan for the grown-ups.** Every baby comes with at least one adult, so think about seats, food, drinks and somewhere to park buggies.
- **Choose a calm, safe space.** Home, a relative's house or a quiet hall is often easier than a busy venue. Clear the floor of small objects, block off stairs and keep hot drinks out of reach.
- **Expect it to be a lot for him.** New faces, singing and noise can be overwhelming at one. Have a quiet room ready for a feed, a nap or a cuddle.
- **The cake is mostly for the photos.** Some families give the birthday baby a small cake of his own to explore. Check the ingredients against the NHS food advice for young children (see below).

THE PLAN

Countdown checklist

Good parties are made quietly, weeks before, by people who write things down.

Start about eight weeks before. Weekend slots at popular soft play venues go first, and booking calmly beats scrambling. Tick things off as you go; your ticks are saved on this device.

8 weeks before

- [ ] Set a budget for the venue or hall, food, cake and decorations. Write the total down before you start looking.
- [ ] Decide where: at home, a relative's house, a hall or a soft play venue.
- [ ] Draft the guest list: mostly family and close friends, plus a few little ones.
- [ ] Pick a time around his nap. Late morning or early afternoon usually works.
- [ ] Pick a simple theme or colour scheme (ideas below). At this age it's for the photos, so choose something you'll enjoy.

6-8 weeks before

- [ ] Shortlist 2-3 venues and ask each the questions below.
- [ ] Book, pay any deposit and save the confirmation email.
- [ ] Send a **Save the Date** (text in the invitation section below).
- [ ] If you're at home, plan where buggies go and where little ones can play safely.

4-6 weeks before

- [ ] Send the invitations, including the **dietary question**.
- [ ] Set an RSVP date about two weeks before the party.
- [ ] Order or plan the cake, and a small one for him to explore if you like. Our directory lists local cake makers under Cakes & bakers.
- [ ] Ask a friend to take photos, so you can be in some of them.

- [ ] Plan the timings (sample below).

2-3 weeks before

- [ ] Chase RSVPs with a friendly text. Most people are relieved to be asked.
- [ ] Collect allergies and dietary needs, for adults and little ones.
- [ ] Confirm numbers and the food order.
- [ ] Buy decorations, a candle and a lighter.
- [ ] Line up helpers: one for food, one for drinks and one for photos.

Party week

- [ ] Confirm the time, address and arrival time with the venue.
- [ ] Keep his routine as normal as you can in the days before.
- [ ] Pack the party kit.
- [ ] Print the guest list with phone numbers and allergies.
- [ ] Charge your phone and power bank.

Questions to ask every venue

These are the questions that tend to matter once you're in the room with a crowd of little ones and their grown-ups.

- [ ] Is there a separate area for babies and toddlers who aren't walking yet?
- [ ] Is the space exclusive to you, or shared with other families?
- [ ] What's included: food, drinks, a host?
- [ ] Can you bring your own cake, and where can you light the candle? (Mayford Village Hall, for example, only allows candles in the kitchen.)
- [ ] Do adults pay?
- [ ] Is there space for buggies, and somewhere to change nappies?
- [ ] Are high chairs available?
- [ ] How do they handle allergies and dietary needs?
- [ ] What are the deposit and cancellation terms?
- [ ] Is there parking, and is it free?

IDEAS

Themes and party ideas

At this age, the best theme is the one that makes you smile in the photos.

Simple themes work best at one: a colour scheme, “one” decorations, teddy bears, farm animals or woodland friends. It's really for the photos, so choose something you'll enjoy. A simple theme (a colour scheme, a banner and a matching cake) costs less than theming everything.

Shop by theme: First birthday · Teddy bears · Animals · Farm · Woodland · Vehicles. Our shop pages link to Amazon UK, and we may earn a small commission if you buy.

Party ideas near Woking

Each name links to its Playtrail listing, with contact details and a map.

