



# The Simple Simon Party System

You may already have your own Party Game System or format and that's great but if you don't have or you just fancy a change here's what works well for me. You'll note that it's very simple and there's nothing ground-breaking or new, however don't let that fool you because if done correctly it really does work well.

There are so many kids party games out there to choose from but here are the ones I've used for many years which I find work well. For more inspiration on party games simple Google them or check out a book from a library etc. don't be afraid to alter elements of any game to fit in with your requirements and performance style.

## Approach

I treat each of my games as performances in their own right. The secret to running a successful party games section is making sure the emphasis is on FUN! It doesn't matter about winning or prizes, it doesn't matter if the games go a little bit wrong, all that matters is that you maintain an element of control and professionalism and focus the party goers energy into the activities that you are facilitating. It helps if you maintain enthusiasm and keep things moving at a relatively fast pace but above all you must always remember that the key word throughout is FUN!!!

## Which Games?

It's often been said that as professional entertainers we should try and offer games and activities that parents couldn't easily do themselves and as such the older traditional get overlooked. I don't totally agree with this sentiment because in my experience most parents don't have the time, the confidence or inclination to keep 30 or so over excited children entertained with even the simplest of games, it's our expertise that they are employing first and foremost, the content is secondary. I unashamedly use these 'retro' types of games because they use few or no props, they are easy to play, are suitable for any age, any sex, any number of children and quite simply because if played correctly the kids simply love them.

Here is the basic running order of my whole 2 hour party along with timings so as to put things in context. I'm not suggesting you run your parties in this order I offer this info here to give you a fuller picture:

- **Circus Skills** (8/10mins)
- **Party Games** (30mins)
- **Food Break** (20mins)
- **Magic Show** (40/45mins)
- **Balloons & Mini-Disco** (15/20mins)

## At The Party

Pictured is my simple setup which takes me about 5 minutes to get ready. I usually arrive at a party venue about 15mins prior to the party start time. I introduced myself



to the parents who've booked me my initial aim being to put them at ease straight away. I'll also acknowledge the child whose party it is. To the parents I'll explain:

"As your guests arrive for the first 40mins just leave everything to me, you try and enjoy the party".

This opening statement works wonders. I'll then remind them briefly the running order of the party by saying:

"So, the first 40mins I'll greet your guests with some Circus Fun and Party Games, then I'll get all the kids seated for their food, so I'll have them seated for you at 12:40pm (eg), ok?"

"You can have as long as you like but you'll probably find about 20mins is enough and we'll do the cake at the end of the food break" Check their understanding of when the foods need to be ready especially if any hot food is being planned.

I continue by saying "Then it's over to me again for the last hour of the party with Magic Show and Balloons".

In my delivery of these opening statements I am brisk, friendly and confident in my manner. I'm very precise with my timings!

### **Circus Skills** (I run this for about 8/10 mins as the kids arrive - longer if needed)

Whilst I'm waiting for people to arrive I'll play a bit of music with some background music and turn on a small set of disco lights just to add a little bit of party atmosphere in what is initially an empty venue. About 2 or 3 minutes before the party start time a few guests have usually started to arrive so I'll announce "Hello everybody, are you ready to start having some party fun" (kids respond) "Ok, the party will be starting in just 2 minutes time" (I usually increase the volume a little on the music at this point). I'll do this even if there are only a few kids whilst waiting for more guests to arrive.

Right on the party start time I'll invite all the kids to come down towards where I'm set up and say "Let's start with some Circus Fun". I'll put on some fun circus music and start handing out spinning plates and stilts, encouraging the kids to grab anything they'd like to have a go of.



### Using Circus Toys in this way is great because:

- It focuses their attention on something whilst everyone is still arriving. It's usually too chaotic to play a game
- Acts as an ice breaker. I'll hand a spinning plate to mums sitting along the sides with clingy children or toddlers.
- With the music playing, the disco lights flashing and all the action happening it creates a fun, lively and vibrant party atmosphere as people arrive, even if there's only a handful of kids there
- Encourages parents to join in. You'll often find them itching to have a go so let them, in fact I proactively get them to give it a try.

