Birthday Party Checklist for a 9-Year-Old Boy

Nine is the age of strong friendships and stronger opinions. He probably knows exactly what he wants from this party. This guide helps you turn that into a plan, with local prices, timings and the practical details parents of nine-year-olds ask about.

👦 Age 9 | 📍 Woking | ⏱️ 2 to 3 hours | ✅ 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 Thursday evening in Wokingham. Twelve nine-year-olds, a six-lane slot car track, and children taking turns as marshals, putting cars back on the track. The birthday boy has crashed out of three races and won the fourth, which is the only one anyone will remember. Someone's dad has offered to do the lifts and is regretting it slightly. At nine, the best parties have a little bit of real competition and a lot of laughing.

START HERE

What's different about a 9-year-old's party

At nine, friendship is everything, and the guest list is the most important decision of the year.

Nine-year-olds are independent, opinionated and very aware of friendships. The best parties at this age feel a little grown-up: a real challenge, a bit of competition and time with the friends they've chosen.

- **Let him lead the planning.** Ask what kind of party he wants. Some nine-year-olds would choose an activity with a few close friends over a big party; others love a crowd. Follow his lead and your budget.
- **The activity sets the numbers.** Escape Hunt's rooms take up to 6 players each, Rugged Earth Adventures' parties take 10 to 26 guests, and Pinewood Raceway's exclusive events need at least 10 people.

- **Two to three hours.** HealthyChildren.org, from the American Academy of Pediatrics, says school-aged children can manage parties of about 2 to 3 hours.
- **Keep invitations kind.** Most children turning nine are in Year 4. If not everyone in the class is invited, send invitations privately, and ask him to keep party talk away from school.
- **Check game age ratings.** If there's gaming, ask which games will be played and check their age ratings. Gaming Warriors says it generally won't let young children play games outside their age range.
- **Lifts need car seats.** In the UK, children must use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first.

THE PLAN

Countdown checklist

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

Start about eight weeks before, and plan it with him. Popular activity slots go first, especially at weekends. Tick things off as you go. Your ticks are saved on this device.

8 weeks before

- [ ] Agree a budget with him, covering the activity, food, cake and any extras.
- [ ] Ask him to choose between two or three activities (ideas below).
- [ ] Agree the guest list together, and check it against the activity's minimum and maximum numbers.
- [ ] Pick two or three possible dates. Some parties only run on certain days: Escape Hunt's after-school parties are Monday to Thursday, for example.

6-8 weeks before

- [ ] Shortlist 2-3 options and ask each the questions below.
- [ ] Book, pay any deposit and save the confirmation.
- [ ] Check the age limits, safety kit and adult rules. Escape Hunt, for example, needs one parent or guardian for every 5 children.
- [ ] Send the **Save the Date**, privately if you're not inviting the whole class (text in the invitation section below).

4-6 weeks before

- [ ] Send the invitations with drop-off and pick-up times, what to wear, the **dietary question** and a line about photos.
- [ ] Set an RSVP date about two weeks before the party.
- [ ] Order or plan the cake, and let him design it. Our directory lists local cake makers under Cakes & bakers.
- [ ] Plan the schedule (samples below).

- [ ] If it's a sleepover, plan the evening with him: food, film, lights-out and breakfast.

2-3 weeks before

- [ ] Chase RSVPs with a friendly text.
- [ ] Collect allergies, dietary needs, medicines and emergency numbers.
- [ ] Confirm numbers and the food order.
- [ ] Sort lifts, and check every child will have the right car seat.
- [ ] Ask a second adult to help on the day.

Party week

- [ ] Confirm the times and address with the venue or provider.
- [ ] Check the weather and tell guests what to wear.
- [ ] Pack the party kit.
- [ ] Agree a phones and photos rule with him.
- [ ] Print the guest list with phone numbers, allergies and who is collecting each child.
- [ ] Charge your phone and power bank.

Questions to ask every venue or provider

These are the questions that tend to matter once you're in the room with a group of excited children.