- **At home or in a hall.** Many first birthdays happen at home or in a local hall, such as Mayford Village Hall (prices below), Horsell Village Hall or Lyne Village Hall. Mayford doesn't allow bouncy castles or other inflatables, so check each hall's rules.
- **Soft play and play cafés.** Munchkins Play Cafe in Byfleet runs soft play parties for under-5s and private party rooms for ages 1-8, and Mazzy Bees in Sheerwater has a Party Corner (both prices below). Icon Coffee & Play and The Mucky Cow Play Cafe are play cafés in Woking.
- **Role play.** Little Street in West Byfleet is a miniature role-play town scaled for little people, and babies in arms or non-walkers don't need a booked space (prices below).
- **Cake.** Our directory lists local cake makers under Cakes & bakers.

THEME PLAYBOOK

4 themes with games, food and a cake for a one-year-old boy

Pick one and you have the games, the menu and the cake sorted. Each idea has three games you can run without a host, plus local people who can run it for you where we have found them.

Little Diggers

A first-birthday theme that costs almost nothing: yellow, black and grey, a few toy trucks, and a banner that says ONE in chunky letters. It also gives the grown-ups something to talk about while the baby studies the wrapping paper.

- Truck parade: line up soft toy diggers and trucks on a play mat and let the babies push them about. Adults narrate the engine noises.
- Build a tower together: stack big, soft foam or cardboard blocks and let him knock it over. This is the whole game, and it never gets old.
- A cardboard-box road: tape a long road onto the floor with black tape and let the crawlers follow it.

Food and cake: Finger food that looks like a building site: soft cheese 'bricks', toast fingers and pieces of soft ripe pear. For cake, a simple sponge with a toy digger parked on top (take it off before serving).

Party bag: Skip loot bags at this age. If you want to give something, a board book is easy and has no small parts.

Browse little diggers supplies in the shop

Busy Trains

If he already waves at every train in Woking, this is an easy win. A few wooden or soft trains, a track on the floor and a simple red-and-blue colour scheme will do it.

- Track the track: lay a wooden train track on the floor and let the babies sit round it. Keep one set out of reach so it can be swapped when attention drifts.
- Whistle stop: an adult says 'toot toot' and holds up a train, then a baby 'catches' it. Repeat until everyone is bored of it, then do it once more.
- Station snack: hand out snacks from a basket labelled 'platform one', with an adult playing station master.

Food and cake: Toast 'tracks' cut into fingers, cucumber and soft fruit in a train-carriage tray. A small cake shaped like a train carriage is a good first attempt at a novelty bake.

Party bag: A small board book about trains, or a baby-safe wooden whistle-free train, wrapped for the grown-ups to open later.

Browse busy trains supplies in the shop

Wild One

'Wild One' is a popular first-birthday phrase, and the theme is easy: green, sand and orange colours, paper animals on the wall and a few jungle-print props. It photographs well without needing a lot of kit.

- Animal sounds: hold up soft toy animals one at a time and ask the room to make the noise. The babies won't, but the adults will, and it's very funny.
- Jungle floor: scatter big leaves cut from green paper or fabric on the floor and let crawlers explore them.
- Peekaboo safari: hide a soft toy lion behind a cloth and reveal it with a roar. Keep the roar gentle for the little ones.

Food and cake: Fruit 'safari' plate: banana, melon and soft grapes cut lengthways into quarters. A tiger-stripe cake in orange and chocolate is a gentle baking challenge.

Party bag: A soft animal toy, if you want to give something. Choose one without button eyes or small parts.

Browse wild one supplies in the shop

Little Footballer

A football theme for the future striker: a pitch-green tablecloth, a mini goal in the garden or hall, and a banner that says 'One-nil'. Perfect if the grown-ups are fans.

- Roll and kick: roll a soft ball along the floor and let him chase it. Adults cheer every touch.
- Mini goal: set up a toy goal and take turns rolling a lightweight ball into it. Everyone gets a cheer, whether it goes in or not.

- Man of the match: present the birthday boy with a small certificate or trophy and take the photos. Expect the ribbon to be chewed.

