

Young people and parties



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Parents can worry about young people's parties and what can go wrong. However, 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.
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Why are parties important for young people?

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

Parties can help them:

- strengthen friendships
- be accepted by peer groups
- make new friends
- introduce friends to family
- learn planning and entertaining skills.

For parents, parties can be a chance to see their children growing up and interacting with others in a social situation.

Planning a party

If you are hosting a party for your son or daughter it works best to plan it together. Agree on the ground rules before the party is announced so there is no misunderstanding later. Work out who will make things known to guests and how this will be done.

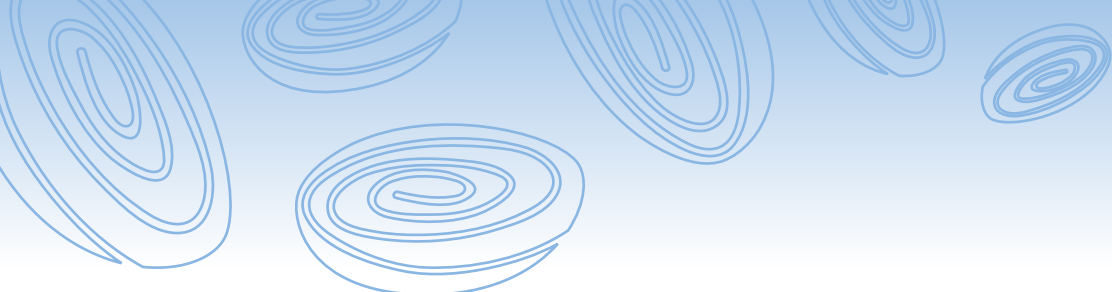
Whether the party is in your home or at a venue, you have a duty of care to ensure the safety of all your guests. You may be legally and financially responsible if someone is hurt, acts illegally or property is damaged.

Some important things to agree on are:

- the party budget and who will pay for what
- how many friends will come
- how invitations will be sent, eg by mail, phone or email. Discourage sending them by social media or SMS texts as they could be passed on to others. Let guests know it is invitation-only
- what invitations will say. Written invitations let guests know all the details and can be used to gain entry
- whether there will be alcohol (see pages 2-3)
- the activities you will have. A pool table, jukebox, dancing, karaoke, games or competitions can be fun and take the focus off drinking
- whether smoking is allowed, and if so, where
- what food will be served
- who will set up for the party and clean up afterwards. Expect your son or daughter to help.

It might be wise to check the details of your insurance policy. Even with the best planning, unexpected things can happen.

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It is important to negotiate the details of the party with your young person, but remember you are the adult who is legally responsible for the safety of everyone at the party. You might have to make some unpopular decisions.
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Safety

Some ways to enhance safety are to:

- notify the police about the party. You can lodge a SAPOL Party Safe Notification Form with your local police station one week prior to the party. Let them know if the party is cancelled
- have a plan for dealing with gate-crashers. Some parents hire a trained person from a security company
- decide how you will respond if drugs are used
- make sure the venue is suitable for the number of guests, eg enough space, toilet facilities and adequate lighting
- decide what rooms in the house or venue will be 'off-limits'
- work out how guests will get home. This is especially important for people living in country areas. Have spare bedding ready
- get parents' phone numbers in case you need to contact them.

Managing noise

You could:

- check with police about noise regulations and test your sound system
- 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. They can make a complaint about excessive noise any time of the day or night.

What about alcohol?

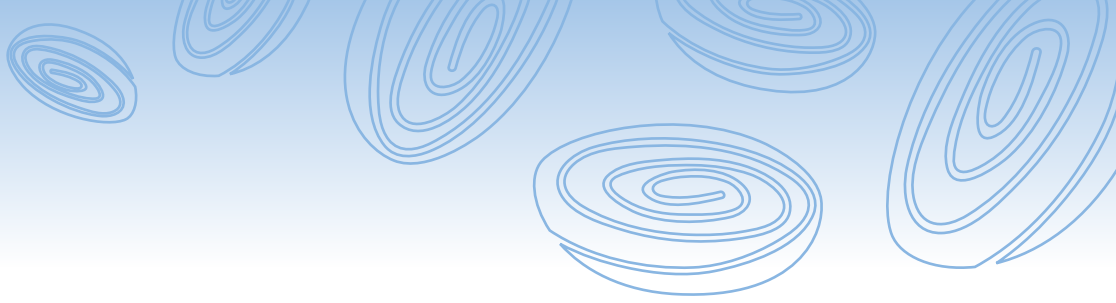
One of the most important things to agree on is whether there will be alcohol at your party. Media images of young people's parties and celebrations might lead parents to think all teenage events are about excessive alcohol use. However, surveys¹ over a number of years have shown a shift in Australian drinking culture, with more young people abstaining from alcohol or delaying when they start to drink. There may be young people at your party who choose not to drink.

