Hosting a Party for Teenagers

Factors to Consider

alcoholthinkagain
Parties

This booklet is designed to assist parents/caregivers in planning and hosting responsible parties with teenagers under 18 years of age. It provides tips about communicating with teenagers and factors you might consider before allowing teenagers to host a party or attend parties elsewhere.
TEENAGERS’ PARTIES

For many teenagers, attending parties and meeting friends is an important part of their social development. Parties are exciting events and can expose teenagers to a range of new experiences relating to music, social experiences and possibly alcohol and other drugs. It is important that teenagers are prepared for what may happen at a party. If well planned, parties can be successful and fun.

If well planned, parties can be successful and fun.

PARENT CONCERNS

It is natural for parents to feel concerned and uncertain about teenage parties. Parents want their teenagers to have fun, but can be afraid of parties getting out-of-hand. Understandably, parents also fear for the personal safety of their teenagers, and many parents get anxious about doing the right thing. Every family has its own values, communication style and relationships, and therefore, parents and families will often have different expectations and reactions.

Understandable for parents to be concerned.
May fear party will get out of hand.
Every family is different.
ALCOHOL
For many parents thinking about teenagers’ parties, one of the biggest concerns is how to manage alcohol. This may include whether to allow their child to drink, whether alcohol should be allowed if hosting a party and the potential availability of alcohol when their child is a guest at a party.

The Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol recommend the following in relation to underage drinking:

For children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.
- Children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking. Not drinking alcohol is especially important for this age group.
- For young people aged 15 to 17, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

💧 Alcohol is a common concern for parents.
💧 For under 18s, no alcohol is the safest option.

WHAT DO I DO?
Only you as a parent can decide on what you are comfortable with for your teenager. However, every party has the potential to get out-of-hand, and whether you are the host or your teenager is a guest, it is important that you talk and plan before the event. It is also necessary for you as a host to understand your legal responsibilities.

💧 Every party has the potential to get out-of-hand.
💧 Essential you plan ahead to avoid any risks.
GOOD COMMUNICATION IS VITAL

Adolescence is a complex time for both parents and teenagers. It is a balancing act for parents to ensure the safety of their teenager and, at the same time, provide them with opportunities to grow and take more responsibility.

- Parenting is a balancing act.
- Provide safety and still give responsibility.

Communication with your teenager is vital during this period particularly because they become exposed to alcohol and other drug use through friends, peers and the media. Although you cannot control these sources of information, open and ongoing communication with your teenager about alcohol and other drugs can provide them with the skills and attitudes to make informed choices.

It is important to establish good communication skills before your children become teenagers. Having trust and respect in your family can make talking through the teenage years easier.

- Establish good communication.
- Trust and respect is important.

It is normal for teenagers to start challenging their parent’s viewpoint over any issue. What their friends think becomes increasingly important, and even though they want and expect you to talk to them about issues, they are just as likely to give you the impression that your ideas are old fashioned or unreasonable. It is common to have more arguments in your household at this time.

- It’s common for young people to challenge their parents beliefs.
- They expect you to talk with them about alcohol and other drugs.
BE PATIENT

Be patient with teenagers. Some teenagers have difficulty expressing themselves and often say things they do not mean. Try not to take what they say personally and avoid engaging in conflict or arguments.

- Be patient.
- Try not to react.

LISTEN

To encourage them to talk with you about important issues, you need to try and listen without interrupting. Help them to express themselves by showing a genuine interest.

- Listen.
- Share.
- Help them to talk.
- Be genuine.

HELP TEENAGERS THINK FOR THEMSELVES

Try not to provide all the answers immediately. Teenagers need to talk through all of the consequences of their actions and try to come to their own decisions.

- Talk through consequences.
- Help them come to their own decisions.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

You are an important role model and can help your teenager take responsibility for their actions and make informed decisions. Be aware of your behaviour and your own attitude towards alcohol and other drug use as this can have an impact on the way teenagers address their own alcohol and other drug use.

- Parents are important role models.
- Be aware of your own behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol and other drug use.

If you choose to discuss your own alcohol and/or other drug use with your teenager it is important that you do not glorify your own behaviour and be careful of sounding hypocritical.