When it's time to put the circus stuff away I'll stop the music and say "Can you all hear me?" (kids respond) "Can you all see me?" (kids respond again) "Can you all smell me?" I act as if I said this by mistake (kids respond again) "Cheeky!" "Ok, everybody shhhh, Shhhh, SHHHH" I'll quieten down the room and with almost with a whisper I'll say "Ok, when I say ready, steady, go, as quickly as you can I want you to collect all the circus toys and throw them into this basket - Ready - Steady - GO".

On the word 'GO' I play music from an old UK comedy program called The Benny Hill Theme (but any fast pace tune is fine) and there's a mad frenzy as all the toys are returned. Everything is usually returned about half way through the music at which point I pause the music, I put the basket to one side and quickly get all the kids to look at me. I take hold of the birthday child hand and ask all the kids quickly stand behind me/us telling them to follow wherever we go. Now I continue the music and briskly walk/run around the room announcing "It's party time" encouraging everyone to join the convoy. As the music ends I make sure I'm back at my performance area, I face the kids getting them to stand spread out in front of me face me.

## **Heads, Shoulders, Bottoms**

With them all facing me I get the kids to copy the following actions (no music needed for this bit). I 'do' and say "Hands in the air, hands on your heads, air, heads, air, heads" you do the actions and the kids copy and you do this a few times faster and faster. I continue by saying "Heads" putting my hands on my heads, "Shoulders" (hand on my shoulders the kids copy). "Heads, shoulders, head, shoulders" I do this a bit faster then faster before saying "bottoms" (hands on my bottom - kids copy and laugh)

"Touch your nose" (you touch yours and everyone copies). "Touch your friends nose" (there's usually laughter) "NO, don't PICK their nose....errr" (more laughter).

Now say, "Everyone..... sit down, cross your legs and listen very quietly"

## **Introduction**

I now introduce myself and get the birthday child up and have a bit of fun chatting with them and I make a big fuss of them as the birthday star! I finish by saying "Are you and your friends ready for some fun and games now..." I get everyone to stand up and I ask the birthday child to stand back with his friends.

"Ok, all look at me, stand still, don't move, don't make a sound, our first game is everyone's favourite.... Musical Statues, Hooray". I say this with enthusiasm and everyone cheers.

## **The Games:**

### **Musical Statues**

"Listen very carefully this is how I play musical statues. When the music plays you all dance and when it stops you stand still. No moving, No wiggling, No blinking!"

"Who knows what happens if you're the one moving the most?" you'll get someone saying "You're Out!" To which you reply: "That's right, normally you'd be out but that's boring and none of us want to be out do we? So I can tell you now that no-one will be 'out' in any of my games...Hooray! So, in my game instead of being out, if you're moving the most you'll have to answer one of my silly questions instead, ok"

You now run the game and ask silly questions of those who move the most but of course they remain in the game.

For an extra level of fun I always add a different style of dancing for each round. For example, the first round it's just normal dancing, round two it's fast dancing "Who can

dance the fastest”, round three is noisy/loud dancing and round four is silly dancing. I’ll generally finish with a final round of normal dancing. I ask a silly question each time. To end the game I’ll say “Put your hands in the air and give yourselves a big clap and cheer...Hooray”

### **Musical Bumps**

“Are you ready for your next game? Ok, everyone sit down, cross your legs and listen very carefully” (The kids follow your instructions – I often sit crossed legged too)

“We are going to play one of my favourite game...Musical Bumps...Hooray. When the music plays you stand up and dance and when it stops you sit down, the last one sitting gets a question, remember no-one is out”

I don’t do the different styles of dancing during this game, instead I add some different fun. I’ll pause the music for a split second, just enough to trick the kids into thinking they need to sit down. I’ll do this a few times - the kids find this really funny. Again I’ll ask a question for the child who’s the slowest

### **Pass The Parcel**

Next I quieten things down a little with “everyone’s favourite game...Pass The Parcel”. Once I have all the children sitting in a circle I’ll address the mums and invite them to come and sit with any shy children or toddlers and help them to join in.