- [ ] Is it suitable for 9-year-olds? Are there age or height limits?
- [ ] What are the minimum and maximum numbers, and how are big groups split?
- [ ] How long does it run, and what's included: food, drinks, a host, invitations?
- [ ] How many adults must be present?
- [ ] What safety kit and briefing are provided?
- [ ] Is it indoors or outdoors, and what happens if it rains?
- [ ] Can you bring your own cake, and are candles allowed?
- [ ] How do they handle allergies and dietary needs?
- [ ] What are the deposit and cancellation terms?
- [ ] Is there parking, and is it easy to find?

IDEAS

Themes and party ideas he might love

The best theme is the one he's still talking about at bedtime.

At nine, an activity with friends usually beats a theme: escape rooms, slot car racing, Nerf, Laser Quest or a gaming van. If he wants a look for the cake and decorations, gaming, football, sports, detectives or neon glow all work.

Shop by theme: Gaming · Football · Sports · Detective · Neon · Science. 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.

- **Escape rooms.** Escape Hunt Woking (prices below).
- **Racing.** Pinewood Raceway in Wokingham (prices below), or a giant Scalextric track from Miniracing.com Scalextric Hire.
- **Nerf and bushcraft.** Rugged Earth Adventures at Sutton Green (prices below).
- **Gaming vans.** Dropzone Gaming (prices below) and Gaming Warriors Party Bus; parents' reviews of both mention 9th birthdays.
- **Bowling and Laser Quest.** Woking Superbowl, from £16 per child with food and a host.
- **Ninja course and football.** Ninja Warrior UK Guildford (an adult must be on site for under-12s) and football coaches like We Make Footballers Woking, for ages 4-12.

THEME PLAYBOOK

5 themes with games, food and a cake for a nine-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.

Outdoor Adventure

At nine, boys are ready for forest Nerf, archery and axe throwing under proper supervision. An outdoor-adventure party offers real challenges, and the children come home muddy.

- Nerf battle: teams with safety glasses and a clear stop signal.
- Archery: a lesson from an instructor, then a mini competition.
- Tracking game: follow a trail through woodland to a 'treasure'.

Food and cake: A hot lunch such as burgers or sausages. For cake, a chocolate sponge with a forest-camp topper.

Party bag: A medal or a small keyring torch.

Local help: Rugged Earth Adventures.

Mystery Night

A murder-mystery for children, with no murder, is a good fit at nine. A script, a few suspects and a set of clues keep the group busy for two hours.

- Suspect cards: each child plays a character with a secret.
- Clue hunt: find and decode clues round the house.
- Final accusation: vote on who did it, then reveal.

Food and cake: A supper of pizza, wedges and fruit. For cake, a magnifying-glass sponge.

Party bag: A notebook, a pen and a detective certificate.

Browse mystery night supplies in the shop

Pool Party

A pool party is a reliable nine-year-old option. A private party room afterwards makes the day complete.

- Relay races: freestyle, floats and treasure dives.
- Pool games: Marco Polo and water volleyball.
- Final splash: a free swim to finish, within the pool's rules.

Food and cake: A warm snack after swimming, such as sandwiches and hot chocolate. For cake, a pool-shaped sponge.

Party bag: A small towel or goggles.

Local help: Woking Pool in the Park.

Browse pool party supplies in the shop

Pizza and Film Night

At nine, a film night with pizza is a favourite. It's easy to run, doesn't need a venue and works for six to eight friends.

- Make your own pizza: pre-made bases and toppings on a table.
- Film vote: three films chosen in advance, and the group votes.
- Popcorn bar: a table with toppings and flavours.

Food and cake: Pizza, popcorn and fruit. For cake, a clapper-board cake.

Party bag: A small bag of popcorn.

Browse pizza and film night supplies in the shop

Bowling and Arcade

Nine-year-olds can keep score, so a bowling party suits them. A package with food and an arcade card is easy to run.

