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Leader Publishing
Be Your Own Balloon Decorator

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Introduction

Balloon décor is a very exciting way to create the WOW Factor with decor at special events like weddings, galas, Christmas parties, graduation parties, anniversary celebrations, bridal or baby showers, proms, fundraisers and other social functions and special events.

An ordinary banquet hall can be totally transformed into a very special and magical environment with the use of balloon décor. Balloon designs add a festive feel to a room. Nothing says “special event” like balloon décor!

Balloons pack a lot of bang for the buck under any circumstances, even when you hire a balloon decorator, because they fill up spaces and give your event a lot of dramatic visual appeal without being anywhere near as costly as elaborate floral arrangements which would fill the same spaces.

But if you are able to do your own balloon decorating, as this guide will reveal, you’ll save a bundle more on your wedding or event.

When you hire a balloon decorator, what you are really paying for is the labor for the balloon designer to do the work. In other words, you are paying for her /his time and effort. Over and above that, they also build in a mark-up for profit.

By doing your own balloon designs, there is no fee for labor, and no one’s charging a profit, so all you’ll pay is the cost of the balloons and a few other inexpensive supplies.

Most balloon decorators charge 5 to 7 times the actual cost of the balloons when they price their services. You do the math! Making the decision to do your own balloon designs for your wedding, party, fundraiser or other social event is a no-brainer!

What’s really great about doing your own balloon décor is that virtually all balloon decorating is really based on only a handful of very basic techniques. This is one of the secrets the pros don’t want you to know. Once you understand the basic techniques, you can apply them in a wide variety of ways to create a wide range of different designs.

Using your own imagination, you can create so many different looks and effects. You’ll also be able to look at photos of balloon designs done by professional decorators and figure out how to assemble many of the looks for yourself once you understand the basic design techniques.

In the past, when you’ve seen the work of balloon decorators, you probably found it mind boggling to envision how the designs were constructed. Balloon décor has such an elaborate look that it seems very complicated and complex to someone who doesn’t understand the processes. And with so many different designs out there, the idea of trying
to learn the techniques for yourself in order to do your own balloon décor probably seemed out of the question to you before now.

The good news is that you are about to discover the secrets of balloon decorating; the techniques and methods upon which all balloon decorating is based. These are the all-important fundamentals - the building blocks and foundation that all balloon décor and design is based upon. You’ll be amazed at how very simple balloon decorating really is when you realize that all balloon décor can really be boiled down to a handful of very simple techniques that can be used over and over again, in many different ways, to create so many different looks and effects.

Almost like magic, once you’ve learned the basics, the ability to create a wide range of designs for your own wedding will open up to you. You are about to discover how to have a stunning, lavishly decorated wedding that looks like you paid a professional decorator big dollars to do, and no one will ever have to know that you saved a bundle by doing it yourself – unless, of course, you want them to!

After you’ve taken the time to read through this quick guide and you come to understand the techniques, you’ll want to ensure success for your balloon decorating project by starting to prepare well in advance. Take the time to look at pictures of balloon decor on the internet to get ideas and find examples of what you like. Think about colors. Not just the color scheme for your wedding or party, but also consider the color of the existing décor in the hall. Make sure the colors you pick for your balloon décor will complement any color that is already in the hall décor to avoid creating a clash.

Be sure to visit the hall well in advance, before you start planning your designs, to familiarize yourself with what you’ll be decorating. It’s really important that you make sure that everything you are planning works with what is already there.

**What Balloon Décor Will Do for Your Wedding or Party**

Balloons can transform even the most nondescript, ordinary, or even downright ugly banquet hall into a gorgeous fantasy world.

Balloon decorations are the most economical way to dress up your hall and fill spaces as compared to other decorating options. All the more so when you do the decorating yourself!

Balloons come in many different colors, sizes, shapes, finishes and designs, making an endless variety of options possible.

Balloons can be used to decorate in many different ways.

Balloons are made of latex, which is a natural biodegradable product that won't harm the environment.
Balloons tell guests “This is where the celebration is!” As a lot of professional balloon decorators like to say, “It isn’t a party until the balloons arrive!”

Are you ready to discover the insider secrets of balloon decorating so you can design your own wedding décor like a pro?

All right then! Let’s go!
Before You Get Started:
Keys to the Success of Your Balloon Decorating Projects

There are just a few details you should know before you get started creating your balloon designs. These are important keys to the success of your balloon decorating projects, so take a close look:

- Good quality helium-quality latex balloons will float for about 18 - 20 hours in a controlled environment of about 70 degrees F., so keep this in mind when planning your set up. You don’t want to set up your balloon designs too far in advance of your wedding, or the balloons will start going limp and will start to sink. Ideally, for a wedding reception taking place on a Saturday evening for example, it’s best to do the balloon work the morning of the wedding. If that’s not possible, do it as late as possible the evening before, and make sure you use Super Hi-Float to prolong the flying time of your balloons (more on that below).

- Make certain to only buy ‘helium grade’ balloons if you are inflating with helium. Regular balloons can not be filled with helium; they might pop or will quickly lose air, so make sure the balloons you buy are marked as ‘helium grade’. If they aren’t labeled this way, they aren’t helium grade!

- Use professional decorator quality balloons to ensure the maximum flying time and durability. Virtually all professional balloon decorators use the Qualatex® brand. This brand is widely available almost everywhere balloons are sold. Visit your local party supply store, wedding supplies store, or look online.