- Do not glorify your own behaviour.
- Be careful not to sound hypocritical.
Share your fears and knowledge about alcohol and other drugs and encourage your teenager to be open with you. Help your teenager develop strategies that will help them deal with situations where they will be offered alcohol and other drugs or put in difficult situations. Talk about some of the problems associated with drug use, including what can happen if they have too much alcohol.

If you need more information to do this, ask for help, don’t make it up (see the “More Information and Contacts” section of this brochure for assistance).

Let them know that if they find themselves in an emergency situation (friend is sick, passed out etc) they must call for help, even if they fear getting into trouble. Reassure them that police do not usually attend alcohol or other drug overdoses unless there is a death or ambulance staff are threatened.

- Develop strategies with your teenager that will help them deal with difficult situations.
- Talk about the problems with alcohol and other drug use.
- Talk about what to do in an emergency situation.

**WORK IN COLLABORATION**

When setting boundaries and establishing rules, it is really important to work in collaboration. To do this you need to express the reasons why you came to a particular decision. Allow your teenager the opportunity to talk about the family’s rules and how they affect them.

Your teenager is more likely to adhere to the rules if they are consulted. Explain how and why your family rules apply and that you will not be influenced by please or “but Jenny’s mum lets her” etc. You may find it useful to document your family’s rules in the form of a contract and have yourself and your teenager agree in writing to these rules.

- Work in collaboration.
- Express your reasons.
- Consult your teenager.
- Explain how and why your family values apply.
- Consider documenting your family’s rules.
KEEP YOURSELF INFORMED

Keep yourself informed about alcohol and other drugs. Teenagers are often misinformed about alcohol and other drugs and you can play an important role in ensuring they know the facts and consequences of alcohol and other drug use. Don’t exaggerate as this can make you sound less credible, instead keep to the facts.

✦ Be up-to-date on alcohol and other drug information.
✦ Share this with your teenager.
✦ Correct any misconceptions they have about alcohol and other drugs.

WHY DO SOME YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIMENT WITH ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS?

Adolescence is a complex time. During this time, experimentation and risk taking may occur, and this may include drinking alcohol. Parties may provide an opportunity for teenagers to experiment with alcohol and other drugs.

Alcohol is most likely to be the main drug used at parties, but as a parent, you may need to consider other types of drugs potentially being used such as cannabis, amphetamines, and other stimulants like ecstasy.

✦ Parties can be a venue for teenagers to experiment with alcohol and other drugs.
✦ Alcohol is likely to be the main drug used at parties.

Both legal and illegal drugs can lead to harm, but the most harm associated with drug use that happens at parties is linked to alcohol use.

✦ Legal and illegal drugs can lead to harm.

Taking drugs including alcohol can be dangerous - especially for the first time, so as a parent, try and acquaint yourself with the commonly used drugs and talk them over with your teenager. Call the Parent Drug Information Service for help in finding out about these drugs and their effects.

✦ Alcohol can be harmful.
✦ Call the Parent Drug Information Service on (08) 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (toll-free for country callers).

IF YOU SUSPECT DRUG USE

Talk about your concerns with a counsellor, GP or another parent from the Parent Drug Information Service.

✦ If you have concerns, call the Parent Drug Information Service on (08) 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (toll-free for country callers).
PLANNING A PARTY
Parties are normally organised to celebrate a birthday, end of exams, school balls or just as a gathering. Any party has the potential to get out-of-hand, but by planning ahead you can limit the chance of this happening. Below are some tips that could help in creating a safer and fun party environment.

✦ Parties are a celebration.
✦ Plan ahead.

DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS WITH YOUR TEENAGER
Discuss with your teenager how they expect the party to run and aim to set some rules.

✦ Discuss your and your teenager’s expectations.

RULES
Rules will need to be set in relation to alcohol, supervision, number of guests, age and maturity of guests, starting and finishing times, transport, sleepovers and what should happen if things get out-of-hand. Remember that whilst compromise may be needed, do not agree to anything you are not fully comfortable with. Talk it through with other parents to find out their own experiences with parties.

