

Choosing the right inflatable can make or break the flow of a family festival, a school fundraiser, or a backyard birthday. I have watched a simple moonwalk save a rainy Saturday and, on another weekend, seen a combo bounce house turn a quiet block party into a steady hum of laughter for six straight hours. The decision is less about which unit looks flashiest and more about matching features to the people, the space, and the schedule you are working with.

This guide breaks down how moonwalk rentals differ from combo bounce houses, when each shines, and the trade-offs you need to consider. Along the way, you will find real-world notes from decades of event rentals across parks, church lots, gymnasiums, and narrow city backyards.

What each inflatable really is

Moonwalk, jumper, bouncer, castle. Rental companies use different names, usually for the same category: a standard, enclosed bouncing area with safety netting and a single entrance. Most moonwalk rentals cover about 13 by 13 feet and stand 14 to 16 feet tall. Some stretch to 15 by 15 feet. Inside, the floor is a single open space. Kids jump, fall, and reset without a defined route or obstacles. Throughput depends on how you rotate groups, not on the equipment itself.

Combo bounce houses add play elements beyond the bounce floor. The most common configuration is a 13 by 13 or 15 by 15 bounce area attached to a short climb and slide, often with a basketball hoop inside. Variations include wet/dry slides, pop-ups, and different slide heights. Combos take more footprint. A 15 by 15 combo with an external slide might occupy 15 by 28 feet, and it needs more clear space for anchors and a safe landing zone.

If you have ever rented a water slide, you already understand part of a combo's appeal. Kids cycle through a predictable loop: enter, bounce, climb, slide, and repeat. That built-in flow spreads out traffic and cuts down on bottlenecks.

Who will use it, and how long

A small birthday party with twelve first graders behaves very differently from a school carnival with 300 attendees cycling through over three hours. Your choice should reflect the pace of the event and the age mix.

A standard moonwalk excels with younger kids. The open layout forgives timid jumpers and allows a parent or attendant to monitor everyone easily. Toddlers and preschoolers like to stay close to the entrance for reassurance, while the bigger kids push deeper into the bouncer. If your guest list skews under age seven, a classic jumper rental is often the simplest and safest starting point.

For mixed ages or a longer event block, a combo bounce house keeps kids engaged longer without increasing headcount. That single slide changes the dynamic. Instead of eight kids colliding in the center, you get a natural rhythm. Think of it like adding a second ride to a small amusement area. The total number of users at a time may be similar, but they feel less crowded, and you hear fewer "Is it my turn yet?" complaints.

At school event rentals and church event inflatables where you anticipate lines, a combo handles the churn better. You can give each child two slides per turn and keep the line moving. Over half a day, that orderliness adds up to less referee work for volunteers.

Space, surfaces, and logistics

Space eats more event plans than budget. Before you put down a deposit, measure the actual footprint, not a guess from a website photo. A moonwalk can fit on a 15 by 15 pad with minimal fuss. It needs clearance to each side for stakes or sandbags, plus overhead room free of branches and power lines. A typical 13 by 13 unit needs 15 by 15 flat space and 16 to 18 feet of vertical clearance. Grass is ideal, but clean pavement works with weighted anchoring.

Combos need more length and more thought about orientation. Many slides extend from the front, which means your entry, supervise area, and slide landing all compete for the same slice of ground. If you have a narrow yard with a fence and a patio set that cannot move, a standard moonwalk saves you headaches. If you have the depth, a combo becomes viable. Allow roughly 17 by 30 feet clear for most combos, including a safe landing area free of furniture and sprinklers.

Power matters. Both moonwalks and combos usually run on a single 1 to 1.5 horsepower blower using a standard 115V outlet on a 15 or 20 amp circuit. Long extension cords kill blower performance and trip breakers. Keep cords to 50 to 100 feet of 12 gauge wire if you can. If you add water features or a second inflatable obstacle course, plan on separate circuits. Good party equipment rentals companies will ask about power up front. If they do not, ask them.

Delivery path is a sneaky constraint. Many city homes have side gates barely 30 inches wide. Most rolled inflatables fit, but some larger combos need a wider path, and all of them are heavy. If your only route has stairs or a tight turn, tell the rental company before booking. I have turned back from a brownstone walk-up when a 300 pound combo could not make a basement turn, only to swap in a standard jumper that slid in easily.