- A product known as Super Hi-Float or Hi-Float can be used to extend the flying time of helium balloons significantly. It is usually available anywhere helium balloons are sold. Simply put some of this solution into the balloon before inflating with helium. Follow directions on the label. It is well worth using if you are concerned at all about the flying time of your balloons. The last thing you want is sagging balloons half way through the evening, so this product is highly recommended.

- Foil balloons (called “mylar”) will fly for several days, even up to a week, when filled with helium, however, they are more expensive than latex.

- Always buy more balloons than you think you will need. Balloons break, calculation errors can occur, so it’s better to have too many balloons than too few. Even the pros who know how to calculate required balloon quantities with great precision always buy 10% more than they know they need to account for wastage – this is a professional rule. Remember, balloons are cheap! And you can always use any leftovers for another occasion.

- Don’t underestimate how long it takes to inflate your balloons! Always allow more time than you think you will need. If you think it will take you two hours to do the
balloon set up work, allow four. If things aren’t looking right, you want to have the
time to fiddle with them to get them perfect. You also never want to feel rushed when
doing your designs because that’s typically how mistakes happen. You should feel
calm and relaxed when doing your balloon designs. Rushing leads to frustration, and
frustration leads to sloppy designs!

- Make sure you are using enough weight to hold down your helium balloons. A cluster
of 3 standard size 11” balloons filled with helium will need 50grams of weight to
keep them anchored down. If necessary, use a kitchen scale to ensure you have
enough weight for your anchors.

- Don’t underestimate how much helium you will need. A standard 11” balloon takes
0.5 cu ft (cubic feet) of helium. A typical disposable helium cylinder contains 12 cu
ft.

- Never move a helium tank without the safety cap being securely attached or it could
explode.

- Always keep the helium tank in its safety stand, or chain it to a pillar or post. If it
were to fall over the result could be catastrophic.

- Follow any safety precautions given to you by the provider of the helium tank and ask
them to explain the safety precautions regarding transporting the tank.

- If you are transporting inflated balloons, put them into a large plastic bag to keep
them properly contained.

- Never release a metallic balloon into the air. Metallic balloons are hazardous to
wildlife, are not bio-degradable, and may conduct electricity when coming in contact
with power lines.

- Never inhale helium from a balloon or tank; it can lead to fatal suffocation.

- Mark the mono-filament line (clear fishing line) you tie to the balloons with ribbons
so passersby won't trip

- If you having an outdoor celebration, keep in mind that balloons will not last outdoors
overnight. The cooler nighttime air shrinks the balloons, and when they expand again
in the sun the next day, they will pop. This can be avoided by simply bringing all
balloons indoors for the night.
Inflating a Helium Balloon

*How to Properly Inflate a Balloon Using a Helium Tank:*

Position the opening at the neck of the balloon onto the nozzle of the helium tank. Gently press the nozzle down to inflate the balloon with helium.

*Properly Filled*

The balloon is *properly filled* when it has a nice oval shape.

*Over-Inflated*

If it is pear shaped or shaped like a light bulb, its *over-inflated* and you need to let some helium out, otherwise it may easily burst.

*Under-Inflated*

If it’s round in shape, its *not inflated enough* and you need to add more helium, otherwise it won’t fly as long as it should.

*Tying Off*

Once you are satisfied that the balloon is appropriately filled, tie a knot in the neck of the balloon to seal. Some helium balloons are made with little ties at the bottom of the neck. If you have this type of balloon, wrap the neck of the balloon around the tie and tie and knot in the balloon neck to seal.
Tips For Working With Helium

To determine how much helium you’ll need, use this as a guideline:

- A 9-inch latex balloon will need .25 cubics of helium
- A 11-inch latex balloon will need .50 cubics of helium
- A 16-inch latex balloon will need 1.3 cubics of helium

Remember the Previous Tips About Working with Helium:

- Good quality helium balloons will float for about 18 - 20 hours in a controlled environment of about 70 degrees F., so keep this in mind when planning your set up. You don’t want to set up your balloon designs too far in advance of your wedding, or the balloons will start going limp and will start to sink. Ideally, for a wedding reception taking place on a Saturday evening for example, it’s best to do the balloon work the morning of the wedding. If that’s not possible, do it as late as possible the evening before.

- Make certain to buy ‘helium grade’ balloons if you are using helium to inflate. Regular balloons can not be filled with helium; they might pop or will quickly lose air, so make sure the balloons you buy are marked as ‘helium grade’. If they aren’t labeled this way, they aren’t helium grade!

- Use professional decorator quality balloons to ensure the maximum flying time and durability. Most professionals use the Qualatex® brand.

- A product known as Super High Float can be used to extend the flying time of helium balloons. It is usually available where ever helium balloons are sold. Simply put some of this solution into the balloon before inflating with helium. Follow directions on the label.

- Never move a helium tank without the safety cap being securely attached or it could explode.

- Always keep the helium tank in its safety stand, or chain it to a post. If it were to fall over the result could be catastrophic.

- Follow any safety precautions given to you by the provider of the helium tank and ask them for safety precautions regarding transporting the tank.
- Never inhale helium from a balloon or tank; it can lead to fatal suffocation.
THE DESIGN TECHNIQUES
Making a Balloon Cluster

When you tie 2 or more balloons together it’s called a *cluster*. Clusters generally consist of 2, 3, or 4 balloons. Two balloons tied together are known as a *duplet*. Four balloons tied together are called a *quad*.

Making a Balloon Duplet

To make a duplet, inflate your first balloon, but do not tie off – instead, just pinch the neck closed with your fingers and hold while you inflate the second balloon. Do not tie off this balloon either – pinch the neck closed with your fingers.

