

Young people and parties

Parent easy guide 13



Adolescence is a time for young people to learn the personal and social skills they need as they become adults. Having parties, being invited to parties and going to parties are very important events in a young person's life. Not only are they fun, parties and social gatherings play a part in helping them develop new skills with their peers. Most young people look forward to parties with great anticipation and excitement, but it's also very common for young people to feel nervous and not confident about socialising. When young people want to have a party or attend someone else's, most parents worry about what can go wrong!

*This PEG uses 'he' and 'she' in turn.
Change to suit your young person's sex.*

Why are parties important?

Parties are occasions for people to socialise and share in the human need for interaction with others. Often parties are the celebration of an event in someone's life; an important part of all cultures is to celebrate such milestones. The milestone may be a birthday, moving house, a graduation, or anything that we want others to share in. Just as we all have different ways of enjoying ourselves at parties, young people will have their own way of having fun. This will depend on their unique personality, their age, friends, interests, what sort of party it's, and the amount of supervision and freedom that parents or other adults provide.

As well as being fun for young people, parties can be:

- > An opportunity to share and make new friends
- > About strengthening friendships and being accepted by a peer group
- > An opportunity to show off friends to family
- > An opportunity to learn the skills of planning and entertaining.

For parents, parties can be an opportunity to see their children growing up and interacting with others as they become independent adults.

Having a party

Supervision of parties by responsible adults is necessary, even though young people may not want this. You may decide to host a party for your

son or daughter, either at home or at a venue. Whether the party is in your home or in a venue, you have a responsibility to ensure the supervision and safety of those attending. This guide is written for parties held at home where the full responsibility for safety of guests rests with you. If hiring a venue, make sure you have a written agreement which outlines your responsibilities and those of the venue. Ensure you understand the terms of the agreement before you sign and that things such as safety of guests and public liability in and around the property are stated clearly.

Safety and supervision

- > As a parent holding the party, you have a legal 'duty of care' to ensure the safety of those who attend. This responsibility can also include guests who may be hanging around near the party. There may be legal consequences if you breach your duty of care, e.g. if someone is hurt you may be held legally and financially responsible for their injury
- > Uninvited guests (gatecrashers) are becoming more common. It's a good idea to ask other responsible adults for assistance on the evening. As a safety precaution some parents notify the police of the date and address of the party in advance just in case something goes wrong. Some parents hire a person from a security company with expertise in managing crowds as this can be a deterrent to uninvited guests
- > Discourage the use of Internet and SMS text messages on mobile phones to invite people.



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Party planning

- > Work out the 'ground rules' with him before the party is announced. This will need both of you to communicate calmly and clearly. It might be good to make a list of all the things you agree on. Remember that even though some points may be hotly debated, at the end of the day you're legally responsible to ensure the safety of all people at the party
- > Agree on these things together:
 - How many friends will come
 - How invitations will be sent (e.g. written, phone, email). Written invitations are a good way of letting people know what you expect, e.g. whether the party will have a theme, dress code, special occasion, whether alcohol will be provided or allowed, time the party will start and end, how to RSVP. They can also be shown by guests to gain entry to the party
 - How loud the music can be and what time it's turned off
 - Budget limits
 - What food to have. Remember, salty nuts, chips and crackers make people thirsty
 - What activities you'll have. Activities such as a pool table, jukebox, dancing, karaoke, sports activities or competitions can take the focus off drinking
 - Whether to have alcohol, how to control the amount, and the things you might need to do as the adult responsible for party safety
 - What about smoking, e.g. inside and/or outside the home, or not at all
 - How to respond if drugs are used
 - What to do if someone gets sick or drunk
 - Whether some rooms in the house, including bedrooms are off limits
 - What to do if gatecrashers come
 - How will guests get home
 - Who will clean up after the party (expect him to help prepare and clean up)
 - How he (or you) will make the ground rules known to the guests
- > Be clear with him about what you expect, but don't be too heavy handed and take the fun out of it
- > Talk to other parents about tips they've learned
- > Advise the neighbours about the party. Some families do a letterbox drop in the street or block the week before and provide a number for them to call if they have a complaint on the night
- > Find out from local police about noise regulations
- > They may also have a 'Party Program' in your area. If so, they'll need information on what type of party it's, start and finish times, whether alcohol is being served, number of guests, and contact details for the responsible adult
- > Make sure the venue is suitable for the number of guests, e.g. there is sufficient lighting in the area to ensure safety and enough bathroom facilities

- > Make sure you can restrict access to where the party is being held
- > Check with the insurer of your property (or hired venue) the extent of insurance coverage
- > Parents' phone numbers may be helpful, e.g. if a young person is drunk or there is a mishap
- > Have spare bedding ready.