If you do allow alcohol:

- make this clear to parents or carers beforehand and include it on the invitation
- supply plenty of alternatives to alcohol, eg water, soft drinks, juice
- control how much alcohol is consumed by providing it yourself rather than letting people bring their own. Only provide light alcohol, use small plastic 'glasses' rather than bottles and cans, and don't allow drinking games
- make sure you understand the law about serving alcohol to young people under 18 years. You must get permission from the parent or carer before you supply alcohol to their young person. It can be verbal or in writing but you must be satisfied it is genuine. If you receive permission, you become the authorised adult responsible for supervising them. This means you need to directly supervise each young person, ensure they do not become intoxicated and not be intoxicated yourself. See www.cbs.sa.gov.au/liquor-reform for more information
- ensure underage young people don't take alcohol from the party to drink somewhere else. This is illegal because you will not be supervising their drinking
- 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
- consider having a 'chill' part of the house in case someone needs space. Check on them to make sure they are OK.

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The law requires adults to provide responsible supervision for people under 18 years who have their parent 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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If you don't allow alcohol:

- be prepared to act if you find some young people drinking. It can be difficult and embarrassing but it is important to 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.

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 later in life. The safest option is to delay drinking for as long as possible.

At your party

Keep your party venue safe and secure by:

- having only one entrance/exit
- making sure your driveway is kept clear in case you need emergency access
- having a list of invited guests at the door or requiring people to show their invitation. Calmly and politely ask people who have not been invited to leave. At the first sign of trouble call the police on 131 444 for non-urgent attendance. Call 000 if there is an emergency
- wandering around the party to ensure guests are safe. Don't just stay in the kitchen
- checking on areas of the house that are 'off-limits'
- checking the garden and boundaries, ensuring gates and side entries remain secure
- not allowing guest 'pass-outs' and ensuring guests stay on the property. You are still responsible for guests around the party vicinity.

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.

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.

Going to someone else's party

If your young person is going to someone else's party, discuss it with them beforehand. Help them think about what might happen and what needs to be decided. This develops their awareness of risk, and their planning and decision-making skills.

You could:

- speak to the parents beforehand to check who will be supervising. Ask for a contact number for the house
- be clear with your young person and the host parents about whether or not you give permission for them to drink
- decide on transport to and from the party. Have a back-up plan if they want to leave early
- make sure they can contact you during the party if needed
- agree on what time they will be home. It is OK to go to the door when you drop your young person off if you are a bit concerned. Don't be afraid to go to the door when you pick them up.

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





School leavers' celebrations

Finishing high school is a big milestone for many young people. Parents often worry about letting their son or daughter attend a school leavers' celebration because of negative images in the media.

If you decide it is OK for your young person to attend a celebration such as the Schoolies Festival™ in South Australia, it is important to do your planning early before they make agreements 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™ event, support services for young people and tips for parents on helping young people stay safe. You can download the free app to find out more.

1 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 2016.

Kids Helpline

Phone 1800 551 800

- Tips for keeping kids safe at parties
www.kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/keeping-kids-safe-parties
- Information for parents about alcohol and other drugs
www.kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/teens-using-drugs-and-alcohol

Reach Out

Tips for young people on drinking responsibly
www.au.reachout.com/articles/tips-for-drinking-responsibly-and-safe-partying
www.au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-party

Raising Children Network

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

Child and Youth Health

Parenting and child health information
www.cyh.com

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

Want more information?

Emergencies

Phone 000 for police, ambulance or fire

Police attendance

Phone 131 444 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

Government of South Australia, Attorney-General's Department

Information about supplying alcohol to people under 18 years, including flyer 'Stop the supply of alcohol to minors' and 'Frequently asked questions' www.cbs.sa.gov.au/liquor-reform

Encounter Youth – Schoolies Festival™

Information for parents and young people about the Schoolies Festival™
www.encounteryouth.com.au/schoolies-festival. Download the free Schoolies Festival™ app on the Apple App Store or Google Play Store by searching for 'Schoolies Festival'

Parenting Strategies

Information and guidelines on preventing adolescent alcohol misuse, including free online course for parents www.parentingstrategies.net

Australian Drug Foundation

Information on safe partying www.adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/teenagers/safe-partying and a safe party planning checklist www.adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/teenagers/safe-partying/hosting-a-teenage-party/



Government of
South Australia

Parenting SA

A partnership between the Department for Education and the Women's and Children's Health Network.

Ph: 08 8303 1660

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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