Now tie the necks of the two balloons together in a knot. You’ve now formed a duplet.

Of course, that’s the way the pros create a duplet, but it can be a little tricky and may take some practice to get the hang of it. If you don’t have the time or opportunity to get good at it, go ahead and cheat! Tie off the neck of each balloon when you blow it up, then tie the necks of the two balloons together using the dangling rubber beneath each knot.

Making a Balloon Quad

To make a balloon quad, start by creating two duplets, as instructed above. (Remember that each duplet consists of two balloons tied together).

Next, cross the necks of the two duplets together and twist to attach together. You’ve now formed a quad. Its that simple!

The pros use this twist method, with no knot required, for forming their quads. But if you find that the necks don’t stay secured and have a tendency to come undone, go ahead and cheat! Simply tie a knot to secure the two duplets together. Better to be safe than sorry – you don’t want those quads coming apart on you!
Making Balloon Columns

Columns are one of the single most important designs / techniques in balloon decorating. They can be used on their own as stand-alone designs, or they can be used as the foundation for a wide range of other designs.

There are two types of columns:

- Foundational Columns
- Flexible Columns

Foundational Columns

A foundational column is a fairly sturdy, non-flexible column. You create foundational columns by attaching the balloons to PVC pipe or metal pipe. A 1/2” diameter is preferred for the pipe, but you can also use 1” diameter. The pipe can be purchased at any building supply store or home renovation store, like Home Depot for example. PVC is quite inexpensive and is more economical than metal.

Once constructed, a foundational column is stationary – it doesn’t move. You should therefore use pipe as the base or frame for your balloon columns when you don’t want the column to have flexibility.

Foundational columns are used for outdoor designs because they won’t fly around in the wind like a flexible column would.

Foundational columns are also commonly used when creating other designs such as candy canes, balloon trees, gazebos, hanging letters or numbers, dance floor borders, and arbors or archways with rectangular sides.

Flexible Columns

A flexible column is created by attaching the balloons to clear mono-filament line, otherwise known as fishing line.

As the name implies, the style of column is flexible and will move if touched, or if exposed to moving air or wind.

Clear mono-filament line can be purchased in hardware stores, home improvement warehouses likes Home Dept, or anywhere fishing supplies are sold.
**Column Making Instructions**

*To make a balloon column, clusters of 4 balloons are first created (refer to the section on making quads), then each cluster is attached to the fishing line or PVC pipe. All balloons in the column should be the same size, and – very important – equally inflated.*

You’ll need to start by deciding how long you want your column to be. Then cut a piece of fishing line or either PVC or metal pipe (1/2” or 1” pipe diameter) to that length.

Next, inflate all the balloons you will need for the design based on your best estimate. Then, if you need to inflate more balloons as you near the end of the project you can simply go back and do so.

You’ll save yourself a lot of time and will be able to work more efficiently if you start by inflating the balloons first, then move on to forming all your clusters, and then attach them to your base. This is better than constantly switching from one task to another, and then back again, which will really disrupt your flow and slow you down a lot.

To create the balloon clusters, attach four balloons together at the necks. See the earlier section on making quads. You should be able to do this using the dangling rubber of the necks themselves. Feel free to gently pull and stretch the rubber so you have enough slack.

If you are creating a flexible column (fishing line), stretch out the fishing line and anchor each end by tying each to a chair.

Starting at one end of the fishing line or pipe, pick up a cluster of balloons, place it snug against the fishing line or pipe and twist two of the balloons together around the line or pipe so that they fasten to the line or pipe.

Continue to add clusters to the line or pipe in this way, placing each new cluster directly next to the previous cluster so they are snugly butted up against one another. After you’ve added a cluster to the line or pipe, you can simply slide it up the line or pipe so that it fits closely against the previous cluster.

If you want to create a color pattern, use clusters of three balloons consisting of three different colors OR use clusters that contain 2 balloons of the same color and one balloon of a different color. Each time you add a cluster to the line or pipe, twist one turn to create the color spiral pattern around the pipe.

There is also a second technique you can use if you are creating a foundational column using pipe.
Place your pipe into its stand (see below for making stands) so that it is now standing vertically. After forming your quads, attach them to the pipe by simply pushing each quad onto the pipe so that the pipe goes right through the center of each quad. Push the first quad all the way down to the base of the pipe, then push the next quad snug against the first, and continue the process until the pipe is covered.

Making a Stand for a Foundational Column

Insert the PVC pipe into the center of a large flower pot or planter until it rests on the bottom of the pot, then pack tightly with gravel to about 1 inch below the rim of the pot. Alternatively, for an even sturdier base, pour wet concrete into the pot, holding the pipe in place, nice and straight, while the concrete hardens.

Now simply proceed with attaching the balloons to the column by twisting the balloon clusters onto the pipe.

Be sure to size the pot appropriately to the rest of the design so that it is in proportion with the design, and so that it will provide the necessary support.
Making Balloon Hearts, Letters, Numbers, Candy Canes and Other Creative Designs

PVC Pipe can be used to make other creative designs such as Hearts, Archways, Gazebos, Letters, Numbers, Candy Canes...

Using the same basic design and construction techniques discussed above to create a column, you can use PVC pipe to create a wide variety of balloon designs.

PVC pipe is quite flexible and can be bent with relative ease into the form you desire. Once bent, it will permanently hold its shape.

PVC pipe is used for creating letters or numbers, or structures like gazebos and archways with straight sides.

