



Reading comprehension

B2

How to throw a party

How to treat your guests to a wonderful evening: everything you need to know from the invites, the guest list, the table, the music, to the fizz. Let Yasmin Mills fill you in on a few hot tips!

I've never been the kind of girl to turn down an invitation to a good party, but best of all is playing hostess myself, whether it's putting together a sing-along for twenty toddlers¹, or organising games for a baby shower.

As with dressing up, putting together a successful dinner party is not about spending endless amounts of money. Who cares if you burn the mini sausages, ruin the grilled vegetables or serve the drinks in plastic cups? As long as you have fun, your guests will, too. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Magic numbers: invite the right number of people, the right way

How many people you want to invite really depends on how much space you have around your table and how confident you are about preparing everything. I think six is a perfect number, as I'd rather have two small dinner parties a few weeks apart than one large one. And if you want to have a proper conversation with your guests, you had better stick to six people.

Unless you are throwing a particularly grand dinner, it is fine to invite your guests by phone, e-mail or even text message. This depends on how you usually communicate with the people you're inviting.

Setting the table

Always start with a white tablecloth and flowers, and then have some fun. You can keep the table simple and chic, or choose a kitsch theme like Barbie and Ken, with dolls on your table.

If you are planning an informal party instead, be creative with place settings: cut out a photo of each friend and clip it onto a mini photo stand. Or write their names in gold on a leaf.

Flowers are also an important element in setting the right mood on the table and in your house. If you are hopeless at flower arranging, buy a bunch of flowers, snip them off short and put them in jam jars. Then place them down the centre of the table or on the mantelpiece. A money-saving tip: if you don't want to buy flowers, and live somewhere close to nature, pick wildflowers.

Setting the scene

When throwing a party, you have to think about all the senses. You are creating a total experience. All the elements have to come together: how the room looks, what music you are playing, where and how your guests are going to mingle. You'd better remember all that if you want to become a perfect hostess.

Some people prefer their lights dim, maybe using a few candles instead. This is especially true if you want to make use of your outdoor space: lead guests out with torches, flares or candles in brown-paper bags filled with sand.

Your choice of music depends on the idea you have for the party and the preferences of your guests. But if you invite people who like dancing and chatting, it's a good idea to move the furniture around to create a dance floor or a seating layout that is more conducive to socialising.

What to eat

If you want to avoid disasters on the night, do not try a new dish on your guests. If I were you, I would stick to tried-and-tested recipes. If you do not feel confident enough, do a test run a few days before the party and cook the same food, just for yourself. You'll manage the dinner party much more easily.

¹ Bambini di 1-3 anni



Exercises

1) Read the text and tick the right answer.

1. This text is about:
 - a) what to cook when you invite people for dinner
 - b) how to set the table on special occasions
 - c) how to make your guests feel at home
2. The writer thinks it is better:
 - a) to invite no more than six people
 - b) to cook only Italian food
 - c) to buy expensive food
3. When you invite your guests you should:
 - a) send them a written invitation
 - b) use the phone
 - c) choose the means of communication you usually use with them
4. As a money-saving tip, the writer suggests to:
 - a) buy paper flowers
 - b) pick wild flowers
 - c) roses
5. The writer is very concerned with:
 - a) the music you play
 - b) appealing to all the senses
 - c) the food you serve
6. As far as the food is concerned, Yasmin thinks:
 - a) you should try a new dish on your guests
 - b) hire a chef
 - c) stick to what you know you can cook

2) Match each verb with the right object. Then, make up a sentence using the right combination.

- | A | B |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. throw | a. disasters |
| 2. to turn down | b. the clutter |
| 3. to spend | c. a party |
| 4. to serve | d. money |
| 5. to invite | e. an invitation |
| 6. have | f. people |
| 7. tidy away | g. some fun |
| 8. to avoid | h. the drinks |



3) Socialising in English: match a sentence in A with a function in B.

A	B
1. Have a seat 2. Help yourselves 3. Would you like some more? 4. Welcome to the party 5. No thanks, I'm full 6. Here are some bags of chips 7. We got you some flowers 8. Can you pass me the salt? 9. Have some roast beef 10. Can I pour another glass? 11. Cheers 12. Where's the loo/toilet, please? 13. Have some snacks	a. offrire dell'arrosto b. offrire degli snack c. rifiutare cibo d. offrire pacchetti di patatine e. chiedere il sale f. fare un brindisi g. chiedere dov'è il bagno h. invitare gli ospiti a sedersi i. regalare dei fiori j. riempire il bicchiere di altri, di nuovo k. dare il benvenuto alla festa l. offrire dell'altro cibo m. invitare gli ospiti a servirsi da soli