

Young people and parties

Parents can feel concerned when young people want to have a party or attend celebrations such as a schoolies.

Many worry about what can go wrong. However, parenting is about helping children learn to make good decisions in all situations, starting early. It can be rewarding to see them use the positive values you have helped them develop over time.

ParentLink

informing



supporting



connecting



Parties are important for young people

Parties and socialising with peers is a fun way for young people to learn personal and social skills they need as they become adults.

Parties can also be an opportunity to:

- strengthen friendships and be accepted by a peer group

- make new friends
- show off 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 as they become independent adults.



ACT
Government

A P A R E N T L I N K P A R E N T I N G G U I D E
www.parentlink.act.gov.au



Hosting a party

If you are hosting a party for your son or daughter it is important to know your legal responsibilities. Whether the party is in your home or a venue, as the host you have a duty of care to all your guests. There may be legal consequences if you breach your duty of care. For example, if someone acts illegally or is hurt you may be held legally and financially responsible.

You have an added responsibility to supervise guests under 18 years (minors), particularly if there will be alcohol* at the party. It is a good idea to inform parents of under-age guests if alcohol* will be served*. While it is not illegal for a minor to drink alcohol* in a private home, you are responsible for ensuring everyone's safety. If there is an injury or any property damage, a lack of supervision may be considered negligence under the law.

The ACT Policing website, www.police.act.gov.au, has information on safe partying as well as young people, alcohol* and drugs (the *ACT Policing Pocketbook Guide for parents and teenagers—alcohol* and drugs* is a good place to start).

As the party host you are responsible for the supervision and safety of all guests, in particular those under 18 years of age.

Party planning

Plan the party with your son or daughter and agree on the ground rules before the party is announced. It can help to make a list of all the things you agree on.

Agree together about:

- the party budget and who will pay for what
- how many friends will come
- how the music will be managed and what time it will be turned off
- what food will be served*
- what activities you will have — a pool table, jukebox, dancing, karaoke, games or competitions can take the focus off drinking*
- whether smoking will be allowed, and if so, where
- whether to have alcohol*, how to control the amount, and the things you need to do as the adult responsible for party safety
- what to do if someone gets sick or drunk*
- how to respond if drugs are used
- what rooms in the house will be off limits
- how guests will get home. This is especially important for people living in country areas

- who will set up for the party and clean up afterwards. Expect your son or daughter to help.
- how invitations will be sent (e.g. by mail, phone or email).

Discourage sending invitations by social media or SMS texts as they could be passed on to others. Let guests know it is invitation-only. Written invitations are a good way of letting guests know what to expect, e.g. any party theme, dress code, special occasion, whether alcohol* will be provided* or allowed, time the party will start and end, where to park, and how to RSVP. Invitations can also be shown by guests to gain entry to the party.

It is important to work out who will make the ground rules known to the guests, and how this will be done.

It also helps to:

- check with police about noise regulations. Test your sound system to see how far the noise carries. Put someone in charge of sound on the night and keep within the acceptable volume level. Neighbours can make a complaint about excessive noise any time of the day or night



- notify the police about the party as a safety precaution. Don't forget to let them know if the party is cancelled
- advise neighbours about the party. Some families do a letterbox drop the week before and provide a number to call if they have a complaint on the night
- have a plan for dealing with gate crashers. Managing the entry point to the party is very important. Some parents hire a person from a security company with skills in managing crowds and uninvited guests
- make sure the venue is suitable for the number of guests, e.g. enough space and toilet facilities, and adequate lighting to ensure safety
- check the extent of your insurance coverage
- get parents' phone numbers in case you need to contact them
- have spare bedding ready.

It is important to negotiate the details of the party with your teen, but don't forget you are the adult who is legally responsible for the safety of all people at the party. You might have to make some unpopular decisions.

At the party

Keep the 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
- keeping an eye on what's happening by wandering around the party and ensuring guests are safe — don't just stay in the kitchen
- checking on areas of the house that are restricted
- checking the garden and boundaries, ensuring gates and side entries remain secure
- not allowing guest 'pass-outs', and ensuring guests stay on the property and don't gather in the street. You are still responsible for guests around the party vicinity.