Use PVC angle fittings (90 degrees and 45 degrees) to connect two pieces of PVC pipe together when there is a sharp change in direction in your design. Angle fittings are sold anywhere you buy your PVC pipe.

It's very easy to create the frames you need for your balloon designs by bending PVC pipe or connecting pieces of PVC pipe together using angle fittings when required in order to make hearts, candy canes, numbers or letters, archways, gazebos, arbors, etc.
Once you’ve created the frame of the design out of the PVC pipe, bending or angling it as needed, simply attach the balloon clusters by twisting onto the frame using the same technique discussed earlier for building columns.

To get the most from your balloon designs, be creative in how you will display your designs. For instance, letters or numbers, candy canes, and hearts can be hung from the ceiling or attached to the wall.

Consider spelling out the couple’s names with letters fashioned from balloons at a wedding. Or at a graduation celebration, use letters and numbers to spell out “Class of 2010”, for example. At an anniversary party or birthday bash, incorporate balloon numbers as a focal point of the décor to mark the milestone. A big “25” done in gold balloons is stunning for a golden 25th wedding anniversary!

For many designs, if you are intending to hang the design on a wall, you can use the mono-filament line technique instead of PVC because you don’t always require the sturdiness that the PVC provides. For example, to create a candy cane, or a heart, you can easily assemble the balloons into a column, as described previously in this guide, then shape the column into a candy cane or heart as you are securing it onto the wall.

Very Important: Just remember to always ask permission from the banquet hall manager before attaching anything to the wall or suspending anything to the ceiling, and follow any instructions they give you in doing so. Some halls have restrictions about how you can attach items to walls or ceilings, or they may limit where exactly you may attach decorations, so it’s really important to obtain proper permission and instructions so that you avoid major headaches.
Making Balloon Garlands and Swags

Balloon Garlands can be the single strand type or they can be made by stringing clusters together to achieve a much thicker, fuller looking garland. When the garland is single strand, it is also referred to the name Strand of Pearls in balloon decorating terminology. Balloon Swags can be created by draping completed garlands into a swag pattern.

Garlands are created using a simple variation of the technique used to make columns with fishing line.

To make a garland, construct it using the very same process you would use to create a column with fishing line: cover the line with a series of balloon clusters.

Helium is not used when creating swags – just fill the balloons with a regular air-inflator. To make a swag, simply create a garland using double the length of fishing line for the area you want the swag to cover, so that you have the excess length you need to drape and swag the garland. So if you have a ten-foot wide area that you want to decorate with a swag, you’ll need to create a swag that is twenty feet long.

Once your garland or swag is constructed, attach it to a wall (often the wall behind the head table is decorated with a swag); use it to adorn the front of your head table, draping
it or swagging it as desired. Or drape it from the ceiling. You can also drape and swag it over the banister of a staircase, much in the same fashion you might do with Christmas garland. Consider also draping garland around a doorway to frame the entrance with a lot of drama. These are just ideas to get you thinking! Take a close look at your reception hall to determine where all the opportunities are. Every hall is different, so exactly how you use your balloon designs will depend on the features and layout of the hall.
Covering a Pillar With Balloons

If your reception hall has floor to ceiling support pillars in it, balloon garlands are terrific for concealing the pillars and will help turn what was originally a visual obstruction into a very attractive decorative feature. Simply create a garland considerably longer than the height of the pillar and then wind it up and around the pillar in a spiral pattern. Or use multiple garlands and wind them around the pillar. Fasten the fishing line at the ends of the garland to the pillar with masking tape. Don’t use any other type of tape as it could damage the paint when the decorations are removed and get you into big trouble with the banquet hall manager.

Be sure to use enough tape to ensure the garland is well secured. You don’t want it coming down during your reception!

And remember, be sure to ask the hall manager for permission to attach anything to the walls or ceiling long before proceeding.
Creating a Dance Floor Canopy with Balloon Swags

Swags can also be used to decorate the ceiling area over the dance floor, the outer side of staircases (similar to how Christmas garland is used on staircases) or other areas. Get creative and use your imagination! That’s what will set your décor apart from every other wedding your guests have been to!

You can create an awesome environment for your dance floor using swags suspended from the ceiling. The idea is to essentially create a canopy of swags above the dance floor. The swags all radiate out from the center point in the ceiling above the dance floor, extending out to the area over the perimeter of the dance floor.

To decorate the area over the dance floor with swags, you’ll need to create multiple swags. Find the center point of the dance floor, then attach one end of all of the swags to the ceiling directly above the center point of the dance floor. Ask your hall manager for instructions on how you are allowed to attach the garlands to the ceiling – every hall will have their own preferences and requirements.

Now attach the other end of each of the garlands to a different point on the ceiling above the perimeter of the dance floor, creating the effect of all of the swags radiating out from the center out to the perimeter.

You’ll need to have an even number of swags, and all should all be evenly spaced apart from each other. Every swag should have another swag directly opposite from it. The precise number of swags you use, however, is entirely up to you. As a general guideline, the larger the area over the dance floor, the more swags you should have to fill the space and create that “canopy”. You don’t want it to look skimpy!
Making a Helium Balloon Arch

Helium arches look spectacular but are actually very easy to construct.

They are best used for indoor décor, but can be used outdoors if the wind and weather is very calm.

Balloon arches add a lot of drama to your reception hall if you use them to frame the entrance, head table, or stage if there is one.

If you are having an outdoor party or reception in an area with a pool, a helium arch looks fabulous gracefully arcing over the pool, from one side to the other. Again, this is only an option if the wind and weather are calm, and make sure you anchor the ends of the line down very, very well to avoid having your creation take off!

