

# Graduation

# Party

## ON A TIGHT BUDGET

By James Tramell III and Athina Mendoza



**B**ettina Charles is graduating from college, and the happy occasion will be marked with a party. “It’s going to be party full of spunk and fun,” says Bettina.

Throwing a graduation party can be expensive, with the average cost of a graduation party for 150 people topping \$1,200. But with a listless economy, there are ways to have these celebrations and still not break the bank.

### Make a budget and stick with it.

Decide how much you are willing to spend, and then make the guest list. How much you are willing to spend will determine how many guests you can invite.

Another option is to find out who else is graduating and combine your budgets.

Ginger Venable, publisher of [graduation-party.com](http://graduation-party.com), agrees that it’s a good idea for graduates to share parties but cautions that “it can get touchy is one (graduate) wants to invite more than the other.”

### Choose the Venue

The cheapest route is to throw the party in your own backyard.

Other options, according to Venable, are to use the park, a party room at an apartment complex, a church hall or a community room.

### Choose the Menu

Food is the biggest cost for a party. The time of day you choose for the party will determine the kind of food you serve. Venable suggests picking a time of day when guests will not expect a large meal. “If you have it at breakfast time, people are not very hungry. You can have bagels, some spreads and serve some colorful sliced fruits.”

Another good time of day, says Venable is 7 – 9 p.m. “People realize you are not serving dinner and you can serve desserts such as tarts and cakes.”

If you are not catering, consider buying foods in bulk from big-box stores such as Sam’s Club or Gordon Foods. And you may want to ask family to help with cooking.

### Print your own invitations

If you have a good printer, you can design your own invitations. Or, says Venable, “You can go to the office supply store and find graduation themed papers and cards.”

For PC users, HP.com has a graduation party kit.

To save on postage, consider sending e-invitations. Venable also suggests using social media such as Facebook to spread the word to your friends. But Venable says she’s a firm believer in mailing invitations to the grownups on your list.

### Craft your own decorations and favors

Balloons make a big splash and are economical. Venable says you don’t have to go for the expensive helium balloons. She recommends getting a hand pump to blow up latex balloons.

You may also try making origami ornaments to use as centerpieces.

The trend for college graduation parties is to have a themed party. Bettina Charles is having a “mad hatter” theme but there are other directions you can go in. For instance, if the graduate is going off to law school or medical school, you can buy construction paper and make your own themed decorations. [e](#)