I play this game in the traditional way but using cloth bags with Velcro fastenings. I only use 8 bags and the last bag is the only one that has a prize (a small bag of sweets). As the music plays the parcel is passed around the circle and when the music stops whoever is holding it gets to open one layer. The music is then played again and the game continues (stopping and starting the music – removing layers) until the final layer is removed and a small prize is discovered.

## Limbo



I love the limbo and so do the kids, seriously the kids LOVE this game. For a limbo pole I simply use a metal rainbow coloured appearing cane (pictured) which I hold horizontally and lower more and more throughout the game (I have the cane already extended beforehand and I don't make it 'appear' in front of the kids because I use a vanishing cane during my show and frankly it's not necessary). You could use a dowel stick covered in coloured tape or painted in a bright colour or even an inflated 260 balloon if you preferred.

Despite the simplicity of this game there are a few key elements to making this a success. Firstly you need to be very clear in your instructions. Make sure the kids are lined up nice and straight and are listening to you. Explain that they are to go under the pole, then go around you then join the back of the line again. I usually repeat this by saying "Under, Around, Line up again". Second you should enlist the help of some parents if any are present. I'll get 4 or 5 mums to stand spaced out and parallel to the line of kids to act as human markers so that the kids know where to go once they have gone under the limbo pole. Instruct these parents that they are to help and encourage the kids to join the back of the line as quickly as possible once they have gone under the pole. I know that this all sound obvious but you'll thank me later!

## Musical Numbers

I love this game and so do the kids. Again I get the kids attention and have them stand in front of me and I explain that when the music plays they stretch their arm out to the sides and fly around the room like planes. When the music stops I say that I'll call out a number, if I say the number 2 they are to get into pairs, if I say 3 they get into threes etc. I say "If you can't get into the number, don't worry, no-one is out, it's just for fun".

I play the music for a short while then I stop it and call out "2", the kids scramble to get into 2's. I play the music again and stop it and say "2" again (I do this so the kids understand the game).

Next I say "Ok, this time when the music plays instead of flying we are all swimming in the sea..... BUT watch out for Sharks, if I see a Shark I'll warn you and you change from swimming slowly like this (demonstrate) to swimming away quickly like this (demonstrate again – include screaming). Play the music for a few seconds then shout "There's a SHARK", the kids will scream and swim around like crazy. Stop the music and shout "4", the kids will scramble into 4's.

Next I say "Ok, back on your planes". Music plays, then stops again as you say "3", the kids get into 3's.

Now I say “This time when the music plays we are all skiing in the ice and the snow (demonstrate)..... but watch out for Polar Bears, if I see one I’ll warn you and you change from skiing slowly like this (demonstrate) to skiing quickly like this (demonstrate). Play the music for a few seconds then shout “There’s a POLAR BEAR”, the kids will scream and ski around like crazy. Stop the music and shout “5”, the kids will scramble into 5’s.

Next: “Ok, back on your planes”. Music plays, then stops again as you say “2”, the kids get into 2’s.

Now I say “This time we’ve flown into Space so put your hands above your head touching your fingers together like a rocket. When the music plays this time we are all fly through space like a rocket (demonstrate)..... but watch out for Aliens, if I see one I’ll warn you and you change from flying slowly like this (demonstrate) to flying quickly like this (demonstrate). Play the music for a few seconds then shout “There’s an ALIEN”, the kids will scream and fly around like crazy. Stop the music and shout “1”, the kids will stop and think and then stand on their own.

I then say “Phew, this is getting far too scary for my so pretend you each have a parachute, hold your hands like this (demonstrate) and when the music plays all float gently back down from outer space back to the party”. I play the music for a short whilst it’s still playing say “When I say ready-steady-go, I want you all to come and land back in front of me sitting on the floor.... ready-steady-go, come and land here in front of me, give yourselves a big cheer....hooray”.