Your arch can be wide, with a very smooth curve, or it can be narrow with a much tighter curve, depending on how you intend to use the arch and where you want to position it. Obviously, to create a wide, smooth curve, the “legs” of the arch will need to be positioned farther apart (and the fishing line will need to be longer) than if you are creating a more narrow style of arch with a tighter curve.

Begin with a length of clear fishing line.

To determine how long the fishing line should be, first measure the area your want your arch to cover, beginning where you want the arch to start all the way over to where you want it to end. In other words, measure the area between where you intend the two “legs” of the arch to be located. Now multiple that figure by 1.5 for a fairly smooth, arch or
multiply by 2 for a steeper arch. This figure tells you how long the length of fishing line should be for your arch.

Next, attach each end of the fishing line to a weight. Use a small bag of sand for the weight, wrapped in decorative mylar foil in a color that matches the balloons, or use a brick wrapped in decorative mylar foil for each weight. Mylar is available at party supply stores; it’s usually sold by the roll, or in sheets, kind of like gift wrap.

If you prefer, pre-made weights specifically intended for this purpose are often sold where balloon supplies are sold.

Position each of the two weights where you want the legs of the arch to be.

Inflate your first balloon with helium. Starting at one end of the fishing line, attach the first balloon to the fishing line, about 5 inches from the weight. You can do this by wrapping the dangling end of the balloon (that little rubber piece hanging below the knot at the neck of the balloon) around the fishing line and tying it off. If that is hard for you to maneuver, use another piece of fishing line to tightly tie the neck of the balloon to the long length of fishing line; then trim away the ends.

Inflate your next balloon and attach it to the fishing line, positioning it so that the two balloons are barely touching. For a variation on the look, you can leave a little more space between it and the previous balloon. This is a good option if you are concerned you may run low on balloons because you will ultimately use fewer balloons this way.

Repeat the process, being careful to space all the balloons an equal distance apart from one another, until you’ve reached the other end of the line.

To create a variation of the look, if you like you can tie dangles of curling ribbon to the necks of each balloon. Using long lengths of curling ribbon will produce one look, shorter lengths will produce another look, and alternating between long and short will result in yet a different look all together. There are so many options, and it’s a lot of fun to experiment and apply your own creativity.
The following diagram shows an arch in progress:
Making a Rectangular Balloon Arbor
(Rectangular Arch)

To make a rectangular-shaped balloon arch, you will need 2 PVC pipes to create the sides of the structure, and a third PVC pipe OR fishing line to create the top of the structure.

You will also need 2 pots, a minimum 12” diameter, filled with either gravel or concrete to create sturdy bases for the side pipes.

Determine how high you want the arch to stand. This will be the length required for the two PVC pipes used for the sides of the arch.

Determine the amount of space you want between the two sides of the arch in order to figure out the length of PVC pipe needed for the top of the structure. Keep in mind that when you add the balloons to the PVC pipes, the space between the two sides of the arch will be reduced, so be sure to account for this when you are planning your design and when deciding what lengths of pipe you will use.

Insert the PVC pipes for the sides of your frame into the center of the pots, then pack tightly with gravel to just below the top of the pot. Alternatively, you can pour wet concrete into the pot, holding the pipe in place, nice and straight, while the concrete hardens.

Place the two sides of the arch an appropriate distance apart and then attach either fishing line or PVC pipe to the tops of the two pipes to create the top of the structure.

If you are using PVC pipe for the top, you will need two 90 degree PVC elbow joint fittings to assemble the pipes together.

If you are using fishing line for the top, tie each end of the line to the top of each of the two PVC pipes. Be sure to allow extra fishing line when you are cutting the length of line for the top of the structure so that you have enough to wrap and tie around each of the pipes. Once you have tied the line in place, wrap duct tape, masking tape or clear packing tape over the line to ensure it stays secured in its place.

Now simply proceed with attaching the balloons to cover the frame you have created for the arch, as described in the section on constructing columns. It’s that simple!
Making a Curved-Top Balloon Arbor

Using the same basic technique as that described above for the rectangular arbor, you can also create a balloon arbor with a curved top and foundational PVC sides.

To create the sides of the frame for the arch, follow the same instructions as those for creating the rectangular arch, as described above. Create the curved top instead of a flat top like the one in the rectangular arch by using a longer piece of PVC pipe for the top, which you can then bend into a smooth arch. OR, if using fishing line for the top of the structure, use 50% more line than you would have used for a straight top, in order to allow for the line to take the shape of a curve when you attach the helium filled balloons.

Now simply proceed with attaching the balloons to cover the arch, as described in the section on constructing columns.

Using a Pre-Made Frame

It should be mentioned that you can also create a balloon arbor or archway using a pre-made lightweight garden arbor frame (wooden or aluminum) rather than constructing your own. How you attach the balloons in this case will depend entirely on precisely what type of frame you have to work with. You can either use a method similar to that described above, or create a column or strands of pearls that you can then attach onto the frame to cover it.
Making Balloon Trees and Topiary Trees

For each balloon tree you want to make, you will need a PVC pipe for the “trunk” of the tree and you will need a pot, with a minimum 12” diameter, filled with either gravel or concrete to create a sturdy base for the tree.

Determine how high you want the tree to stand above the pot. This will be the length required for the PVC pipe. If you want your tree to stand about 5 feet in height, you are going to need a 5’ length of PVC pipe for the trunk of your tree.