✦ Don’t agree to anything you are not comfortable with.
✦ Agree on rules and promote these rules up front.

It is common for teenagers to become defensive and hostile at this point and accuse you of wanting to stop the fun or feel that you don’t trust them. Be calm and try not to enter into the argument. Listen and remain firm that rules of the party must be established.

✦ Stay calm and don’t enter into arguments.
✦ Remain firm about rules.
ADULT SUPERVISION

Teenagers like to feel trusted and like their friends witnessing your trust. It may be important to them that you remain invisible at their party. If so, tell your teenager that you WILL be around but not “in their faces” so that you are available if needed. Even older teenagers may be met with situations they are not able to cope with, for example, gatecrashers or highly intoxicated guests who become aggressive or very ill.

- Tell your teenager you will be around but not “in their faces” so that you are available if needed.
- Adult supervision is necessary.

You are the host and responsible for the wellbeing of the guests. If a party is held in your home for people under the age of 18 you will be considered responsible and potentially liable for any outcomes during and after the party, including your guests getting home safely.

- You are responsible as a host.

MUSIC AND NOISE

Most teenagers want to listen to music loud but you need to be considerate of your neighbours. Agree with your teenager on a moderate level of noise that will reduce in volume after midnight (a good time to end the party).

- Agree on a moderate level of noise.

Tell your neighbours you are having a party.

- Tell neighbours.

If the Police receive a complaint, they can take whatever action is necessary to stop the disturbance, including prosecution of the host.

- Police can take action regarding noise.

INFORMING OTHER PARENTS

You may consider informing other parents of the party through invitations. Encourage parents that if they have any queries about the event, to contact you.

- Inform other parents by sending out formal invitations.
- Encourage parents to contact you.
For younger teenagers, telephoning every parent is also a good idea (and may be something you have negotiated with your teenager). Most parents appreciate this form of contact.

- Telephone parents.
- Parents appreciate this.

**VENUE**

Make sure your venue is appropriate for the number of guests invited. Keep the party in a safe, contained area.

- Appropriate venue.
- Keep party contained.

Don’t use glass. Plastic containers and cups are preferable.

- No glass.

Lock rooms you don’t want anybody entering. Put away valuables.

- Lock rooms.
- Put valuables away.

Consider parking and be aware of bus and train timetables.

- Parking options.
- Public transport.

**FOOD**

Always have food and bring it out early and throughout the party! Whether it is nibbles or a feast, ensure there’s plenty of it.

- Bring food out early and throughout the party.
- Have lots of food.

**EXPECT SURPRISES**

Even the well-managed party can have a few surprises. Expect things to go wrong and plan ahead. If you know in advance how you will respond to problems then you will be better able to manage them if they arise.

- Plan ahead for any problems that may occur.
REGISTERING YOUR PARTY WITH POLICE

Registering your party with police means that if trouble does arise, the police can respond quickly and effectively. You can obtain a party registration form from your local police station or download a form from the website:

✦ www.police.wa.gov.au

Complete the registration form and submit it online or drop it into your local police station, or call 131 444 at least 7 days before the party.

DIAL 000 FOR LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCIES
FOR POLICE ATTENDANCE: 131 444

GATE CRASHERS

Most teenagers hear that “a party is happening” and everyone may know about it before the end of the day.

✦ News travels fast.

Unexpected people turning up at the party is a serious issue. To prevent ‘gatecrashers’ use the following ideas to plan ahead:

- Use INVITATIONS and write the names of the people invited. Ask for an RSVP. Keep a list of these people at the entrance to the party and tick off their names.
- Keep the guest list small.
- Locate the party away from high traffic areas.
- Organise guests to be picked up and transported to and from the party.
- Have reliable adults at the door (and your teenager who knows what their friends look like).
- Have one entrance to the party and consider locking side gates etc.
- Have Police phone numbers on hand for a quick response if gatecrashers do take over.
Use invitations.
RSVP.
Keep the list small.
Register your party with the Police.
Locate the party away from busy areas.
Transport.
Adults at door.
One entrance to party.
Have Police phone numbers on hand.
Ensure Police can get to your house.

