



RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT PARTIES FOR PARENTS OF TEENS



The role of parents is to gradually bring their children to responsible independence. This includes preparing their children for mature social interaction with other boys and girls, a happy social life balanced with other responsibilities, and ultimately for their own adult family life. None of this happens by accident! It requires parents to work as a team, patiently and purposefully, to develop in their children virtues such as self mastery, generosity, sincerity, self confidence and friendship.

EDUCATING IN FREEDOM

It is normal for teens to demand a level of freedom in their social life that they aren't yet mature enough to manage. Educating their children in freedom means that parents need to establish limits and insist on them firmly. However, controlling is not the same as educating. Young people learn to live in society when they understand the meaning of rules. Teens need time and attention, speaking with their parents one-to-one. An open and intelligent dialogue, with affection and sincerity, is the key.

These practical recommendations come from the collective experience of Tangara and Redfield parents, and from resources such as <http://www.safeparty.com.au/> and NSW Police Party Safe Tips: http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/services/party_safety/party_safe_tips

Party Smart is a guide to foster positive and formative social experiences for our young people. These are not rules, but suggestions. We respect the freedom and responsibility of parents to make decisions for their children's formation.

With thoughtful planning, good communication and clear boundaries, parties can be fun, safe and valuable milestones in the social development of our children

IF YOU ARE HOSTING A PARTY

“ WHAT SORT OF PARTY? ”

When you are thinking about hosting a party, consider the level of maturity and social development of your child and his or her guests. Younger teens benefit from activity based parties and may not be ready for co-ed gatherings.

YEARS 7 & 8

At this age, parties should be single sex, to reflect the emotional maturity of most girls and boys. It is healthy for them to socialise with other families who have girls and boys of the same age.

Activity based parties are recommended eg a pool party, movie night, rock climbing.

Be inclusive: adolescents are very sensitive about being left out. Invite either a small group of closest friends, or invite the whole class.

YEARS 9 & 10

The difference in maturity and emotional development between boys and girls is very significant at this age. Some in this age group will be mature enough for a co-ed party, but some will not. It's important we don't put young teenagers in situations they don't feel ready for.

At this age the best parties are those where the guests are actively doing something together eg in a game of bowling or tennis, boys and girls learn to socialise in a natural way, avoiding feelings of pressure or awkwardness.

Consider other options which include a wider group of families such as a picnic or sport competition.

Parties should finish no later than 10.00 pm and there should be no alcohol.

The 16th birthday party has become a popular trend, but it should not be seen as an expectation. It may be good to discuss with your child which parties he or she might attend so they don't expect to go to every one.

YEARS 11 & 12

Think carefully if you decide to host an 18th birthday party. It should be alcohol free, because it is very difficult to limit alcohol to those students who are 18 years or older.

Formal after-parties are not a rite of passage and parents should not feel obliged to organise one. The Formal itself may be celebration enough. If there is an after-party, it's better to invite the whole class and their partners. All parents should work closely to support the family who agrees to host an after-party.

“ BEFORE THE PARTY ”

Work collaboratively with your son or daughter to plan and organise their party.

Use this [Safe Party Planner](#) to carefully think through preparations together

Avoid parties around exam time.

WHAT SIZE PARTY WILL IT BE?

Smaller parties allow the host to mingle with all the guests and are more personal.

Larger parties (with more than around 40 guests) provide serious challenges for supervision and need to be carefully planned. You will need to ask other parents to help you supervise. Depending on the number of guests and type of venue, consider hiring security to assist.

INVITATIONS

Written, hard copy invitations have many advantages:

They are a first point of contact with other parents. Include your phone number. You can request that parents RSVP on behalf of their child so you can talk with them and get their contact details.

Hard copy invitations discourage gatecrashers; you can request guests to show the invitation at the door.

You can tell guests what you expect from them, eg dress code; whether alcohol will be allowed/provided; start and finish time.

State that 'no extra guests will be permitted'. So called 'plus-one' invitations make a party more difficult to control.

In the invitation request that parents come to the front door at the end of the party to collect their child and any friends they are transporting.

It's not recommended to invite guests by SMS, email or through social networking sites. If you do decide to use Facebook, ensure that the event is private and for invited guests only.

START AND FINISH TIME

Plan a definite start and finish time and ensure the guests and their parents are aware.

Plan a wind-down time leading up to the finish, turning down music etc.

PLAN ADEQUATE SUPERVISION

A ratio of 1 supervising adult per 10 invitees is recommended. Consider whether you need to hire security to assist. The presence of uniformed security communicates expected standards of behaviour.