Insert the PVC pipe into the center of the pot, until it rests on the bottom of the pot, then pack tightly with gravel to about 1 inch below the rim of the pot. Alternatively, for an even sturdier base, pour wet concrete into the pot, holding the pipe in place, nice and straight, while the concrete hardens.

Now simply proceed with attaching the balloons to the top of the tree, by twisting balloon clusters onto the pipe.

For a variation, if desired you can also add balloons at the bottom of the tree trunk, right above the pot, to create a topiary tree effect.

You might want to add some festive tangles of curling ribbon to your balloon clusters if you want additional decorative embellishment. Just tie it in to the neck of one or more of the balloon clusters. The more curled ribbon you use, the more festive it will look.

Experiment and play around to get the look you like – that’s what design is all about, and that’s the great thing about being your own designer! Once you know the basic principle, you can try different things and different looks until you hit upon what really grabs you!
Making a Balloon Cluster Centerpiece or Balloon Bouquet Centerpiece

Making a balloon cluster centerpiece or balloon bouquet centerpiece (they are both the same thing) is extremely easy, yet they add a fabulously festive feeling to any banquet room and help to give the room that “all dressed up” look.

For each centerpiece, fill several balloons with helium. Use from two to seven balloons, depending on how large of an arrangement you wish to create.

Attach a length of un-curved curling ribbon to the neck of each balloon. Cut the ribbon to different lengths so that you can arrange the balloons at different heights. The most important guideline to keep in mind is that the balloons must fly high enough above the table to avoid obstructing the view across the table when guests are seated. Therefore, you’ll generally want the balloons in your centerpieces to be flying at a height of at least 6 feet above floor level.

If you want, you can curl some curling ribbon and attach it to the necks of the balloons so that it dangles below the balloons for added decorative embellishment.
Now attach the end of the ribbons to a weight or base, positioned at the center of the table. You’ll want this base to be decorative since it is a visual part of your overall centerpiece design. For example, you might use a flower pot, a basket, or even a gift bag (with sand or something heavy inside) as the base. Or wrap an empty box in really gorgeous gift wrap after placing a weight inside the box, top with voluptuous bow fastened very securely to the box, and tie the balloons into the bow.

Whatever you choose as your base, make sure it has adequate weight to it, sufficient to anchor the balloons. If it doesn’t, tuck a small bag of sand within the base, and conceal with something decorative.

If using an item like a pot, basket, or gift bag as your base, fill it with something decorative, like a floral arrangement, tissue shredding or metallic shredding, or even just sheets of colored tissue paper that have been bunched up and decoratively arranged.

Another option for a base is to simply take a medium to large sized sheet of decorative mylar (durable foil available from party supply stores) and lay it flat on the table. Pour one or more cups of sand into the center on the mylar sheet, fold up the sides to create a little bundle or pouch of sand, and tie off with some pretty ribbon. Now tie your balloons to the decorative little sand pouch. The exact quantity of sand you use will depend on the size of your centerpiece and the number of balloons you’ll be using. Obviously, it needs to be heavy enough to weight down the balloons, and it should also be large enough to look like it has the right proportion and scale for the rest of the arrangement.

You can use standard latex balloons in your centerpiece displays, or you can use foil balloons (technically referred to as “mylar”) – or to create additional visual interest, you can combine the two.

To give you even more styling options, you can either choose balloons in a solid color or those with a design or pattern stamped on them. Or again, combine the two. Or consider adding glitter to your balloons to give them extra pizzazz. Or get really clever and cover your balloons with fabric. Instructions on adding glitter or fabric covers to balloons will follow later in this guide.

If your centerpieces are for a wedding, another interesting variation is to use lengths of tulle in place of curling ribbon to attach the balloons to the base. Tulle is that sheer net-like fabric that bridal veils are made of. It’s used a lot in wedding décor because the look is SO bridal. As an added bonus, it is super-easy to work with. It can be purchased in 9” widths on small rolls for this purpose. White is a terrific choice to achieve that “bridal” look, but it comes in a variety of colors to match any color theme as well, if you prefer.

Make up the bases for your centerpieces ahead of time so that when set-up time comes all you have to do is inflate the balloons, attach the curling ribbon, tie to the bases and you’re done!
If you want to jazz the look up a notch or two more, you can place the base of your centerpiece on a 12” round mirror. These are often available from party supply rental shops or florists for a small rental fee. Lightly sprinkle some metallic confetti or rose petals (fresh or faux) over the mirror, or curl some short lengths of curling ribbon and toss those around the base of the centerpiece for a wonderfully festive look. Or, light a few votive or tea-light candles and place them on the mirror, around the base of the centerpiece.

However, be sure to keep the candle flames far away from the helium filled balloons – only use candles if the balloons will be flying well above the table. Flame in contact with helium could create an explosion.
Making a Balloon Spatial Arrangement

You can also create much larger versions of the balloon cluster centerpiece, previously described, to stand on the floor and fill in empty spaces, or to frame your focal points such as the head table, the entrance, the dance floor, etc. These are called “spatial arrangements” because they are used to fill-in and dress-up empty spaces.

Follow the same process as described above for centerpiece balloon clusters, but design these spatial arrangements to stand 4 to 6 feet tall or higher, according to your preference.

Use a minimum 12” diameter flower pot for the base so that it is in proper proportion and scale to the overall arrangement.

Arrangements like this placed strategically throughout the reception hall help give the hall a very lavishly decorated appearance, and they are so easy and incredibly inexpensive to create, it’s almost crazy not to!
Making a Balloon Cloud (Cloud Nine)

Balloon Clouds, also referred to by professional balloon decorators by the name “Cloud Nine”, can be positioned on walls (behind the head table is perfect!), placed on balloon columns on the floor to help dress up empty spaces, or can be suspended from the ceiling for a magical floating effect! They can also be floated in particular locations of your reception room if weighted to the floor with clear line or lengths of tulle attached to an appropriate weight.

