

# Make Your Own Placemats

Everyone loves a party, and half the fun is the anticipation of the big event. Getting your child involved in the preparations will boost his confidence and encourage him to be a contributing member of your family. Homemade placemats are festive, easy to make, and can be tailored to any type of celebration. They make perfect take-home party favors too! Here are three suggested themes, but designs can be personalized according to the type of celebration or your child's individual interests.

## What You Need:

- Colored construction paper (8½ x 11 inches for the placemat; smaller pieces can be used for the cutouts)
- Glue stick
- Markers
- Pencil
- Glitter
- Clear contact paper



## What to Do:

### Birthday Theme:

1. Start with any color of construction paper for the background.
2. Create a balloon template by drawing an oval shape on cardboard and cutting it out. You can make different sizes, if desired.
3. Have your child trace the balloon template onto 3-5 different colors of construction paper, depending on the size of the template.
4. With safety scissors, your child can cut out the balloon shapes and glue them onto the background.
5. Use a marker to draw strings from the bottom of the balloon cutouts. For extra texture, you can even glue real ribbon to the bottom of the balloons!
6. Your child can personalize placemats by writing guest names if he'd like. Try making an extra special placemat for the lucky birthday guest.
7. Sprinkle glitter on balloons to really make them shine.
8. See instructions for sealing the placemats below.

### Winter Holiday Theme:

1. Start with any color construction paper for the background, although dark or medium tones work best to set off light-colored snowflakes.
2. Cut three round circles (small, medium, and large) from white construction paper. Glue onto the placemat to form a snowman.
3. Use a marker to give your snowman a face, arms, a scarf, and any other desired features.
4. To add snowflake cutouts, fold a square piece of paper in half diagonally so that it forms a triangle.
5. Fold your triangle in half diagonally again to form another smaller triangle.
6. Fold the triangle in thirds—one side to the front and the other side to the back.
7. Trim the bottom corners off the triangle in an arc.
8. Around all three outside edges of the triangle, cut small shapes such as circles, triangles, or squiggles.

9. Unfold your paper and glue the snowflake to the placemat.
10. Sprinkle a small amount of glitter across your snowy scene to make it sparkle in the light!
11. See instructions for sealing the placemats below.

#### Space Theme:

1. Start with a dark blue or black sheet of construction paper for the background.
2. Place a small, round object—a coin or a plastic lid, for example—on lighter colored paper and trace several circles with a pencil to create moons and planets. Use different round objects to make different sizes. Cut out the shapes with a scissors. You can cut some of the moons into crescents, if desired.
3. Draw several stars freehand (or make a star-shaped template from cardboard and trace it) and cut them out.
4. Attach the cutouts to the dark background using a glue stick.
5. Use a marker to add any detail you would like—for example, rings around the planets or tails for shooting stars.
6. Sprinkle a small amount of glitter across your galaxy to create a shimmery effect.
7. See instructions for sealing the placemats below.

#### **To seal the placemats:**

Note: Working with contact paper can be tricky. Try a few practice placemats to get the hang of it before you attempt to seal your child's irreplaceable work of art.

1. Cut a sheet of contact paper that is approximately one inch larger than your placemat on all sides (so about 9½ x 12 inches).
2. Lay the contact paper flat and remove the backing, with the sticky side up. If the contact paper was rolled, you may want to roll it up in the opposite direction before you remove the backing to help it lay flat.
3. Center the placemat above the contact paper to determine where it should be positioned.
4. Carefully and slowly press the placemat onto the contact paper, starting with the left side and smoothing it down towards the right to help avoid bubbling.
5. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with a new sheet of contact paper.
6. Center the placemat (with the first sheet of contact paper stuck to it) above the second sheet of contact paper and press it into place as in step 4.
7. Trim any sticky edges where the contact paper did not line up exactly.

Your child can make a special placemat for himself, one to give as a gift, or even a whole set for the next holiday or celebration! With that contact paper seal, you'll never have to worry about mealtime accidents ruining the festivity.