



# Frequently Asked Questions



## **What does my party include?**

All parties include admission, an experienced Virginia Zoo Birthday Party Host, a designated party space, activities, a birthday button, water and lemonade, electronic party invites, and all table covers and paper products. The biggest difference between our packages is the number of included admissions. Members receive a gift with their party.

## **Do you offer any discounts on Birthday Parties?**

Member, Military, First Responder, Student, Norfolk Resident, ETC. Birthday party pricing is standard for everyone, no discounts are available.

## **What time can I show up for my party? Where do I go?**

A designated birthday party sign will be placed out front for you, and your guests, to meet at 30 minutes before your party. You will be escorted to your space by your Host.

## **How many guests can I invite?**

We recommend a total of 30 people for a great party. However, the party spaces can accommodate up to 45 guests. Children ages three (3) and up are counted towards the total, including yourself and the birthday child. Due to safety reasons, no more than 45 guests can be admitted to your party. While 30 guests are included in your party, you may purchase 15 additional tickets for a total of 45.

## **Do Zoo Members need a ticket for the birthday party?**

Yes, birthday admission is separate from general zoo admission. All guests, including zoo members and children age of three (3) and over, must have a birthday party admission ticket to attend the birthday party.

## **How will I receive my admission tickets and invitations?**

Your birthday tickets, along with your digital invitations, will be sent by e-mail once you have signed and returned the Birthday Party Agreement and the Birthday Party Banquet Event Order.

## **What time should my guests arrive?**

We ask that you and your guests arrive 30 minutes before the start of your party.



### **Can I bring party favors or treat bags?**

Yes! We do ask, however, that your treat bags do not include any small item that can be considered a choking hazard. If it is a hazard to a small child, it is also a hazard to our animals. If your bags do happen to include these items, your host will ask that they are given to the parents to hold for their children until after they leave the Zoo.

### **Can you accommodate food allergies? Can you accommodate dietary restrictions?**

Most common diets and allergies, including vegetarian and gluten-free, can be addressed through our restaurant. Please keep in mind that our kitchen is considered a mutual preparation environment. Exceptions can be made in cases of extreme allergies. We will coordinate this with you at the time of booking.

### **What if my child has special needs?**

Please let us know if anyone in your party requires accommodations. We are more than happy to help and letting us know in advance gives us the best opportunity to ensure you and your guests have a great experience.

### **Can I choose the animals for my show?**

No. The Virginia Zoo cannot guarantee specific animal ambassadors. The ambassadors participating in the animal presentation will be chosen by staff at the Virginia Zoo. Ambassadors will be selected for your party based on animal health and safety. In addition, please plan to keep your chosen dessert item covered until after the animals have left the room.

### **Can I store my items in the room before or after my party?**

We cannot offer storage space for your items before or after your party. Most parents choose to have a large cooler with ice packs in their car to keep any food items fresh before and/or after their party.

### **Can I get train tickets as part of my birthday party?**

Train tickets can only be purchased at the train station on the day of your party.

### **What if there is bad weather the day of my party. Can I reschedule?**

All parties are held rain or shine. The Virginia Zoo is open year-round under all-weather conditions, except in extreme circumstances. In the event that the Zoo is closed due to extreme weather, the Birthday Party Coordinator will contact you.



### **What is the cancellation policy?**

All parties held rain or shine. The Virginia Zoo is open year-round under all-weather conditions, except in extreme circumstances. Party cancellations must be received at least ten (10) days before the party date to receive a partial refund of 50%. No refunds will be given for a party cancelled less than ten (10) days before the reserved date. Any changes or additions to the party must be made at least ten (10) days before the reservation date.

### **What is in the favor bags?**

Our favor bag contents vary depending on stock, but can include note pads, pencils, toys, and animal figures.

### **What animals are available for the Zoodoption package?**

Our most popular animals available for birthday zoodoption are: Red Panda, Tiger, Giraffe, Sloth, and Crocodile.

### **Can I choose what room my party is in?**

Generally, our parties are held in one of our classrooms. While we cannot promise any particular room on any given day, we will do our best to let you know which room we expect your party to take place in. Please keep in mind that location is subject to change without notice.

### **Can I see the room beforehand?**

While we cannot do in person room showings beforehand, the Birthday Party Coordinator can provide you with pictures of our birthday party rooms.

### **How far in advance do I need to make a reservation?**

Our birthday parties book up fast; usually about 2-3 months in advance for most of the year. A minimum of 2 weeks is needed.

### **What is the deposit?**

The deposit to secure a birthday party is \$275. This covers the standard party package.

### **When is the rest of my payment due?**

The remainder of your balance is due a minimum of 10 days before your party date.

### **What happens during the 90 mins?**

We set up a free play environment where kids can choose what to do rather than set a schedule. We find that scheduled, structured activities often do not work for all children. A variety of games, toys, and coloring are set up, and can be adjusted, based on the age of the kids and their interests. If they wish to play a group game that can be facilitated as well, just ask your host!



## What do I bring?

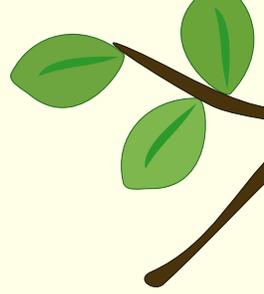
You do not need to bring anything other than the kids and the cake! We know that most parents wish to have specific decorations to fit a theme. Some things to keep in mind, other than avoiding items on the prohibited item list (found in your Birthday Party Agreement):

- Wall space to hang items is limited. Banners are commonly easy to accommodate.
- We do not have space or equipment to hang large photo ops of any kind. This includes ones that require a person to stand behind.
- Tabletop balloons are still balloons and are not permitted.
- While some parents love to “go all out” for a party, we are not the venue for that type of celebration. Any items or plans that require more than one or two people to set up typically eat into your party time. Please keep in mind that extra time is not available, and regardless of extensive set up (that also requires extensive clean up), our party times are fixed.
- We highly encourage our party parents to keep things simple. This ensures you have time to enjoy the experience as much as your child and your guests.
- “When in doubt, leave it out.” If you are unsure about if a décor item is permitted, we highly suggest leaving that item out.
- Table covers, banners, and paper products are great ways to have a theme without complication.
- Toys, games and activities will be set out on the tables when you arrive so kids can start playing right away!

## I have an afternoon party...

We encourage our afternoon parties to make plans to tour the Zoo before their celebration. Just let the ticket booth know you are there for a birthday party, and staff can assist you from there. 30 minutes before your party we ask that you and your guests meet your Zoo Host in front of the Zoo at the designated sign. We host multiple parties in a day, so you may see signs in the park pointing toward rooms. Meeting your Zoo Host out front ensures that you get to the correct room on time. We cannot offer storage space for your items before or after your party. Most parents choose to have a large cooler with ice packs in their car to keep any food items fresh before their party.





## Timeline

We encourage a relaxed atmosphere for your party. That being said a few key times to keep in mind are:

- You can arrive 30 minutes before your party start time. This is your set up time. Please meet your host at the “Birthday Party Meet Here” sign in front of the Zoo.
- 10 minutes into party – this is when your animal program will begin and will last 15 to 20 minutes. This cannot be changed. Letting your guests know this ahead of time helps ensure they do not miss out!
- 30 minutes into party – any food you have ordered will be delivered.
- 1 hour into your party – We highly recommend starting cake/cupcakes/dessert at this time.
- 15 minutes left – Your host will begin reminding you and your guests that time in the room is almost up.