Be aware of party information being distributed by text messaging, internet, social media (such as Facebook, Twitter etc) or word of mouth. If you intend to use these methods to inform guests about the party consider the following to reduce the risk of uninvited guests:

- Only include information of a general nature, such as the date.
- Inform guests that they will be receiving a physical invitation with further details, including the time and address.

- Be careful of text message and internet invitations.
- Follow up with a physical invitation.

Discourage an ‘open house’ impression and the attendance of ‘friends-of-friends’.
Be aware of advertising. Make it clear that only invited guests will be allowed to enter.

- Discourage ‘open house’.

If you are having a big party then you may want to ask other adults you trust to help you or consider hiring crowd controllers.

- Ask other adults to help you.
- Consider hiring crowd controllers.
**SHOULD I ALLOW ALCOHOL AT THE PARTY?**

This information refers to hosting a party for teenagers under the age of 18. In Western Australia, as a parent or host of a party for under 18-year-olds, you have a ‘duty-of-care’ and are considered liable for any outcomes during and after the party, including your guests getting home safely. ‘Duty of care’ is a duty to take reasonable care to identify possible causes of harm and prevent harm from occurring. This means that if anything goes wrong and you have not taken care to prevent problems, civil legal action could be taken against you.

- As a parent you have a duty-of-care.
- Parents.Hosts can be considered liable.

An alcohol-free party is the safest option with guests aged under 18. It is a good idea to make this clear on the invitation. Consider how you are going to refuse entry to people who arrive with alcohol or appear intoxicated. Having all parents’ numbers beforehand may also assist.

- An alcohol-free party is the best option.
- Making it clear on the invite that the party will be alcohol-free so guests will know what to expect.
- Need to consider strategies if people arrive with alcohol or appear drunk.

Have a plan in place to deal with this situation, such as calling the Police if they refuse to leave or asking another adult for assistance.

- Have a plan in place.

It is also important to remember that all adults supervising the party need to stay sober so that they can drive guests home if necessary and respond to any other problems effectively.

- Adults should stay sober.
ALCOHOL & THE LAW IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The laws are different in each State or Territory regarding alcohol use by people under the age of 18. Under the Liquor Control Act 1988, it is an offence for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of alcohol in a public place. Police can issue on-the-spot fines to young people who break the laws stated in the Liquor Control Act 1988.

Police have powers to seize any liquor (open or un-open), from young people in the above circumstances and may destroy it on the spot in certain situations (Liquor Control Act 1988 & Protective Custody Act 2000).

 Laws are different in every State.

LICENSED PREMISES

It is against the law to sell or supply alcohol to people under the age of 18 in WA on licensed premises.

 It’s against the law to sell or supply alcohol to people under 18 years on licensed premises.

REGULATED PREMISES

It is an offence to supply or sell alcohol to juveniles on regulated premises. Examples of regulated premises include local halls, parks, footpaths, a vehicle on or adjacent to the road, and premises occupied by a club where a licence is not held. This means that if you are holding a teenager’s party in a community hall, for example, it is against the law for guests under the age of 18 to consume alcohol.

 It’s against the law to sell or supply alcohol to people under 18 years on regulated premises.

In WA, a person of any age who drinks on any road, including a parked or moving vehicle commits an offence. It is also an offence to drink alcohol in any reserve or park without permission by the authority or person who has control of the place.

NOTE: Where a person is caught, ‘street or park drinking’, Police now have the power to immediately seize the open containers and destroy the contents.

 It is an offence to drink alcohol in any street/road, reserve or park.
PRIVATE PREMISES
A private residence is not considered a regulated premises. While you may not be in breach of the Liquor Control Act 1988 if you allow the consumption of alcohol or supply alcohol to another person’s child in your home, you could be held accountable if any problems or harms occur.

- You can be held accountable if problems or harms occur.

DRUNK AND UNWELL TEENAGERS
You should be aware that even if you decide not to allow alcohol at the party, there may be guests attending who are over the age of 18 who are legally allowed to buy alcohol and who may not consider the ‘no alcohol’ approach also applies to them. Talk with your teenager about the agreed expectations regarding alcohol and their friends who are over 18 and consider how to manage the issue on the night if it occurs.

