

Young people and parties



Parties and socialising are fun ways for young people to learn the personal and social skills they need as they become independent adults.

Hosting a party can be a great opportunity for you to strengthen your relationship with them, get to know their friends and become more involved in their life. Parties can be a chance to see your young person using the positive values and decision-making skills you have helped them develop over time.

Planning a party

If you're hosting a party for your young person planning it together is ideal. Including their input guarantees a more successful event and helps them understand and appreciate the planning and effort involved. It is a great opportunity for them to practise problem solving and risk assessment without the pressure of making decisions on the spot.

As the parent you are legally considered the host whether the party is at home or another venue. You are responsible for everyone's safety and any damage or illegal activity that may occur. Although the final decisions for the night rest with you, agreeing on key points with your young person will help the event run more smoothly. Start by discussing their wishes for the party and negotiate from there, aligning their wishes with safety and responsibility.

Agree on the ground rules before the party is announced so there is no misunderstanding later.

Some important things to agree on are:

- who to invite, how many, are partners invited
- how invitations will be sent
- where the event will be held, when it will start and finish
- the party budget
- will alcohol be allowed (if there are young people over 18) or tolerated (if not) and who will serve the alcohol
- rules about smoking/vaping
- the activities you will have, eg a pool table, movie, dancing, karaoke, games or competitions can be fun and take the focus off drinking
- how to supervise and whether security is needed
- what food will be served. This is very important if there is alcohol as eating slows down alcohol absorption. Avoid saltier foods as this can make guests want to drink more
- how to set up the party, who will do this and clean up afterwards
- what you will do in an emergency.

You may wish to contact your insurer to find out if your policy covers a party held at home, what is excluded and whether guests are covered.

It is important to negotiate the details of the party with your young person but it is you who is legally responsible for everyone's safety.

Safety

Some ways to enhance safety are to:

- lodge a SAPOL Party Safe Notification Form online or at your local police station one week prior to the party. Do it together so your young person understands the process

- have invitations to make it clear the party is invite only and to keep more control over the guest list. Consider whether to use printed or digital ones:
 - printed invitations are a point of contact with other parents, you can request they RSVP on their young person's behalf, have a chat and exchange contact details
 - digital invitations could require young people to fill in certain details including an emergency contact number, eg via a QR code
- decide how many adults are needed or if security is required (at least one adult to ten guests is the suggested ratio)

There's no guide to perfect parenting or hosting an incident-free party. The most effective way to minimise risk is to hold an alcohol-free event. If this isn't an option for your young person's stage of development, take every precaution to make the party as safe as possible for everyone.

- ensure the venue is suitable for the number of guests, eg enough space, toilet facilities, adequate lighting
- decide which areas will be "off-limits" and prepare clear signage
- lock up or remove your own alcohol supply and any prescription medications
- decide how you will respond if drugs are used
- think about leaving your mobile number in an accessible place with a note to text you if anyone feels unsafe, eg drug use, inappropriate sexual behaviour
- devise a plan with your young person for handling guests who bring alcohol if your party is alcohol-free. If this includes turning away guests it's important to ensure their safe return home without sending them away with alcohol
- have a strict finishing time to ensure as many parents as possible know when guests will be asked to leave your home. This can reduce the number of young people spilling out onto the street after the party has finished.

Gatecrashers

Gatecrashers can be a problem at parties particularly if alcohol is provided or allowed. Some steps you can take to avoid them getting in are to:

- restrict the guest list
- consider hiring security if you're having a big party
- only have one entrance to the party, secure any side and back gates
- ensure there is always someone at the door or entrance area with a list of invited guests
- ask other adults to help you supervise the party
- phone police if unmanageable gatecrashers arrive.

Managing noise

You could:

- check with police about acceptable noise levels and whether limits apply at certain times
- agree who will be in charge of music on the night and what time it will be turned off
- advise neighbours and provide a number to call if they have a complaint
- be mindful of noise levels – not just the music but also guests arriving and leaving.

What about alcohol?

One of the most important things to agree on is whether there will be alcohol. Media images might lead parents to think all teenage events involve excessive alcohol use. Surveys over a number of years have shown more young people are not drinking alcohol or delaying when they start to drink.

Alcohol affects the developing brain of children and young people. Studies show the earlier young people start to drink the greater the chance they will have problems with alcohol as adults. The safest option is to delay drinking for as long as possible.

If you do allow alcohol:

- make this clear to parents beforehand and include it on the invitation. You need parental permission for anyone under 18 years to drink alcohol
- you can only supply alcohol to minors (even with permission and supervision) at private properties. If you hire a venue you may require a liquor licence and will not be allowed to serve alcohol to minors under any circumstances

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The law requires adults to provide responsible supervision for anyone under 18 years who has their parent's or carer's permission to drink alcohol. This means directly supervising them while drinking, not allowing them to get drunk and not being intoxicated yourself.
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- check any catering company you hire holds a liquor licence and staff are trained to serve alcohol responsibly. They cannot provide alcohol to minors under any circumstances at a party at your home or any other venue
- supply plenty of alternatives to alcohol, eg water, soft drinks, juice
- control how much alcohol is consumed by providing it yourself rather than letting guests bring their own. Provide light alcohol only, use small paper cups rather than bottles and cans and don't allow drinking games
- ensure underage guests don't take alcohol from the party to drink elsewhere. This is illegal because you would not be able to supervise
- be aware of how to provide first aid in case of intoxication
- suggest drivers give you their car or motorbike keys when they arrive. It is against the law for a person on "P" plates to drive with any alcohol in their system.