Throughput and crowd management

Volume is the quiet reason planners switch from a moonwalk to a combo for high turnout. Both units typically allow six to ten kids at a time, depending on age and weight limits. The difference is how many kids you move through per hour without chaos.

In a moonwalk, most groups want three to five minutes each. The line grows or shrinks based on your discipline. It works fine for backyard party rentals where parents mingle and kids self regulate. At a public event, you either post an attendant with a timer or you get complaints within an hour.

On a combo, the slide creates a turn-by-turn cycle that takes about 45 to 60 seconds per child. I often run a two slide rule: enter, bounce for 20 to 30 seconds, climb, slide, repeat once, then out. That predictability calms lines. Over ninety minutes, you can run 90 to 120 kids through a combo with a single volunteer who understands the rhythm. For school carnivals, that math matters.

If you want maximum throughput, consider pairing a combo with a separate inflatable obstacle course. A short inflatable obstacle course, even a 30 foot run, will process kids quickly and appeal to older siblings. That mix reduces pressure on the combo and shortens lines. It also gives you an easy upcharge if you are selling wristbands at a fundraiser.

Safety and supervision in the real world

Every rental contract lists rules: no flips, no food or drink, similar sizes only. In practice, safety comes down to surfaces, anchoring, supervision, and weather calls.

Moonwalks have fewer moving parts. With a flat bounce floor, you mainly watch for size mismatches and roughhousing. Combos add climb and slide sections with baffles and side rails. Modern units meet ASTM

guidelines, but the slide still concentrates traffic in one place. On a busy day, one committed attendant per unit is the difference between smooth fun and a pileup at the slide mouth.

I encourage clients to assign a rotation captain who is not also grilling or managing music. For church event inflatables with volunteers, we run short shifts of 30 to 45 minutes, then swap. Attention fades after an hour. If you decide on a water slide combo, the wet surface increases speed. If the landing pad sits on concrete, ask the vendor for extra foam mats and insist on socks off, one slider at a time.

Anchoring is not negotiable. On grass, stakes should be at least 18 inches long, driven at an angle, with straps tight. On pavement, heavy sandbags or water barrels secure each corner and the slide base. I have seen flawless weather turn to gusts in 10 minutes. A well anchored inflatable stays put. A lazy setup ends badly, and it ends fast. If a crew suggests "just tying to the fence," stop the install.

Theme and age fit

Not every event needs a character-themed unit. Still, kids react to appearances. Moonwalk rentals come in every skin from generic castle panels to licensed superheroes. Combos often feature brighter art and taller facades that become a backdrop for photos. If you want your backyard party photos to pop without adding decor, a combo gives you more visual impact.

Age matters too. For three to five year olds, a 13 by 13 moonwalk is plenty. They tire in 20 minutes and return in bursts. For six to ten year olds, the combo's slide wins every time. Past age ten, many kids will still enjoy a combo, but a dedicated water slide rentals unit or a longer obstacle course rentals option draws them better, especially at corporate event rentals or school event rentals where self conscious preteens want challenges, not just bouncing.

Budget and value for money

Price varies by region and season, but here is a defensible range. In many markets, a standard moonwalk rental runs 130 to 220 dollars for a day, including delivery and setup within a service radius. A combo bounce house typically costs 200 to 350 dollars, more if it includes a taller slide or wet option. Packages that pair inflatables with table and chair rentals or concession machine rentals like cotton candy or a snow cone can save 10 to 20 percent compared to piecing items together.

For small gatherings, a moonwalk's lower price frees budget for party entertainment rentals such as carnival game rentals or face painting. For fundraisers selling tickets, a combo's higher engagement often pays back in smoother lines and happier families. If your rentals will run longer than six hours, ask about full day or overnight rates. Many inflatable party rentals providers quote the same price for up to eight hours as for four, since delivery labor is the same.

Do not forget the soft costs. Combos take longer to set up and break down. If your venue has strict load-in windows, the cheaper unit might be the one your crew can install within the rules. The best event rentals teams will ask about docks, elevators, and curfews and plan accordingly.

Weather calls, water, and wear

Weather shapes usage more than people expect. On hot days, a standard moonwalk heats up. In full sun, the floor can feel like a gym mat after a noon class. Shaded placements or canopy tents help. A combo with a wet slide option keeps kids cooler, but water changes your supervision plan, sod health, and cleanup time.