Food and cake: A pitch-shaped tray of sandwiches or finger foods with tomato and cheese 'penalty spots'. For a cake, green icing with a toy goal, or just a plain sponge.

Party bag: A small soft football for the birthday child. Skip bags for the other babies.

Local help: Little Footy Stars.

Browse little footballer supplies in the shop

Planning for a girl instead? See the 1-year-old girls' party checklist, which has different themes.

THE DAY

Timings, activities and party bags

Short and sweet is the whole plan.

The best way to calm party nerves is to have a plan for the time, even for a small family party.

A 90-minute first birthday

Plan the party around his nap. A late-morning or early-afternoon start, after a nap and a meal, usually works best.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
0:00	Guests arrive. A play mat, soft toys and a basket of safe toys for the little ones, and drinks for the grown-ups
0:20	Music and bubbles, or a few nursery rhymes with actions
0:35	Food: finger food for the little ones, something more filling for the adults
1:00	Cake and singing. Keep the candle well away from little hands, and blow it out for him
1:10	Free play, photos and goodbyes. Open presents later at home
1:30	Home in time for a nap

- [ ] Have one adult free to help with food and drinks, so you can enjoy it.
- [ ] Keep a quiet room ready for naps and feeds.

- [ ] Put the cake somewhere safe and out of reach until it's time.

Gentle activities for one-year-olds

Games aren't really the point at this age. A few gentle activities are plenty.

- [ ] Bubbles, or a bubble machine.
- [ ] Music and dancing with a grown-up.
- [ ] Nursery rhymes with actions.
- [ ] A play mat and a basket of safe toys.
- [ ] Parachute play, with adults holding the edges.
- [ ] A colouring table for any older brothers and sisters.

Party bags

Party bags are optional at this age. If you'd like to give something, keep it simple: a board book or bubbles. Check the age labels on toys, because many aren't suitable for under-3s, and skip sweets. There are more ideas in the party shop.

LOOK AFTER THEM

Food, drink and safety

At a party, love mostly looks like paying attention.

Food and drink

- [ ] Finger food that's easy to hold: sandwich fingers, soft fruit, cooked vegetable sticks, crackers and dips.
- [ ] Cut grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes into quarters (NHS).
- [ ] Don't give whole nuts or popcorn to children under 5 (NHS), and keep raw jelly cubes away from little ones, as they can be a choking hazard (NHS).
- [ ] Don't give honey to babies until they're over 1 year old (NHS), so keep it out of anything for baby guests.
- [ ] Babies shouldn't eat much salt (NHS), so go easy on crisps and salty snacks for little ones.
- [ ] The NHS advises avoiding food and drink with added sugar or sweeteners for children aged 4 and under, so keep sweet things to the cake and offer fruit alongside.
- [ ] Seat little ones to eat, in high chairs if you can, and always supervise them while they eat (NHS).
- [ ] Plan proper food and drinks for the adults. They'll be most of your guests.

Safety

- [ ] Be careful with balloons. St. Louis Children's Hospital advises that latex balloons aren't recommended for children under 8, and that broken pieces should be collected immediately and kept out of reach.
- [ ] Keep candles, hot drinks and the kettle well away from little hands.

- [ ] Clear small objects off the floor, block off stairs and close doors to rooms you're not using.
- [ ] Check the toys in the play area are suitable for under-3s by looking at the age label.
- [ ] Ask parents before you share photos of their children.
- [ ] Keep a list of phone numbers and allergies, and know where the first-aid kit is.

THE DAY ITSELF

Party kit, the day itself and afterwards

Pack the night before. The morning belongs to the nap.

The day goes better when the bag is already by the door. Here's what's worth having with you.

Party kit to pack

- [ ] Cake, candle, lighter, knife, plates and napkins.
- [ ] A small cake or plain sponge for the birthday boy to explore, if you like.
- [ ] Nappies, wipes and a changing mat.
- [ ] Bibs, beakers and snacks for the little ones.
- [ ] A high chair or booster seat, if the venue doesn't have one.
- [ ] Spare clothes for the birthday boy (cake happens).
- [ ] A play mat and a basket of safe toys.
- [ ] Decorations and tape (check what the venue allows).
- [ ] A small first-aid kit.
- [ ] Printed guest list with phone numbers and allergies.
- [ ] Camera or phone, and a power bank.
- [ ] Bin bags for the tidy-up.