The balloons in your clouds may either be filled with helium or air, depending on how and where you intend to use them.

Eleven-inch latex balloons are typically used to create clouds. A combination of white and clear balloons are most “cloud-like” in appearance, but you can use absolutely any color or any combination of colors.

To make a balloon cloud, fill one 11-inch balloon; tie off, and attach a length of clear monofilament line (10-15 lb.) to the neck of the balloon so that you leave a 2’ 4” tail, as well as a longer length of line hanging from the balloon. The longer length of line will need to be equivalent to the finished height of your completed cloud plus 12”. If you aren’t certain what the finished height will be, make an estimate and then add an extra foot of line as a buffer – you can always cut away what you don’t need later.

Weight down the end of the line somewhere nearby and set aside until you need the balloon later in the design. This will become the single balloon in the center of the cloud.

Fill eight 11-inch balloons with helium and tie off. Make sure all balloons are filled to equal size or your cloud will appear unbalanced!

Make a duplet by tying the necks of two of the balloons together with one knot (using the dangling rubber of necks themselves). Repeat this step to make a second duplet.

Twist the two balloon duplets together at the necks to create a quad – a cluster of four balloons.

Now take the line attached to the single balloon you’ve set aside. Pull the line attached to this balloon down through the intersection of the four balloons. Tightly wrap the long line and shorter tail together around the neck of the cluster, then create a knot with the tail to secure it into the cluster.

Create two more duplets, and then form the duplets into a quad to create another cluster, exactly the same way you did previously.

Position this second quad snugly under first quad, and attach by wrapping the longer line of the new quad around the balloon necks.
Tightly tie off the line and tail with a knot under the bottom cluster. Trim away the excess line and tail so it can’t be seen.

If you want to kick up your design a notch or two, you can attach ribbon, tulle, silk ivy garland, feather garlands (really hot right now) - or whatever else your imagination dreams up - to dangle from your cloud. Simply slide the ribbon or other embellishment into the bottom balloon quad, then pull it through until it comes back out the other side. Trim the ribbon or other embellishment to the length you desire, et viola!

Balloon Clouds are really stunning when positioned over the dance floor. You can create a canopy effect if you like by placing one large cluster over the central point of the dance floor, then position more clouds at equal distances apart from one another, radiating out from this central point, all the way out to the perimeter of the dance floor. This creates the appearance that the area over the dance floor is literally filled with clouds. Very dreamy and romantic! Your central cloud should be created with 16” balloons in order to give it the increased size it needs as the focal point. Consider using a different color of balloons for the central cloud. For example, if your other clouds are blue, use clear or white for the central cloud. Another neat thing you can do is to connect the clouds together over the dance floor using swags of white tulle to give your dance floor areas a very dreamy look. Simply insert the tulle through the bottom quad of each cloud to connect your clouds. If you like, leave a 12” to 18” tulle tail hanging from each cloud, or just from the center cloud. If you really want to get fancy, run a string of white twinkle lights through each length of tulle and create some real magic!

Balloon Clouds can also be positioned on top of balloon columns and placed at the corners of the dance floor; on either side of the head table or entrance way; or anywhere you want to fill spaces, add decorative detail, or dress up the overall look.

You can also simply attach your balloon clouds to a length of clear line - or better yet, white tulle always looks magnificent - then secure them to a weight on the floor to add color and decoration to your reception, and fill in spaces. A bag of sand or a brick wrapped in decorative mylar, for instance, makes a suitable and easy weight to anchor a balloon cloud in place.
Balloon Clouds Ceiling Cover

A Balloon Clouds Ceiling Cover is different from the Balloon Cloud (Cloud Nine) previously described. This design is one huge cloud, about 10’ long by 5’ wide, consisting of about 300 balloons, designed to decorate a large area, like the ceiling over a dance floor. Instead of individual clouds, this design is more like an entire cloud-covered sky.

This design has a depth of about 5’, so you will require a tall ceiling if you are going to use this design as described, however you can simply modify the design so that it has less depth if your hall has a lower ceiling.

Again, 11” balloons are used, generally in a combination of white and clear if you are really going for that authentic “cloud” look. However, any color of balloons can, of course, be used if you are going for a different effect.

In addition to the balloons, you’ll need 50 feet of 30-pound clear mono-filament line.

Inflate one white and one clear 11” balloon with air until they are approximately the same size. Tie the necks of the balloons together to create a duplet. Repeat with all the remaining balloons.

Now form all of the duplets into quads by twisting together two pair of balloons to make four-balloon clusters.

Stretch out a 50' length, plus a few extra inches, of 30 pound clear monofilament line and anchor each end to a chair, table, etc.

Starting one foot from one end of the line, twist a quad cluster of balloons around the line so the balloons hang suspended on the line. Repeat with a second quad cluster. Push the second cluster up against the first.

You goal is not to position one cluster into the next in an orderly fashion, rather, you want the appearance of the clusters to be randomized.

Continue the process until all but one foot at the end of the line is covered.

Form a really loopy knot at each end of the line so that the balloons don’t fall off the line.

Now loop the balloons on the mono-filament line back and forth on top of each other until a big puffy cloud is formed.

