



# Hosting teenage parties

## Managing alcohol & other drugs

We all love a party and it is important for teenagers to celebrate, have fun and learn social skills. However no parent wants drunken behaviour, property damage, personal injury or gatecrashers.

Here are some tips to consider when planning a party for teenagers.

### Your legal position

As a parent, you are the host and you have a 'duty of care'. You should do all you can to provide a safe environment:

- Find out the laws about alcohol and other drugs in your state or territory (ask local police or your community legal centre). Everywhere in Australia, there are special laws about people under 18 and alcohol.
- You should supervise the party. If anything goes wrong, even after the party, and you have not taken care to prevent this, you could be held liable. Additional adult supervision is advisable.

You should find out about insurance:

- If the party is on your property, contact your insurer about your home cover.
- Contact venue management about hired premises.

### Invitations

**Invitations have many advantages:**

- They are a first point of contact with other parents.
- You can work out how many guests to plan for – include RSVP.
- You can communicate what you expect from guests, e.g. dress code; whether alcohol will be provided; finishing time, invitees only.
- Making invitations will help you decide whether party will have a theme, be fancy-dress, special occasion etc.

## Food

While eating doesn't stop people getting drunk, food in the stomach slows down the process.

- Start with savoury food, provide hot food halfway through, finish with fruit and desserts.
- Serve low-salt chips and crackers.
- Make sure food is easily available and taken around regularly.

## Drinks

**A no-alcohol party** is a valid choice. You may decide to ask teenage guests to hand over any alcohol to you when they arrive. Remember:

- You have a right to confiscate alcohol if you need to.
- You need to work out what you will do when the guest leaves.  
(You could be held liable if you return alcohol to a young person who then consumes it after leaving and gets into trouble.)

**If you decide to allow alcohol**, you should:

- inform parents beforehand
- establish an agreement between yourself and your teenager about alcohol and adult supervision
- take special care to control how much alcohol is consumed
- be aware that 'binge drinking' is a common problem (supplying the alcohol yourself will give you more control)
- remember that nothing other than time will sober up your guests if they are drunk.

### Serving drinks

- (Younger age groups) Restrict time during which alcohol will be served, e.g. 8–9 pm.
- Set up a bar area; use small glasses, discourage stubbies, cans etc.
- Have an adult non-drinker who is the 'designated server' (serve alcohol only on request and don't allow 'topping up' of drinks).
- Pre-mix drinks to ensure limited alcohol content.
- Don't supply drinks with an extremely high alcohol content (check labels).
- Serve only low-alcohol drinks, if possible.
- Always supply alternatives to alcohol.
- Serve non-carbonated soft drinks (juices or water) as 'spacers'.
- Watch punch and any unsupervised drinks that could be 'spiked'.
- Encourage friends to look after each other.



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## Activities

These activities can take the focus off drinking:

- pool table, sports activities, competitions
- juke box, dance music, karaoke, theatre sports.

## Running the party

- Don't drink or use drugs yourself.
- Before the party, find out how to handle someone who is drunk and/or using other drugs.
- Work out with adult helpers who will do what.
- Keep the party happening and 'happy'.
- Consult your teenager every so often.
- Encourage guests to leave at the time you have chosen for the party to end.

## Transport

- Encourage parents of younger age groups to pick up their children at the end of the party.
- Check how guests are getting home and who is driving. If a guest has been drinking they should not be driving.
- Young people may not be able to tell if someone else can drive them home safely.
- Consider getting drivers to hand their keys in when they arrive. You can then check on their condition at the end of the party.
- Encourage guests to come by taxi, or with a driver who won't be drinking.

## Gatecrashers & security

- If you are concerned about security, restrict the guest list.
- Register your party with police.
- If having a big party, consider hiring security.
- Have only one entrance to the party; secure side or back gates if necessary.
- Organise for your teenager and a reliable adult to be on the door.
- Make sure that vehicle access is not blocked.
- Phone police if gatecrashers arrive.

## Planning for 'extras'

- Have some spare bedding available in case someone cannot go home for some reason.
- Parents' phone numbers may come in handy, e.g. to contact parents of a guest who is drunk and afraid to go home.

## Party Checklist

### Getting Started

To help make decisions, find out from local police:

- local laws on alcohol and drugs, especially for under-18s
- noise regulations

Ask the insurer of your property or hired venue:

- the extent of insurance coverage available

Decide on:

- type of party
- location
- budget
- Finalise agreement about alcohol and supervision with your teenager and the rest of the family.

### Well before the date of the party

- Design, make and send invitations.
- Contact parents; gather phone details.
- Organise helpers and security.
- Inform neighbours.
- Register the party with your local police.
- Organise activities and equipment.
- Make a list of emergency phone numbers.

### Just before the party

- Buy and prepare food, drinks and decorations
- Organise hire/purchase of crockery, glasses etc.
- Have spare bedding ready.

### On the day of the party

- Experiment with sound equipment; set up to minimise disturbance locally.
- Set up and decorate house/other venue
- Lock any side or back gates, if necessary
- Make sure there is vehicle access.
- Secure dog/s.

## For further information

- Contact the Australian Drug Foundation on 1800 069 700 for a copy of the booklet *Hosting Teenage Parties*. These are available for \$5 (including postage & handling)
- Contact your local state alcohol & drug service.
- Check out the Websites [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au) or [www.druginfo.adf.org.au](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au)