If you opt for a wet combo, run a dedicated garden hose from a spigot. Drip attachments help, but they still put tens of gallons over an afternoon onto the landing area. On dormant or stressed grass, that much foot traffic plus water can leave a muddy patch. If your yard is a showpiece, set the landing on rubber mats or accept you might reseed a rectangle. Also, wet inflatables weigh more at pickup. Crews need clear paths free of mud traps.

Light rain is usually fine for dry units, but steady rain turns vinyl slick, and blowers do not like standing water. Good vendors will watch radar and work with you on rescheduling or swapping to a covered alternative like indoor carnival games. If you expect wind above 15 to 20 mph, cancel or reduce sail area. A large combo with a tall facade catches more wind than a low profile moonwalk.

Cleaning and vendor quality

The difference between a good day and a long complaint thread often starts in the warehouse. Ask how often units are cleaned and sanitized. After a stretch of back-to-back kids party rentals in summer, the best companies wipe down after each event and deep clean weekly. Smell tells the truth at delivery. Fresh vinyl smells faintly like plastic and cleaner, not like feet.

Reliable vendors arrive within a window, lay out tarps, and test blowers for at least ten minutes. They anchor first, not last. They review safety rules and leave a contact number that rings a real person. If you are shopping "inflatables near me," check recent reviews that mention punctuality and setup quality, not just price. I would pay 25 dollars more for a company that sends a two person crew and carries backup stakes and cords. It shows.

Real-world pairings and event types

Backyard birthdays, ages 3 to 6: Choose a 13 by 13 moonwalk with a theme the child loves. Set it on grass if possible. Add a small concession like a popcorn machine and a folding table for treats. You will save enough over a combo to add one or two carnival game rentals, such as ring toss or balloon darts with Velcro tips. Expect active play in bursts around cake and gifts rather than continuous use.

Backyard birthdays, ages 6 to 10: A combo bounce house hits the sweet spot. If the yard is narrow, pick an internal slide model to save footprint. Post an adult by the entrance. If budgets allow, add a small foam machine or a dunk tank alternative like a balloon splash for variety. Kids this age will run loops for an hour at a time, then take five minute snack breaks and jump back in.

School carnivals and field days: Throughput rules. Pair a combo with an inflatable obstacle course for older grades. Use clear signage with "two slides per turn" and a volunteer with a light stopwatch. Offer wristbands rather than single tickets to reduce line pressure. Add table and chair rentals near the inflatables for parents to supervise comfortably. If you can swing it, place water slide rentals on a separate field with hoses and a drainage plan, not near electrical outlets.

Church picnics: Crowds ebb and flow after services. A large combo with a dry slide, backed by a smaller moonwalk for toddlers, covers the range. Station youth volunteers with clear ground rules. Consider shade tents to keep vinyl cool. If the congregation spans a wide age range, add gentle party entertainment rentals like a trackless train or a simple nine-hole mini golf to reduce congestion at the inflatables.

Corporate family days: Liability and optics matter. A clean, newer combo with a staff attendant from the rental company is worth the line item. Pair it with non-inflatable attractions like a photo booth, a magician, or yard games to diversify appeal. For larger campuses, a pair of identical combos placed far apart prevents crowding and shortens walks.

The case for the moonwalk

Clients sometimes apologize for “just” booking a moonwalk. There is nothing just about it. A standard jumper is the backbone of inflatable rentals for a reason. It sets up almost anywhere, runs on a single blower, and pleases a wide age span as long as you manage capacity. When space is tight, budgets are lean, or guests skew young, a moonwalk is a smart, safe pick.

Moonwalks also stack neatly with other rentals. If you want a simple package with table and chair rentals and a cotton candy machine, a moonwalk keeps costs predictable and logistics simple. At small fundraisers where you price per play, a moonwalk lets you offer a low ticket value while upselling the obstacle course or a separate water slide for bigger thrills.

The case for the combo bounce house

Combos [birthday party packages](#) justify their higher price when you need built-in variety in the same footprint and staff count. The slide adds a sense of progression. Kids stay engaged longer, so parents settle in and enjoy the event. For medium to large gatherings, the combo’s ability to smooth lines is its quiet superpower.