On the day

Try to enjoy it. He won't remember the napkins, and neither will anyone else.

- [ ] Arrive early to set up, and ask what the venue allows.
- [ ] Put the cake and candle somewhere safe until it's time.
- [ ] Keep to his routine as much as you can: a nap before, and a feed when he needs it.
- [ ] Put one adult on photos, so you're in some of them too.
- [ ] Check food against allergies before serving.
- [ ] Light the candle away from little hands, and blow it out for him.
- [ ] Open presents later, when he's rested.

After the party

When the last guest has gone, there will be cake on the floor and a very sleepy baby. That's how you'll know it went well.

- [ ] Pay any balance and check for unexpected charges.
- [ ] Send thank-yous to everyone who came.
- [ ] Back up the photos, and print a few for the baby book.
- [ ] Write down who gave what.
- [ ] Note what worked for next year.

📍 NEAR YOU

Four Woking-area options compared

A price is only the beginning of the sentence.

The headline price is only part of the story. What matters is what's included and what you'll still have to organise. As a rough guide: a 2-hour party room at Munchkins is £200 at a weekend, plus food from £5 a head; Mazzy Bees' Party Corner is £195-£225; and exclusive hire of Little Street is £295 (or £225 on a Friday afternoon). Details below were read on the dates at the top of this page. They change, so confirm before you book.

OPTION	AGE FIT	PRICE AND WHAT'S INCLUDED
Munchkins Play Cafe, Byfleet	Soft play parties for under-5s. Party rooms for ages 1-8	**Party room:** 2 hours' private hire for up to 15 children, £100 midweek or £200 at weekends (£90 or £160 with an entertainer, whose fee is extra). Food from £5 per head. **Soft play (under-5s):** £295 for 2 hours' exclusive use for up to 25 children at weekends, with a £100 deposit, or £18 per child on weekdays for 5-10 children during a normal session, including a lunchbox and drink each and one free adult per child. No outside food except the birthday cake.

OPTION	AGE FIT	PRICE AND WHAT'S INCLUDED
Mazzy Bees Soft Play, Sheerwater	Soft play designed for ages 0-8	**Party Corner:** up to 10 children, £225 peak (weekends and half term) or £195 off-peak. A 90-minute slot during public play: 45 minutes play, 15 minutes food, 30 minutes disco and karaoke or play. Includes sandwiches, unlimited squash and crisps. **Exclusive hire:** £490 for up to 15 children, then £12.99 per extra child, up to 40. Party bags £3 per child; pizza and chips £4.50 per child.
Little Street, West Byfleet (role-play town)	Rooms scaled for little people. Babies in arms and non-walkers don't need a booked space	**Exclusive hire £295** for an 85-minute session, for up to 60 people including adults. A Friday offer (3.45-5.15pm) is **£225**, for Friday bookings to the end of December 2026. Includes unlimited squash and water for the children, £25 of café drinks for the adults, a PDF invitation and a free return visit for one child and one adult. Food isn't mentioned, so ask.
Mayford Village Hall, Woking (hall hire)	Any age. You bring everything	3-hour children's party sessions (10am-1pm or 2pm-5pm) are listed at **£54.60 to £78.00**, depending on the room and time, with a £50 deposit. Mayford residents get 10% off. Bouncy castles and other inflatables aren't allowed, and candles and naked flames are only allowed in the kitchen.

What stands out from a parent's seat

- **Munchkins Play Cafe:** Two very different parties under one roof: a private room you fill with your own entertainer, or soft play for the under-5s. No outside food apart from the cake, so budget for their menu.
- **Mazzy Bees:** The Party Corner runs during public play, so other families will be around. Food and squash are included. The page doesn't list deposit or cancellation terms, so ask.
- **Little Street:** One price for up to 60 people, adults included, so it works for a big family party or a whole-class party. You'll need to sort food and cake.
- **Mayford Village Hall:** The cheapest space by far, but you do everything: food, decorations, entertainment and the clean-up. Light the candle in the kitchen and carry the cake out.