Even if you decide not to allow alcohol at the party, there may be guests attending that have been drinking prior to coming without your knowledge. If this is the case, there are a few things you can put in place to reduce the risk of guests becoming unwell.

- Offer plenty of non-alcoholic soft drinks and have water easily accessible.
- Ensure that food is readily available for guests and is served throughout the night.

Despite careful planning, you may experience teenagers who have become drunk or unwell. If you have concerns about a young person who appears to be intoxicated, speak to them in a low voice away from the crowd. Try to make sure they do not have any more alcohol. If they are under 18, do not hesitate to call their parents to come and collect them. As you are the host and as such are responsible for them, you have a duty-of-care and may be considered liable for their safety.

- Intoxication – you have a duty-of-care.

Alcohol is a poisonous drug, and people can overdose and die from too much alcohol. Teenagers usually have a low tolerance to alcohol and do not have much experience with drinking alcohol. As such they are vulnerable to intoxication.

- Teenagers usually have low tolerance to alcohol.
- The safest option is to have no alcohol at parties where there are guests who are under 18 years old.
Sometimes teenagers experiment with more than one type of drug, this is termed polydrug use, and there is a greater risk of harm when two or more drugs are mixed at any one time. For example, combining alcohol and benzodiazepines (valium, serapax etc) can fatally depress heart rate and breathing.

✧ Polydrug use is a possibility and can be very dangerous.

Keep a close eye on people during the party. If a teenager is showing signs of intoxication, passing out or being sick, it might be more than just a ‘few drinks’.

✧ Keep watch.
✧ Look out for teenagers mixing drugs.

If you see a person with symptoms of extreme intoxication or ‘passing out’ try NOT to panic, and:

- Ask if you can help put them into the recovery position.
- Stay with them and MONITOR their ABs (Airway and Breathing) every two minutes.
- If the person becomes unconscious or stops breathing call TRIPLE ZERO (000) for an ambulance or send for help. Explain what you think has happened including any alcohol or drug use you are aware of.
- Start CPR: compressions and rescue breaths (30:2) until the ambulance arrives.

Police DO NOT attend drug overdoses unless there is a death or ambulance staff feel threatened.

✧ Assist person into the Recovery position.
✧ Monitor AB’s and re-assure them.
✧ Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance or send for help if unconscious or stops breathing.
✧ Start CPR (30:2) and stay with the person until an ambulance arrives.

Know FIRST AID or resuscitation (CPR) or have someone on hand that does.

✧ Know First Aid.
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OR VIOLENCE
ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE IS UNACCEPTABLE. IF THINGS GET OUT OF HAND, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL POLICE.

✦ Call WA Police 131 444.

A SAFE ENDING
Your responsibility as a host includes a safe ending for getting people home. Consider the following:

• Organising a bus and responsible driver may ensure guests leave safely at a designated time.
• If you live in a town where there are no taxis, or if you prefer, arranging a sleep over can work well. Some parents decide to have different sleeping areas for males and females. Don’t forget to provide breakfast.
• Don’t allow young guests to leave the party alone or without someone responsible that they know to accompany them.
• Offer to take them home or arrange a taxi.

✦ Getting people home safely is important.
✦ Designated finish time.
✦ Sleepover.
✦ Bus.
✦ Taxis.
✦ Ensure teenagers leave with someone responsible that they know.
✦ Offer to take them home.
✦ Try not to let young people leave the party alone.
WHAT CAN I DO IF MY TEENAGER WANTS TO GO TO A PARTY?

Be interested! This is possibly a very important event for them.

✦ Be interested.

BE CLEAR

Be clear about what information you need from them in order to make an informed decision about attending a party. Don’t be pressured into agreeing to a party. Take your time.

✦ Be clear about what you need to know.
✦ Take your time.
✦ Don’t agree to anything you are not comfortable with.

SET BOUNDARIES

Set boundaries. What’s OK? Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Who will be there? Address? Hosts? Will adults be present? Phone numbers? Who will be going? What time does it start and finish? Will there be alcohol there? How are they getting home?