Combos also photograph well. If you want shareable images for a school Facebook page or a neighborhood newsletter, a towering combo with bright art becomes a backdrop that tells the story in one frame. At brand-forward corporate event rentals, that matters more than people admit.



Quick decision guide

- Guest ages: mostly under 6, moonwalk. Mixed ages 6 to 10, combo. Over 10, consider an inflatable obstacle course or water slide.
- Space: small or awkward yard, moonwalk. Wide, deep yard or park, combo.
- Event pace: casual backyard hangout, moonwalk. Timed tickets or large turnout, combo.
- Budget priorities: stretch dollars with a moonwalk and add carnival game rentals or concessions. If the inflatable is the main draw, invest in a combo.
- Staffing: limited volunteers, moonwalk. One solid attendant available, combo with clear rules.

What about water options?

Water changes the equation for hot months. A wet/dry combo turns a June birthday into a backyard splash park. If you book a wet combo, plan for:

- Hose access within 75 feet and a way to keep the splash area from becoming a mud pit.
- A towel station and a shoe mat so grass clippings do not migrate inside.

- Extra time at pickup for drainage. Crews often need 15 to 30 minutes to bleed water from slide lanes.

A standalone water slide rentals unit can be a better fit if the whole theme is cooling off. Water slides also appeal to older kids who might shrug at a bounce floor.

Questions to ask your rental company

- What are the exact footprint and clearance needed, including stakes and the slide landing area?
- How many kids can be inside at once for the age group you expect, and do you provide a suggested rotation plan?
- Do you bring tarps, mats, and adequate anchors for my surface?
- What are the power requirements, and will one circuit suffice with my other equipment running?
- How do you clean and sanitize units between events, and what is your weather and wind policy?

Two scenarios from the field

A PTA called with a classic spring challenge: two hours after school, 300 students, and a limited volunteer pool. They had space behind the gym but only two standard outlets nearby. We placed a 15 by 15 combo near the building, anchored on grass with stakes, and a 30 foot inflatable obstacle course around the corner on a separate circuit. We roped stanchions to create clear queue lines and trained four eighth graders on a two slide policy and a 60 second stopwatch on the obstacle course. In two hours, they cycled roughly 220 kids through the combo, 250 through the obstacle course, and, crucially, eliminated the parental complaints that had marred the previous year's single moonwalk plan. The combo was not bigger, it was smarter for the [Dunk tank rentals](#) flow.

A backyard client had a narrow, sloped lawn with a stone fire pit dead center and a guest list of fifteen five year olds. They wanted a combo for the wow factor, but a tape measure and a photo walk revealed the truth. A 13 by 13 moonwalk fit perfectly in the only flat section, clear of low tree limbs and away from a sprinkler control box. We anchored with stakes and added two carnival game rentals on the patio. The party ran three happy hours without a single bump or scraped knee. The combo would have blocked the sliding door and caused a supervision nightmare.

When a package beats a single piece

Some days, the right answer is both. A moonwalk for toddlers plus a combo for grade schoolers creates natural age zones that reduce collisions. Add a few tables and chairs so adults can sit within sightlines, and you increase actual supervision without adding staff. If you are shopping party equipment rentals, ask about bundles that include an inflatable, tables, chairs, and a concession machine. The savings often cover delivery surcharges or generator rental if power is far.

For fundraisers, consider tiered experiences. The moonwalk is included with general admission, while the combo or inflatable obstacle course is part of a "premium play" wristband. Clear signage and a few yard signs pointing to each activity do more to balance traffic than doubling the number of inflatables.

Final thoughts from the rental yard

Moonwalk rentals are the dependable workhorse of kids party rentals, especially in tight spaces and with younger crowds. Combo bounce houses deliver more engagement per square foot when you have the room and at least one vigilant attendant. The right choice turns on five realities: ages, space, pacing, budget, and staffing.

If you are still undecided, walk the site with a tape, list your top two goals for the day, and call two reputable inflatable party rentals companies to compare options. Ask them to talk you out of the bigger unit. The honest ones will. Pick the piece that fits your space and your supervision plan first, your theme second. Do that, and your guests will leave with grass on their socks, smiles in their eyes, and a simple question you will be happy to hear: Can we do that again next year?