This game really is a lot of fun. Here’s a recap of my running order for it:

- Planes
- *Call 2*
- Swimming (Shark)
- *Call 4*
- Planes
- *Call 3*
- Skiing (Polar Bear)
- *Call 5*
- Planes
- *Call 2*
- Space Rocket (Alien)
- *Call 1*
- Parachute (Return quietly to the party)

## **Conga**

Now I get the birthday star up with me in front of his friends and ask him and everyone else “Are you having fun?” I’ll tell them it’s time for a break but I’ll see them later for a Magic Show. I get all the kids to line up behind the birthday star and I now lead them in a conga (with accompanying music) to the birthday food area and encourage them all to sit down for their food as I hand things over to the mum.

## **Food**

During the food break I’ll play some background music. Typically after about 20 minutes the kids have had enough food and are eager to get up and have some more fun. Some might even leave the table early on and begin running around the hall, that’s fine as it’s not my responsibility to intervene, besides I’m busy setting up my Magic Show.

At the appropriate time I’ll get the birthday mum ready with the cake, turn off my background music and get any kids who have left the table to sit back down. I will now get everyone to join in signing happy birthday. Next it’s Showtime.

## **Magic Show**

I run my show for about 40 minutes.

## **Hokey Cokey!**

Once the Magic Show has finished I make a balloon animal or sword etc for each child, however, just before I do so I say “Ok, have you enjoyed the show?” (kids respond) “Would you all like a balloon?” (kids respond). “Alright, just before I do, let’s do something that gets all the mums and dads involved. When I say GO you all stand up and drag all the grownups onto the dancefloor and get them to hold hands with you in a great big circle, ready-steady-GO!”

Now the entire room should be standing in a circle and I stand in the middle whilst I address everyone. I say “In a few minutes time I’m going to make each and every one of you your very own special party balloon. It’s important that once you have your balloon please PLEASE look after it because if you lose it or pop it I might not have time to make you another one. I continue “if your balloon does pop at home please don’t be upset. Just give the broken pieces to your mum or dad, ask them to put these pieces under your pillow at night and to say my magic word and in the morning the broken pieces will have magically changed into £1” this gag works for me. “So, just before I make your balloons let’s all do the Hokey Cokey”. Music plays

and everyone joins in this party dance which I find is a real winner for some strange reason with the mums and dads.

## **Music & Balloons**

Now for the last 20 minutes of the party I put the music on with the flashing lights for a kind of mini-disco whilst I make every child a balloon of their choice. I wrap up the party by announcing this is the end and thanking them for coming and checking that everyone has a balloon and a party bag (if they're having any at the party). That's it.

## **Examples Of My Silly Questions**

- What colour is an orange?
- What is the name of Peppa Pigs brother?
- Can you name a Superhero?
- Can you tell me the name of a Disney Princess?
- What food do Minions like?
- What colour is Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeers Nose?
- Do you know the name of anyone from Frozen?
- What colour is Thomas The Tank Engine?
- Who lives in a pineapple under the sea?

You get the idea....

## Extra Bit!

As well as running a games section to your part structure, why not add a game into the middle of your show? This adds a bit of variety as well as extra fun. There are many games which are suitable for this but as an example here is one such game/competition that I manufacture and sell which is ideally suited.



There have been many variations that go by many different names of this old routine and this is my presentation for what I believe is an 'Oldie but a Goodie'

Nowadays people are keen to get their smartphones out and take photos or videos of anything remotely interesting. If their kids are doing something funny or sweet that's even better and you can pretty much guarantee that such events will be shared with family and friends on social media etc. This phenomenon makes revisiting this old classic an ideal addition to any kids or family show.

I've included information of what music I use during my presentation, all of which I simply purchased from iTunes. Of course you can use whatever tunes best suit you.