Browse all Woking party venues

ASKED AT TEN AT NIGHT

Questions parents ask

How many people should I invite to a first birthday?

As many adults as you can comfortably host, and only a few babies. HealthyChildren.org's rule of thumb for babies and toddlers is the child's age plus one, so one or two little guests. Every baby brings a grown-up, so plan food and seats for the adults.

How long should a first birthday party last?

Under 90 minutes, as HealthyChildren.org suggests for toddlers, and timed around his nap. Late morning or early afternoon usually works best.

Does a one-year-old need entertainment?

Not really. A play mat, a basket of safe toys, bubbles and some music are plenty. If older children are coming, a colouring table keeps them busy.

Can a one-year-old have birthday cake?

That's your call. The NHS advises avoiding food and drink with added sugar or sweeteners for children aged 4 and under, so many parents keep it to a small taste or bake a lower-sugar cake. Don't give honey to babies until they're over 1, and keep salty food to a minimum for little ones.

Should I open presents at the party?

It's easier to open them later at home, when he's rested. Keep a note of who gave what for the thank-yous.

Are balloons safe at a first birthday?

Keep latex balloons out of reach. St. Louis Children's Hospital advises that latex balloons aren't recommended for children under 8, and that broken pieces should be collected straight away.

Home or a venue?

Home is calmer and cheaper, and nap time is easy. A hall gives you more space if lots of family are coming, and venues like Munchkins and Mazzy Bees do the food and tidying for you (prices above).

SAY IT KINDLY

Save the date, invitation and RSVP wording

An invitation is a small promise of cake and good company. Make it easy to say yes.

1. Save the date (6-8 weeks before)

Save the date! We're celebrating [Child's name]'s first birthday and would love you to join us.

Date: [day, date, month]
Time: [start - end]
Place: [home, hall or venue]

Full invitation to follow.
[Your name and number]

2. Invitation (4-6 weeks before)

You're invited to [Child's name]'s first birthday!

Date: [day, date, month]
Time: [start - end] (we're keeping it short around nap time)
Place: [address]
Parking: [where to park, and where to leave buggies]
Little ones: [we'll have a play mat and high chairs / please bring what your little one needs]

Food: please tell us about any allergies or dietary needs, for grown-ups and little ones.

RSVP by [date] to [your name and number].

We can't wait to celebrate with you!

3. RSVP reply for guests to copy and fill in

Family name:
Coming? Yes / No
Adults coming:
Children coming, with ages:
Allergies or dietary needs (adults and children):
Need a high chair? Yes / No
Anything else we should know:

4. Reminder for anyone who hasn't replied (about 3 weeks before)

Hi [name], just checking whether you can make [Child's name]'s first birthday on [date]. No pressure at all! Could you let me know by [date], and tell me about any allergies? Thank you!

5. Thank-you message (the week after)

Thank you so much for coming to celebrate [Child's name]'s first birthday, and for the lovely [present]. It meant so much to have you there. Love, [your names]

Handling the replies

You're holding other families' information, so treat it with care.

- [ ] Keep a simple list of each child's allergies and dietary needs.
- [ ] Send it to the venue, caterer or entertainer with your final numbers.
- [ ] Tell the party host about any serious allergy on the day.
- [ ] Use the information only to plan the party, and delete the list afterwards.

Sources

- HealthyChildren.org (American Academy of Pediatrics), Playful birthday party ideas and tips for young children
- Mayford Village Hall, Hiring rates 2026
- NHS, Preparing food safely (Start for Life)
- NHS, Foods to avoid giving babies and young children
- St. Louis Children's Hospital, Why are latex balloons dangerous for children?
- Munchkins Play Cafe, Parties
- Mazzy Bees Soft Play, Parties
- Little Street, West Byfleet and Parties and groups

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