At the party

- > Have only one entrance to the party
- > Make sure vehicle access is blocked, but also ensure there's a safe exit if needed in an emergency
- > Have a responsible adult at the entrance to ensure people arriving have been invited
- > Ensure all adults supervising are aware of what to do in an emergency and have emergency numbers on them, as well as how to deal with an intoxicated guest
- > Don't drink or use drugs yourself
- > If you have an alcohol-free agreement and you discover young people drinking, be prepared to tackle this. You're responsible for their safety in your home and their parents expect it of you. It can be difficult and embarrassing, but it's important to remind them this wasn't agreed to. Remove the alcohol and tell them you'll take care of it while they're in your home. You can be held legally and financially responsible if you return alcohol to a young person who consumes it after leaving you and then gets into trouble
- > If you allow alcohol:
 - Make this clear to parents beforehand
 - Ensure young people under 18 years (minors) don't take alcohol from the party to drink somewhere else. If you know they're doing this you could be held responsible if anything happens. Whilst they can legally consume alcohol on private premises under adult supervision, it's against the law for them to drink alcohol in any public place (e.g. on the footpath, near their cars or in a nearby park) unless they're with their parent or guardian
 - Make sure food is easily available. While food slows the passage of alcohol into the bloodstream, it doesn't stop people getting drunk
 - Control how much alcohol is consumed
 - If you provide the alcohol yourself you have more control, but be ready for people 'smuggling in' extra
 - Have a responsible adult serving the alcohol
 - Use small plastic glasses and discourage stubbies and cans
 - Don't let people 'top up' glasses - this makes it hard to keep track of how much alcohol is being drunk
 - Don't supply drinks with a high alcohol content. Provide light alcohol options
 - Supply alternatives to alcohol, including water
 - Serve non-carbonated drinks (juices or water) as 'spacers'
 - Encourage friends to look after each other
 - Only time will sober up guests if they're drunk

- Suggest drivers give you their keys when they arrive.
A person on P plates who has been drinking shouldn't be driving
- > Keep an eye on what's happening without being obvious
- > Check on areas of the house that are 'restricted'
- > Occasionally check the garden and boundaries, ensuring gates and side entries remain secure
- > Ensure guests stay on the property, encourage them to not gather at the front of the house
- > Consider having a 'chill' part of the house in case someone needs space
- > Every so often check with her that everything is OK
- > Refuse gatecrashers. Phone police if you can see a problem brewing before it gets out of hand
- > Encourage guests to leave at the agreed time by turning lights on and music down a half hour before the party is due to end.

Going to a party

Some things you might want to do

- > Speak to the parents beforehand to check who'll be supervising the party
- > Be aware of the start and finish times
- > Ask the parents if there'll be alcohol at the party
- > Decide if it's OK for her to attend. If you believe it's not suitable, be calm and clear about your reasons. Her safety and wellbeing is your responsibility
- > Decide on transport arrangements. Will you or another responsible adult take her and bring her home? Are you happy to let her go in a car with a friend on P plates? Is there a designated driver? What if this person drinks? Does she have a 'fall-back' position in an emergency, e.g. taxi money or a phone number if you won't be at home? Will she be staying overnight and how will she get home next day?
- > Going to the door when you drop her off can be embarrassing for her. However, you may need to if you're not sure whether the parents will be home. Don't be afraid to go to the door when you pick her up. You get to meet the parents who may become friends
- > Discuss a time when you expect her to be home. Don't be too different from what other parents decide and talk it over with them if you feel unsure
- > Find out what videos or DVDs will be shown at the party. Young people love thrills and suspense but R and X rated movies (and some M rated ones) are not appropriate for young people and may be very disturbing. You may have to make another unpopular decision!
- > Remind her about being safe, such as not drinking and driving and not being alone in dangerous situations
- > Make sure you're both clear about the rules and the consequences if these are broken. Stand by these and be consistent.

Some things he could do

If you think the party is OK, let him:

- > Decide whether he wants to go or not
- > Decide what he'll wear
- > Have a say in what time he'll come home
- > Decide whether he goes with a friend because it's sometimes difficult for young people to go to parties alone. Having a friend over to get ready together or even having a friend sleep over after the party can be half the fun
- > Choose and buy a birthday present himself. These responsibilities can gradually be taken over by him because eventually he'll be making all his own decisions in life
- > Tell you of changes in plans such as homecoming time. You have a right to know his whereabouts and to not be worried.

Reminders

- > Planning for a party together can be fun
- > The more thought and preparation that goes into the planning, the more smoothly it's likely to go
- > Some young people are nervous about going to parties and others are nervous about having them - this is all very normal
- > Half of the fun of a party is getting ready for it and talking about it afterwards
- > You have a legal responsibility to provide a safe environment for a party
- > Think very carefully about providing or allowing alcohol. Ensure you understand your legal responsibilities
- > Let her go to parties, but do your homework first
- > Stand firm if you believe there are good reasons why she shouldn't go to a party
- > Be clear about what's okay and what's not okay
- > Talk to other parents. They're often feeling the same as you and may have tips that help.

Contacts

Youth Healthline: Tel 1300 131 719
Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm
Youth health and parenting information

Alcohol and Drug Information Services:
Tel 1300 131 340

Kids Helpline: Tel 1800 551 800

Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner
Tel (08) 8226 8410
For information about liquor licenses and supply
of alcohol

Police: Tel 131 444
Emergency: Tel 000

Websites

www.cyh.com
For parenting and child health information

www.parenting.sa.gov.au
For other Parent Easy Guides

www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnightmare
Information on safe partying

www.lawstuff.org.au
Legal information for young people on
a broad range of topics, including parties

www.adf.org.au
Australian Drug Foundation

www.druginfo.adf.org.au
Drug Info on the ADF website

www.alcohol.gov.au
Australian Government's information site

www.kidshelp.com.au
Kids Helpline

For more information

Parent Helpline 1300 364 100

Parenting SA
Children, Youth and Women's Health Service
Telephone (08) 8303 1660
Internet: www.parenting.sa.gov.au

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Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia

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