Supervision should be active. Parents should be circulating during the party, not confined to another area socialising together, or working in the kitchen etc. Don't allow yourself to feel excluded from any area or feel that you are intruding.

Avoid having a party in a confined space (eg an enclosed room) which can make it difficult for parents to circulate; at the same time open spaces, (eg a garden or acreage), will require boundaries and a clear supervision plan.

Is the lighting, inside and outside, adequate? Are there any dark, hidden-away areas?

Consider registering your party online with the Police, as an extra support, should there be any anti-social behaviour.

See: http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/services/party_safety/register_my_party

IF YOU ARE HOSTING A PARTY



“ DURING THE PARTY ”

ENTRANCE AND EXIT

Have one entrance or exit to the venue. This makes it much easier to control who comes and goes.

Have an adult(s) at the entrance/ exit, supervising who arrives and leaves. As each guest arrives:

- Tell them clearly that if they decide to leave, they will not be allowed to re-enter. This prevents teens loitering in the neighbourhood or re-joining the party after ingesting drugs or alcohol.
- Ask them to leave their bags and any personal belongings in a designated room (see below).
- Make it clear to under 18s that if they consume any alcohol or drugs, it will mean an immediate phone call to their parents and they will be collected from the party.
- If any guest appears intoxicated upon arrival, call their parents to collect them.
- Explain there is no need to take water bottles into the party because water will be supplied (water bottles often conceal alcohol).

You have the right to refuse entry to your property. It is an offence for people to trespass if you have refused them entry.

If uninvited people attend the party, ask them to leave. If they don't leave, contact police on 131 444. If it is an emergency call Triple Zero (000).

BAG ROOM

Upon arrival, direct guests to leave all backpacks, handbags, water bottles etc in a designated room. Delegate a supervising adult to control access to the room. If someone requests access to their bag, the room is opened by the supervising adult who stays at the door while the guest gets what they need. This ensures the security of people's valuables and that nothing illicit is drunk or ingested at the party.

FOOD AND DRINKS

Provide alternatives to alcoholic drinks, such as mocktails and other non-alcoholic drinks.

It should not be necessary for guests to take water bottles to a party. Ensure there is plenty of water available.

Confiscate alcohol from under 18's and ensure they do not have access to alcohol.

Ensure that adequate food is served throughout the party.

AT THE END OF THE PARTY

In the invitation request that parents come to the front door to collect their child and any friends they are transporting.

This gives the hosts peace of mind that all children are safe when they leave your home. By personally thanking the hosts, parents are modelling gratitude and respect to their children.

IF YOUR CHILD IS INVITED TO A PARTY



If your teen asks permission to go to a party, it helps to respond with 'leave it with me so I can talk with your mother/father'. Consult your spouse and delay the answer so that a sensible decision is made with time to plan properly eg check on supervision. If your child demands an immediate answer, it should be 'no'.

Help your teen to understand they don't need to attend every party they're invited to.

Discuss with your teen the number of parties you both believe are reasonable within a term, balancing study and family commitments.

Make this a family based decision.

EMPHASISE COURTESY AND GRATITUDE

Take advantage of the opportunity to teach your teen details of common courtesy eg send an RSVP to the host parents, say hello and introduce themselves on arrival. If your child has RSVP'd 'yes' to an invitation, reinforce the importance of honouring that commitment, even if they later receive a 'better offer'.

WHAT TO WEAR?

Talk through with your teen what they plan to wear to the party. It is up to parents to set the family standard. Discuss it with your spouse and come up with some guidelines that you can pass on to your children. Determine what you consider to be acceptable clothing choices. Make time well before the party to explain calmly to your child the family standards and the reasons for these standards. Discuss their ideas about what to wear to the party and what is appropriate, what is not, and why. It's important to be consistent with all your children.

SPEAK WITH THE HOST PARENTS

If your child is a guest, speak with the host parents. Check the location of the party. How many guests are attending? How many adults are supervising and who are they? Is there a planned finish time? Will alcohol be permitted?

GIVE YOUR CHILD AN 'OUT'

Maintain open communication with your teen. Tell them that if anything goes wrong at the party, or they feel uncomfortable, they can make a phone call to be collected, using Mum and Dad as their excuse: give them an 'out'.

ORGANISE TRANSPORT

Ensure there is a planned finish time and transport arrangements are clear. Consider putting the transport arrangements in writing so there is no room for misunderstanding about pick up time and location.

It's not advisable for your child to travel to the party using public transport: sometimes teens, if unsupervised, will obtain alcohol on the way. Offer to drop off and pick up your child and go into the party and speak to the parents. Offer to take other children home.