If you don't allow alcohol:

- be prepared to act if you find some young people drinking. Remind them this wasn't agreed to, remove the alcohol and tell them you will take care of it while they are in your home. Return it to their parent or carer, not to the young person themselves.

At your party

- Be there to meet parents when they drop off their young person.
- Have a list of invited guests at the door or ask to see invitations. Calmly and politely ask anyone not invited to leave. At the first sign of trouble call the police on 13 14 44 for non-urgent attendance. Call 000 in an emergency.
- Actively move around the party offering food as an informal way of supervising and ensuring guests are safe.

- Watch for signs of intoxication and act accordingly. Ensure food is always available.
- Check areas of the house that are "off-limits".
- Check the garden and boundaries ensuring side and back gates remain locked.
- Don't allow "pass-outs" and ensure guests stay on the property. You are still responsible for them in nearby areas.
- Make sure your driveway is kept clear for emergency access.

Have a number of adults who:

- know how to deal calmly with difficult situations
- have access to a first aid kit
- know what to do in an emergency and have emergency numbers and a mobile phone on them.

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Stop serving alcohol, turn lights up and music down half an hour before the party is due to end so guests can leave at the agreed time.
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Going to someone else's party

If your young person is attending someone else's party discuss your expectations with them. This helps develop their awareness of risk and planning and decision-making skills.

You could discuss:

- whether they are allowed to drink or not
- not leaving any drinks unattended
- what time they need to be home by
- how they're getting home
- staying with friends and never leaving a friend who is drunk or affected by drugs
- what to do if issues arise.

Having a pre-arranged code (like texting the letter X) and pick up point gives young people a quick, safe way out in an emergency or if something goes wrong.



Make sure your young person knows never to drink and swim or accept a lift from anyone under the influence. Remind them you will pick them up if they ever feel unsafe or something hasn't gone to plan. Let them know they can always call you if they are affected by alcohol or drugs.

If you have concerns it can be helpful to contact the host to find out:

- what sort of party is it?
- how old are the people attending?
- will there be supervision and how many adults will be supervising?
- will there be alcohol and food?
- is there a plan to prevent gatecrashers?
- when will the party start and end?

You can swap contact details with the parents hosting the party. You can also give your details to one of your young person's friends, just in case something happens to them or their phone.

If you don't think a party is suitable for your young person be calm and clear about your reasons. Their safety and wellbeing is your responsibility.

School leavers' celebrations

The Schoolies Festival in South Australia can be a rite of passage for many young people after completing high school. It is an opportunity to socialise and celebrate all the hard work they put into their studies. It can also be a time they drink and are exposed to, or use, other drugs. If your young person is going to "Schoolies" it's important they know how to be safe around alcohol and drugs.

If you decide it is OK for them to attend this type of celebration it's important to plan early before they make arrangements with friends. Open communication about the expectations you both have is a good place to start. This will help you work out together how they can have fun while keeping safe.

It helps to agree on:

- who they will go with, how they will get there and back and where they will stay
- what they will do while there and how they will pay for things
- how they will keep safe, their back-up strategies if things don't work out as planned and what they will do in an emergency
- how they will keep in contact with you.

Visit the Encounter Youth website for information about the Schoolies Festival and support provided by the Encounter Youth Green Team during the event.

Note: The term 'Parents' in this Guide refers to anyone caring for and/or raising children and young people, eg parents, caregivers, step-parents, grandparents, guardians, foster or kinship carers.

Want more information?

Emergencies

Phone 000 for police, ambulance or fire brigade

Police attendance

Phone 13 14 44 for non-urgent police attendance

SA Police

Information about safe partying, including Party Safe booklet and Party Safe Notification Form
www.police.sa.gov.au/your-safety/crime-prevention-and-security/party-safe

Parenting Strategies

Guidelines for adolescent alcohol use
www.parentingstrategies.net

Consumer and Business Services

Guide for parents on alcohol and minors
<https://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/documents/faq-for-parents-supply-of-alcohol-to-minors.pdf>

Legal Services Commission SA

Young people, alcohol and the law factsheet
www.lsc.sa.gov.au/resources/AlcoholandTheLawYoungPeopleFactsheet.pdf

Encounter Youth – Schoolies Festival

Information for parents and young people
www.encounteryouth.com.au/schoolies-festival

Kids Helpline

Phone 1800 551 800 or chat online, 24 hours
Information and support for children and young people aged 5-25 and their parents
www.kidshelp.com.au

ReachOut

Online mental health support for young people and safe partying
www.au.reachout.com
www.au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-party

Raising Children Network

Schoolies week: keeping teenagers safe
www.raisingchildren.net.au/articles/schoolies.html

Parenting SA

For other Parent Easy Guides including 'Young people, alcohol and drugs', 'Living with young people' and 'Talking sex with young people'
www.parenting.sa.gov.au



**Government of
South Australia**

Parenting SA

A partnership between the Department of Human Services and the Women's and Children's Health Network.

www.parenting-sa.gov.au

Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia.

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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