- Team bowling: two teams and a running scoreboard.
- Arcade challenge: a set of tokens and a list of games to try.
- Trophy: a small trophy for the winning team.

Food and cake: Ask what food the package includes. For cake, a bowling-pin sponge.

Party bag: A small trophy for the winning team.

Local help: Woking Superbowl.

Planning for a girl instead? See the 9-year-old girls' party checklist, which has different themes.

THE AFTERNOON

Schedules, games and party bags

A real challenge, a fair fight and plenty of food.

The best way to calm party nerves is to have a plan for the time. Here are two versions: one at an activity venue, and one you run yourself at home.

A 2-hour activity party

Venues set their own timings, so fit food and cake around their slot. Escape Hunt's after-school parties run 1.5 hours; Rugged Earth Adventures' run 2 hours with a campfire meal.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
0:00	Arrive, safety briefing and teams
0:15	The main event: escape room, Nerf battle, bowling or racing (60-75 minutes)
1:30	Food
1:50	Birthday cake and singing
2:00	Hand-over to parents

A 2.5-hour home party

A home party at this age works best with a plan and a bit of competition. Keep a film or a calm game for the end.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
0:00	Guests arrive: music on and a quick ice-breaker game
0:15	Challenge games: minute-to-win-it, a team quiz or a treasure hunt with riddles
0:50	Make-your-own pizzas or wraps
1:20	Main activity: karaoke, a craft, a film or a gaming van
2:10	Birthday cake and singing
2:20	Goodbyes and hand-over (or pyjamas, if it's a sleepover)

- [ ] Have a second adult to help, especially with lifts and hand-overs.
- [ ] Keep a back-up game ready in case something finishes early.
- [ ] If it's a sleepover, agree lights-out and breakfast plans in advance.

Games for 9-year-olds

Eight- to ten-year-olds like a real challenge and a bit of friendly competition. Keep teams mixed so nobody is left out.

- [ ] Minute-to-win-it challenges: stacking cups, moving sweets with a straw, balancing biscuits.
- [ ] A team quiz, or “Who knows the birthday boy best?”
- [ ] A treasure hunt with riddles or codes to crack.
- [ ] Charades or a drawing game.
- [ ] Karaoke or a dance-off.
- [ ] A detective or escape-room-style game at home.
- [ ] Decorating cupcakes or making pizzas.
- [ ] A film with blankets and snacks to finish.

Party bags

By now, one decent thing beats a bag of bits: a paperback, a puzzle book or a small game, plus a slice of cake. Some venues sell party bags (Woking Superbowl's premium upgrade includes one), or you can skip them. 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

- [ ] Let him help choose the menu: pizza, wraps, hot dogs or a make-your-own pizza table.
- [ ] Ask about allergies and dietary needs (including vegetarian, halal or kosher) on the RSVP, and pass them to the venue.
- [ ] Check what's included: Woking Superbowl's parties include a kids' meal, Rugged Earth Adventures includes a campfire meal, and Escape Hunt's page doesn't mention food.
- [ ] If younger brothers and sisters are coming, cut grapes into quarters and keep whole nuts and popcorn away from under-5s (NHS).
- [ ] Offer water and squash.
- [ ] Plan the cake moment: Rugged Earth recommends sparklers, because candles can't be blown out on a shared cake there.

Safety

- [ ] Check the adult rules: Escape Hunt needs one parent or guardian for every 5 children, and Ninja Warrior UK Guildford needs an adult on site for under-12s.
- [ ] Make sure safety kit is used: goggles for Nerf, safety socks for ninja courses.
- [ ] For gaming, check each game's age rating with the provider.
- [ ] Lifts: in the UK, children must use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first.
- [ ] Agree a phones and photos rule with him, and ask parents before you share photos of their children.
- [ ] For sleepovers, collect emergency numbers, allergies and medicines, and agree a pick-up time.
- [ ] If younger siblings are coming, keep latex balloons away from them. St. Louis Children's Hospital advises they aren't recommended for children under 8.
- [ ] Note where the first-aid kit and exits are.