Have responsible adult/s who:

- are willing to not drink or take drugs during the party
- 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.

If you don't allow alcohol*:

- be prepared to act if you find some young people drinking*. You are responsible for their safety in your home and their parents expect it of you. 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.

If you do allow alcohol*:

- make this clear to parents beforehand
- ensure young people under 18 years 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. It is 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
- make sure food is easily accessible throughout the party but remember that salty nuts, chips and crackers make people thirsty
- control how much alcohol* is consumed
 - consider providing the alcohol* yourself rather than letting guests bring their own. Have a responsible adult serving it away from where people are gathering
 - use small plastic glasses and discourage stubbies and cans
 - don't let people top up drinks — it's harder to keep track of how much alcohol* is being consumed
 - don't allow drinking* games
 - only provide light alcohol* options
 - supply alternatives to alcohol*, including water, soft drinks and juice as spacers
 - stop serving someone who is drunk*. Remain calm and polite to avoid arguments
- suggest drivers give you their keys when they arrive. Remember, it is against the law for a person on P plates to have any alcohol* in their system if driving
- consider having a 'chill' part of the house in case someone needs space. Check on them to make sure they are OK
- stop serving alcohol*, turn lights up and music down a half hour before the party is due to end so guests can leave at the agreed time.

Going to a party

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your teen when attending someone else's party:

- speak to the parents beforehand to check who will be supervising the party. Ask for a contact number for the house
- ask if there will be alcohol* and be clear about whether it is OK for your teen to drink or not
- decide on transport arrangements to and from the party. Have a back-up plan if your teen wants to leave early
- make sure they can contact you during the party if needed
- discuss what time you expect them home and be clear about the consequences if this doesn't happen.

It is OK to go to the door when you drop your son or daughter off if you are a bit concerned. Don't be afraid to also go to the door when you pick them up.

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

* Laws around support of alcohol to minors

Secondary supply laws came into effect in the ACT in August 2016. Under these laws it is an offence for a person to supply liquor to a minor (a person under the age of 18) in a private place (such as a home) unless:

- the person supplying the liquor is the parent or guardian of the minor or has the permission of the parent or guardians of the minor
- AND
- the supply is consistent with the responsible supervision of the minor.

This means that an offence would be committed in the following scenarios:

- the parents or guardian of a minor provides the minor with alcohol, in a manner that is not consistent with responsible supervision of the minor
- a person who has permission from the parent or guardian of a minor provides the minor with alcohol, in a manner that is not consistent with responsible supervision of the minor
- a person who is not the parent or guardian of a minor provides the minor with alcohol and does not have permission from the minor's parent or guardian. In this case it will be irrelevant whether the supply of alcohol was consistent with responsible supervision of the minor.

The laws provide some guidance by explaining that the following factors are relevant to whether the supply of alcohol to a minor is consistent with the responsible supervision of the minor:

- the age of the minor
- whether the minor is consuming food with the liquor
- the level of supervision the supplier has of the minor
- the kind of liquor supplied to the minor
- the quantity of, and the time in which, the liquor is supplied to the minor.

The law also clarifies that the supply of alcohol to a minor who is intoxicated is NOT consistent with the responsible supervision of a minor.

The maximum penalty for this offence is \$3000.

To find out more about this offence, see www.justice.act.gov.au/supply-of-alcohol-to-minors

This guide's content was produced by Parenting SA, Women's and Children's Health Network.

© Department of Health and Ageing, Government of South Australia (revised 10/15). Reproduced with permission and adapted by the ACT Government to reflect Australian Capital Territory laws (11/17).

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

Published by ParentLink, Community Services Directorate
GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

e parentlink@act.gov.au
t 13 34 27

Looking for more information?

ACT Government Publication No. 17/0608 (November 2017)

ParentLink — for other parenting guides, online parenting information
www.parentlink.act.gov.au

Child and Family Centres — for parenting information and support
www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/childandfamilycentres

Raising Children's Network — covering topics for parenting newborns to teens
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