## Funny Face Competition

Picture the scene. I've just finished some sort of trick and I'm talking to the audience when all, of a sudden I'm interrupted with an 'Air Horn' sound effect. I then announce "Oh, that sound means its competition time". And so my routine begins....

Here's the basic framework of my routine along with suggestions on the types of music and sound effects and where I position them:



*(Air Horn sound effect)*



*"Oh, that sound means its competition time" (Jazzy music starts – I use the Star Wars Cantina Bar tune and at Christmas I use a jazzy instrumental version of Jingle Bells )*

*"Ok we are going to have a funny face competition so if you'd like to*

come on stage and take part pull your funny faces now and I'll come and pick some of you" (*Jazzy Exciting Music continues as you select competitors*)

Look for kids who appear game for a laugh. Aim to pick kids old enough and tall enough to hold the banners and choose 2 boys and 2 girls.

Once on stage position the kids: boy, girl, boy, girl and space them out across the stage a little. Once in position invite the audience to give your fore contestants a round of applause and as this happens stop the Jazzy music.

Explain they are going to take part in a Funny Face competition but first "Let's meet our contestants". You now speak to each of the four children making them feel at ease and ask things such as their names, ages, where they are from, got any hobbies etc and try and draw out a bit of comedy from the conversations. It's the kind of light-hearted small talk you'd see on a cheesy gameshow.

Now you start the competition. Ask each child to face the audience and on the count of 3 they are to pull a funny face, but they must not use their hand.

"1-2-3, Hmmmm, it's too tough to choose a winner. I know, let's make it more interesting"

Have the four kids stop pulling their funny faces and turn around with their backs towards the audience and staying in their line side by side. You obviously keep facing towards the audience – you'll be talking to the audience over the heads of the four kids on stage during this part of the routine)

Grabbing your Funny Faces banners you say "we'll add some props" (at no point do you show the pictures as you unroll the banners, you keep the printed sides towards you)

### **What happens next should be delivered briskly and in a simple, clear and uncomplicated fashion**

1. Holding the unrolled banners 'as one' by the top two corners you clearly say "when I give these to you keep facing this way, hold the banners at the corners like this against your chest" (demonstrate)
2. "Ok, lift your banners up so your faces are looking through the holes" (help them get the position right if needed)
3. "Look at me and pull your funny face.....Great"
4. "Now when I say turn around you all face the audience but keep pulling your funny faces through the holes..... Ready, turn around"

As soon as they have turned to face the audience you step to one side so that you can look along the line and the contestants faces, make praising comments about how good they are and allow a few moments for photos. Addressing the audience say “I still can’t pick a winner, they are all too good so well have to try something else”

Instruct the kids to stop the face pulling and to lower their banners and have a rest for a moment

You tell the audience that you have a special App on your phone or you have a computerised clap-o-meter or whatever imaginary device you like that measures cheers. You explain that in a moment the contestants will look though the holes and do their funny faces again and that you will walk behind them putting your hand above each of their heads in turn and explain that as you do so the audience are to clap and cheer as loud as they can for each contestant. Tell them that the cheers will be picked up by the computer which will then work out the winner

You now do exactly what you proposed, walk behind each child holding a hand above each and allowing the audience to cheer for a few seconds before moving on to the next one (I usually hold one hand above their head whilst my other hand hovers a microphone, sweeping it left to right slightly pretending its picking up the cheers)



Once each child has been applauded I play a *Timer/Ticking Clock* sound effect and announce that the results are being calculated.as this is playing I collect all the banners back and quickly roll them together and put them away (The *Timer/Ticking Clock* sound effect is still playing as I do this)



Next I skip to the next sound effect with is *Tension Music* as the results are about to be revealed and say “The results are coming through now....”



“And the winner is.....All four of you, it’s a four way draw hooray” (as I announce this I play my next track which is a winners Ta-da fanfare tune) this gets a cheer from the audience



I hand each contestant a prize and/or a certificate thanking them for taking part and returning them to their seats (as they return to their seats I play some suitable *cheesy gameshow music*)