✦ Set boundaries.
✦ Ask questions

GATHER INFORMATION

Gaining information is a good way to help you make a decision, and for you and your teenager to decide collaboratively about the relative safety of the party.

✦ Make a decision about the safety of a party together.
GIVE YOURSELF TIME

Give yourself time before deciding if you’re going to allow your teenager to attend a party elsewhere. You don’t have to make a decision immediately. Explain you need time to think and consider the information. Talk your concerns through with them as this will most likely lead to a compromise.

- Consider all the facts before making a decision.
- Share your concerns.

Ring the hosts of the party and discuss the level of supervision and determine whether alcohol will be served.

- Ring the host and ask about supervision and if alcohol will be served.

Remember that most teenagers are very responsible and don’t want to harm themselves or others.

- Most teenagers are responsible.

BE AWARE

Be aware that tobacco, alcohol and other drugs could be at the party. This does not automatically mean that your teenager is experimenting or that they will even want to.

- Be aware that alcohol or other drugs could be at the party.

TRUST YOUR TEENAGER

Trust your teenager to make the right decisions for themselves. Be aware that the ability to deal with situations and make decisions will develop with age. A 13-year-old is not able to make the same decisions as an 18-year-old. Treat your teenager in an age-appropriate way. An 18-year-old will usually know how to behave and may have had experience with alcohol and other drug use at a party. A 13-year-old may be frightened and unsure of what to do.

If a teenager tells you that alcohol and other drugs were at a party they attended, don’t reward their honesty by banning all future parties. Talk about which parties will be OK to attend and the standards you will expect from your teenager and the party hosts.

- Trust your teenager to make the right decisions.
- Ability to deal with situations develops with age.
- Talk over which parties are OK to attend and the standards you expect.
Discuss how they will get home. You might want to drop-off and collect your teenager at an arranged time. Teenagers often don’t want to arrive at parties by themselves so you may like to suggest sharing a lift with someone else.

- Discuss how they will get home.

Talk with other parents. What have they arranged?

- Talk with other parents.

Set limits with your teenager and negotiate fair consequences if they stretch the boundaries.

- Set limits and consequences.

Be flexible. Circumstances can change once your teenager arrives at the party. Encourage them to ring you if necessary.

- Some flexibility may be needed.

Talk about safety. Consider emergency cash, telephone numbers, taxi information and calling you if they can’t get home. Give them a mobile phone to take with them or find out if they can use a phone at the host’s house. Having the means to contact you or an adult they trust in an emergency is really important.

- Talk about safety.
- Emergency cash.
- Taxi.
- Mobile phone.
- How to contact you in an emergency.

REFERENCES
The development of this booklet was a partnership project between the Drug and Alcohol Office, Local Drug Action Groups Inc., the Parent Drug Information Service and Service Groups of Western Australia (2004).

We wish to acknowledge Willetton Local Drug Action Group and the South East Metropolitan Community Drug Service Team for producing the original booklet in 2000.

PARENT DRUG
INFORMATION SERVICE
(08) 9442 5050 OR
1800 653 203 (TOLL-FREE FOR COUNTRY CALLERS)

Free 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone support for alcohol and other drug information and support for parents and family members.

- Talk to a professionally trained counsellor about alcohol and other drugs.
- Talk confidentially to another parent for strategies and support.
- Find out where to go for further help.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG
INFORMATION SERVICE
(08) 9442 5000 OR
1800 198 024 (TOLL-FREE FOR COUNTRY CALLERS)

Free 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone service.

- Access to information about alcohol and other drugs confidentially and quickly.
- Talk to a professionally trained counsellor about alcohol and other drugs.
- Provides information, counselling and advice for people concerned about their own or another’s alcohol or other drug use. Find out about other services.
POLICE ATTENDANCE 131 444

AMBULANCE 000

CRISIS CARE (08) 9223 1111 OR 1800 199 008 (TOLL-FREE FOR COUNTRY CALLERS) (08) 9325 1232 (TTY)

DEPARTMENT OF RACING, GAMING AND LIQUOR 9425 1888 OR 1800 634 541 (TOLL-FREE FOR COUNTRY CALLERS)

YOUR LOCAL CONTACT NUMBERS

Hospital

Doctor

Other