Happy, Hassle-Free Hosting

Below is a rough outline of the steps you can take to host a hassle-free party.

1. **Set the date and time.** *To allow for late arrivals, I generally plan to serve the meal about 1 hour after the time noted on the invitation.*
2. **Create the invitation template.** *Remember to include pertinent information such as:*
   a. Location/Address (include directions, if necessary)
   b. Time and duration
   c. Planned activities (especially when an activity may require guests to bring items or prepare in some way)
   d. *If applicable*, provide an RSVP deadline
   e. *If applicable*, note where guests can park when they arrive
3. **Create a guest list.**
4. **Send the invitation to guests.** *Tailor your message delivery for each guest; invitations can be snail-mailed, texted, Facebook Messaged, or emailed depending on the likelihood of receiving the invitation.*
5. **Make a list of invitees who have RSVP'd:**
   a. Note totals of adults, children, babies, etc.
   b. Note any special needs that guests may have (e.g., highchairs, wheelchairs, allergies)
6. **Plan your menu and gather recipes.** *Our holiday meals are usually reruns with slight modifications. Birthday celebration menus will differ depending on the birthday but tend to follow patterns.*
7. **Create a Shopping List.** *Split out the shopping list by store. Remember to include paper plates, utensils, and napkins, if applicable.*
8. **Create a Timeline.** *A simple timeline is one of the most important contributions to hassle-free hospitality. It's impossible to get it all done in one day. My preference is to spread it out over 2-4 days. I also plan to be company-ready with 30-60 minutes to spare so that I have time to freshen up and relax before guests arrive (this doesn't always happen).*

   Things to include in the timeline:
   - Shopping
   - Housework: dusting, floors, bathroom, etc.
   - Decorating
   - Food preparation (including thaw time for frozen items)
   - Serving dishes/platters
   - Table Settings
   - Food cooking, time, temperature, and resting times

Bonus Tip!
Whenever possible, save your notes in a file with a name that includes both the holiday and event date. Saved notes make planning subsequent events even more effortless. If you can, take a few moments after the event to note the things you may have missed or would like to remember the next time you host an event.