THE DAY ITSELF

Party kit, the day itself and afterwards

Pack the night before, then let him help you set up.

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, candles or sparklers, lighter, knife, plates and napkins.
- [ ] Printed guest list with phone numbers, allergies, medicines and who is collecting each child.
- [ ] A lift plan: who's driving whom, with the right car seats.
- [ ] Water bottles and snacks for active or outdoor parties.
- [ ] Rain jackets or a change of clothes for outdoor parties.
- [ ] A small first-aid kit, wipes and tissues.
- [ ] Party bags, or slices of cake to take home.
- [ ] Phone and a power bank.
- [ ] Bin bags for the tidy-up.

On the day

Try to enjoy it. The children won't remember whether the napkins matched.

- [ ] Arrive early and check in with the host.
- [ ] Tick every child off as they arrive, and check you have a number for each parent.
- [ ] Let him help host: greeting guests and handing out food.
- [ ] Check food against allergies before serving.
- [ ] Keep an eye out for anyone who seems left out, and quietly bring them in.
- [ ] Hand each child to the adult you expect to collect them.

After the party

When the last guest has gone, there'll be wrapping paper everywhere and a very happy 9-year-old. That's how you'll know it went well.

- [ ] Pay any balance and check for unexpected charges.
- [ ] Open presents calmly at home, and keep a note of who gave what.
- [ ] Thank-yous: he can write his own notes, or send a short message with a photo.
- [ ] Back up the photos, and ask before sharing any that include other children.
- [ ] Delete the guest list with allergy details once the party's done.

📍 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 for about 10 children: Escape Hunt's after-school party is £22 per person, with the birthday guest free in groups of 10 or more; a Nerf party at Rugged Earth is £280 (bushcraft is £250); and

Pinewood Raceway is from £200 for 12-18 racers. 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
Escape Hunt, Woking (escape rooms)	After-school parties for ages 8-16 (Monday to Thursday, 3pm-6pm)	**£22 per person** for an after-school party: 1.5 hours with one escape room per person, a drink, e-invites and a game host. The Birthday Celebration package is £35 per person. Up to 6 players per room (bigger groups book more rooms), and one parent or guardian must be present for every 5 children. The birthday guest goes free in groups of 10 or more.
Rugged Earth Adventures, Sutton Green	For children turning 6 to 12+	**Nerf:** £280 for 10 children, £290 for 11, £300 for 12, then £15 per child up to 30 (the party page also lists £17.50 per child for 27-30, so check). **Bushcraft:** £220 for up to 8 or £250 for up to 10, then £17.50 per child up to 20. Two hours, including a campfire meal (a sausage bap, crisps, fruit and chocolate treats, or s'mores at bushcraft parties). Bring your own cake; sparklers are recommended instead of candles. £50 non-refundable deposit, balance on arrival.
Pinewood Raceway, Wokingham (slot car racing)	No minimum age stated. Parents' Google reviews mention 7th and 8th birthday parties	From **£200** for 12-18 racers, for a 2-hour exclusive racing event on a 130ft, 6-lane track. Minimum 10 people. On-site catering can provide party food and drinks, and trophies and medals can be arranged. Evenings Monday to Thursday; weekends by special arrangement.

OPTION	AGE FIT	PRICE AND WHAT'S INCLUDED
Dropzone Gaming (gaming van, comes to you)	From age 6	**£275** for 90 minutes or £325 for 2 hours, for up to 12 children aged 6+, each with their own screen. Xbox Series X consoles, a DBS-checked team member and free editable invitations. £100 deposit. The van needs a clear driveway or a quiet street within 20 metres of the house, two plug sockets and access to your internet router.