If you want to really add some WOW factor to your clouds, you can string clear twinkle lights in among the balloons. For a cloud this size you’ll need a minimum of 100 lights. The warmth of the lights won’t pop the balloons, but they may cause the balloons to start losing some air after 5 to 8 hours, so don’t run the lights just for fun prior to the big event if you can avoid it!
Suspend the cloud from the ceiling, using clear mono-filament line. Remember, get permission from the hall manager, and ask him to instruct you on how he wants this done.
Making a Balloon Wreath

A balloon wreath is often used to decorate the wall behind the head table at a Christmas wedding (use green balloons), but you can also use wreaths in other colors any time of the year. For example, pink is very pretty and doesn’t have a “Christmas” look, which makes it versatile.

Making a balloon wreath is very easy. Simply create a flexible column, as explained earlier in this guide, by attaching balloons to a length of mono-filament line. Then shape the flexible column into a wreath as you secure it to the wall. Finish by attaching a big, pretty fabric bow to the top of the wreath.
Making a Balloon Christmas Tree

This one can be a little bit of a challenge for a newbie, because achieving the shape is tricky to do, but it gets easier with practice.

For each balloon Christmas tree, you will need a PVC pipe for the “trunk” of the tree and you will need a pot, with a minimum 12” diameter, filled with either gravel or concrete to create a sturdy base for the tree.

Determine how high you want the tree to stand above the pot. This will be the length required for the PVC pipe. If you want your tree to stand about 5 feet in height, you are going to need a 5’ length of PVC pipe for the trunk of your tree.

Insert the PVC pipe into the center of the pot, until it rests on the bottom of the pot, then pack tightly with gravel to about 1 inch below the rim of the pot. Alternatively, for an even sturdier base, pour wet concrete into the pot, holding the pipe in place, nice and straight, while the concrete hardens.

Create a very long strand of pearls, starting with smaller balloons at one end, then transitioning to medium balloons, and then large sized balloons.

Starting at the top of the “tree”, wrap and wind the strand of pearls down the length of the PVC pipe. If necessary, go over it again with another strand of pearls until you’ve achieved the correct shape and size for your tree.

You might want to add some festive tangles of curling ribbon, tied in between the balloons, for Christmas tree decorations, and you can even wind white twinkle lights between the balloons for a lit tree.
Special Effects

**Making Balloons Sparkle**

Adding some sparkle to your balloons can really up the visual impact of your balloon décor. It’s very easy to do:

Purchase a can of “spray glue” or “spray adhesive”, available in most craft stores and sometimes in hardware stores.

Lightly spray the inflated balloon with the spray glue, holding the can several inches away from the balloon, or as per the instructions on the can.

Lightly sprinkle small amounts of glitter over the balloon.

Allow a few moments to dry.

**Covering a Balloon With Fabric or Lace**

*This technique is used only with air-filled foil balloons.*

Start with a non-inflated mylar foil balloon.

Cut two pieces of fabric of your choice a little larger than the balloon you are going to cover.

Spray one side of the balloon with spray adhesive.

Place the fabric on top of the balloon and apply gentle but firm pressure to press onto the adhesive.

Turn the balloon over and repeat on the other side.

Press the 2 pieces of fabric together all around the edges to seal the seam together. Be sure they are securely glued together.

Carefully and neatly trim the fabric to about ½” from the sides of the balloon.

Inflate with air and use a heat sealer (available from balloon supply stores) to seal the balloon, making sure that the stem isn’t covered by fabric to ensure complete seal.
Double Stuffing a Balloon

Double Stuffing is a technique that you can use to create a wide range of different colors of balloons when using latex balloons. By layering two different balloon colors together, you can essentially create another balloon color. Both balloons should be the same size when using this technique.

To Double Stuff a balloon, stretch the opening of one balloon (this will be your “inside balloon”) over a straw or the blunt end of a pencil, and gently push the pencil or straw all the way into the balloon until it is in as far as it will go.

Insert this balloon into a second balloon (the top balloon color), and then remove the straw or pencil.

Inflate the inside balloon with either air or helium while firmly holding the double-layered balloon at the neck. As the inside balloon inflates, the outside balloon will inflate along with it.

Tie a knot in the neck of the inside balloon. It is not necessary to tie the neck of the outside balloon.
**Making a Double-Bubble Balloon**

A double bubble is a balloon that has another smaller balloon inflated in it. It’s a really neat looking effect because you can clearly see the smaller balloon within the larger one. They look complex but they’re really easy to create!

Insert a straw or the blunt end of a pencil into an non-inflated 11” balloon and then push the balloon into an non-inflated 16” balloon.

Insert the helium nozzle in between the two balloons so that you inflate the 16” balloon to about ¾ full.

Remove from the helium nozzle and pinch the neck of the balloons to hold the helium in.

Insert the helium nozzle into the 11” balloon and inflate.

Tie a knot in the double-layered balloon neck.
Final Word

Congratulations! You now know how to create stunning, professional quality balloon decorations and designs that will leave a memorable impression on all your wedding or party guests. By doing your own balloon decorating you’ll be saving yourself hundreds of dollars, and you’ll also get a fabulous sense of satisfaction in knowing you did it yourself.

We’d love to see your creations. Please send us photos of the balloon décor you create with the help of this guide! We’ll send you a free gift when you do! Contact us via email at www.BalloonDecorSecrets.com and we’ll tell you how to upload your photos to us. We’re excited to see your creations!

We’d love to hear how you enjoyed this quick guide to balloon decorating techniques! Contact us via email at www.BalloonDecorSecrets.com and share your comments with us! We’ll send you another free gift when you do!

May your wedding or party be awesome!

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