

Planning a Party Before Your Son or Daughter Leaves for Basic Training or Boot Camp

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I'll admit it; I do like to gather friends and family together for any occasion...or for no occasion at all, other than to spent time together!

Before our son headed off to [Basic Training](#) at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, Texas, we gathered friends and family together for a party! My son wasn't too excited about the idea initially (he didn't want to be the center of attention), but during the party he told me how much he enjoyed it and thanked me for putting it all together. I know the idea of having a celebration when you worried sick and sad about your 'baby' heading off to the military seems like the wrong thing to do, but a party or get-together can be a wonderful memory for all of you.

Focusing on the party plans can be a welcome diversion to all the worry and anxiety that you'll have before they head off to boot camp or basic training.

The get-together can be as easy as a Saturday or Sunday open house with sodas, lemonade, ice tea (or hot coffee and tea) and cake and cookies or it can involve more substantial food offerings like a backyard BBQ, pasta and salad or cold cuts.

Here are some ideas for making this party or get together special.

Party Planning – The Details

1) Set the date and time. I would recommend 2 to 3 weeks before your loved one is scheduled to leave, in case the report date gets moved up. 3 hours is a good amount of time for an open house; 6-9 on weekdays and 1-4 on Saturday and Sundays.

2) Send out invitations or call family and friends with all the details (date, time and place).

3) Every family and area of the country has their own traditions and expectations of food and drink that will be offered at a party or gathering. Time of day has a lot to do with the amount and type of food to serve. One idea is to have all of your son or daughter's family favorite recipes. Another idea is to plan a "Souper" party with soup and chili along with assorted breads, crackers and chips.

Cake, pies and cookies are good sweets and the cake can serve as the table centerpiece until eaten. Most bakeries can reproduce the military insignia on the cake and add appropriate words such as "Basic Training (or Boot Camp) is a piece of cake" or simply "Best Wishes" or "Good Luck", etc.

If people want to help out by bringing food and drinks, be ready with a suggestion for them.

Just make sure that you keep it simple and ask family and friends to help so that you can enjoy this time, too.

4) Decorations and balloons make any get-together more festive and this party is no exception!

Red, white and blue decorations lend that patriotic feel to the occasion and can be used for any branch of military service. For Air Force, you might want to add silver to the mix. For the Army and Marines, you might select a camouflage theme. For Navy and Coast Guard, a nautical theme might be appropriate. You can find Service specific decorations, table and party ware in party stores or on-line at several different sites.

5) Take lots of photos of your son or daughter with family and friends. Remember to get photos of you with the new recruit and other family members and of course, their friends. You can print out these photos and they can take them along to Basic Training or send them out in your letters after they arrive at boot camp or basic training. Photos of friends and family and don't forget the family pets are always welcome in those letters!

6) Have a notebook handy for family and friends to write down notes of support and best wishes to your son or daughter. They will enjoy reading these on the plane to their training location or when they need some support during Basic Training or Boot Camp. Make sure that they put their mailing address in the book so your son or daughter has these addresses for filling out the security information for graduation day passes. While your son or daughter will probably be too tired to send many letters to family and friends back home, but having the addresses will certainly help, if they do want to write.

7) Another idea is to have a stack of postcards available so guests write a short note. Once you receive your mailing address at Basic Training, you can address the cards and send them out.

8) For making sure that your Recruit gets lots of notes from family and friends, you might want to look at a service such as Write2Them, which lets family and friends send email to a special email address and they make sure the emails are mailed out to your loved one. Be sure to get everyone's email address at the party, so you can add them as Friends when you set up your [Write2Them](https://write2them.wordpress.com/) account. This way they can easily continue to send notes of support and photos to your loved one via email throughout basic training.

Remember, whether your gathering or party just has immediate family or includes friends, this is a very special time. Be sure to enjoy these days and the time you spend with your loved one before they head off to Basic Training or Boot Camp!

<https://write2them.wordpress.com/>