What stands out from a parent's seat

- **Escape Hunt:** A brilliant team challenge for this age. Rooms take 6, so bigger groups play in parallel rooms, and food isn't mentioned, so plan tea elsewhere.
- **Rugged Earth Adventures:** Outdoors at Sutton Green Garden Centre, so dress for the weather. Masks and goggles are provided for Nerf, and dietary needs are confirmed by email a week before.
- **Pinewood Raceway:** Unusual and properly competitive, with everyone racing or marshalling. Weekends are by special arrangement, so ask early, and it's further afield in Wokingham.
- **Dropzone Gaming:** Easy for you, because the team runs the gaming. Ask which games they'll play and check the age ratings.

Browse all Woking party venues

ASKED AT TEN AT NIGHT

Questions parents ask

Is nine too old for a birthday party?

Not at all. The party just changes shape. Many nine-year-olds would rather do one great activity with a few close friends than have a big party. Let him choose.

How many friends should I invite?

Let the activity decide. Escape Hunt's rooms take up to 6 players each, Rugged Earth Adventures takes 10 to 26 guests, Pinewood Raceway needs at least 10 people, and Dropzone Gaming's van takes up to 12.

Any tips for a sleepover?

Keep it small, and agree the plan with him in advance: food, film, lights-out and breakfast. Collect emergency numbers, allergies and any medicines from every parent, agree a pick-up time, and have a plan for anyone who wants to go home in the night.

How do I check gaming is suitable?

Ask the provider which games they'll play, and check each game's age rating. Gaming Warriors says it generally won't let young children play games outside their age range, and Dropzone Gaming's van is for ages 6+.

How should we handle lifts?

Ask parents' permission, and make sure every child has the right car seat. In the UK, children must use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first.

What should I say about presents?

Whatever suits your family. Some parents write “no presents, please”. Others suggest a small, clearly optional contribution towards one bigger gift, sometimes called a “fiver party”.

SAY IT KINDLY

Save the date, invitation and RSVP wording

An invitation is a small promise that you'll look after someone's child. Make it easy to say yes.

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

Save the date! [Child's name] is turning 9 and we're planning a party.

Date: [day, date, month]
Time: [start - end]
Where: [venue or area]

Full invitation to follow.
[Your name and number]

2. Invitation (4-6 weeks before)

You're invited to [Child's name]'s 9th birthday party!

Date: [day, date, month]
Drop-off: [time] Pick-up: [time]
Venue: [venue name and address]
What we're doing: [activity]
Wear: [comfortable clothes and trainers / clothes that can get muddy / a warm coat]
Grown-ups: [drop-off is fine / we need one adult for every 5 children, could you stay?]

Food: please tell us about any allergies, dietary needs or medicines, so we can look after everyone.

Photos: we'll take a few photos on the day. Let us know if you'd rather we didn't share any that include your child.

RSVP by [date] to [your name, number or email].

3. RSVP reply for guests to copy and fill in

Child's name:
Parent / carer name and phone:
Coming? Yes / No
Who's collecting (name and phone):
Allergies (nuts, dairy, egg, gluten, sesame, other):
Dietary needs (vegetarian, vegan, halal, kosher, other):
Medicines or health needs we should know about:
OK to share photos that include your child? Yes / No
Happy for your child to travel with another parent, with the right car seat? Yes / No
Anything else we should know:

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

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

5. Thank-you message (the week after)

Thank you so much for coming to my party, and for the [present]. I had the best time! From [Child's name]

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

- Escape Hunt Woking, Birthday packages
- Rugged Earth Adventures, Price list and Party information
- Pinewood Raceway, Parties
- HealthyChildren.org (American Academy of Pediatrics), Playful birthday party ideas and tips for young children
- Gaming Warriors Party Bus, FAQs
- Warwickshire County Council, Understanding the law on child car seats
- Woking Superbowl, Kids' parties
- Ninja Warrior UK Guildford, Ninja Warriors, and Guildford.org.uk, Ninja Warrior Guildford
- We Make Footballers, Woking birthday parties
- NHS, Preparing food safely (Start for Life)
- St. Louis Children's Hospital, Why are latex balloons dangerous for children?
- Dropzone Gaming, Booking and How it works

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