



Establishing Rules About Alcohol Summary

Why Rules About Alcohol?

Whether it's discovering the liquor cabinet has been opened by your curious fifteen-year-old, arguing over attending a friend's unsupervised party with your sixteen-year-old, or your nineteen-year-old coming home with alcohol on their breath, establishing clear rules about alcohol can help your family prepare for dealing with challenges cooperatively while building essential skills in your teen.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Ask questions.
 - *"What are your hopes for your friendships?"*
 - *"What are you and your friends most interested in trying that's new and different?"*
 - *"Where do you like to hang out with your friends?"*
 - *"Does alcohol show up at parties with friends, and how do you feel about it?"*

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Learn together. Alcohol impacts a teen's growing body and brain differently than adults.
- Discuss values for family health and healthy development. Consider discussing the following questions:
 - *"What do we do to keep healthy (diet, exercise, preventative doctor visits)?"*
 - *"How do food and drinks fit into keeping your body healthy?"*
 - *"Do you take medication? For what and why?"*
 - *"What are the many substances that alter your body and brain?"*
 - *"How do those altering substances fit into a healthy lifestyle?"*
- Engage in a discussion about setting up rules about alcohol. You might ask: *"What might be some helpful rules we can stick to as a family?"*
- Change the conversation when your young adult turns 21. If you have a 21-year-old, change the conversation to focus on choices about the healthy and safe use and non-use of alcohol.

Trap Don't allow sipping alcohol for any person under 21 since it sends a clear message that authority figures feel drinking by teens is acceptable.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Try out the new rules before your teen experiences peer pressure, and they are in a high stakes setting.
- Identify with your teen their closest friend, and discuss the role of a safety buddy.
- Initiate the no-risk pick up.

Step 4. **Support** Your Teen's Development and Success

- Ask key questions to check in. *"How are the rules we've established? Are they reasonable to you? Are you struggling at all? Are the plans we set up, like your safety buddy, working out so far?"*
- Monitor their activities. Before they go out, be sure you know where they are going, who they'll be with, and how they are getting there. Verify when they'll be home. Offer the ride home. And, when they get home, be there to greet, hug, and discreetly check their breath.
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like, *"I noticed how you called me when you were uncomfortable. That's taking responsibility!"*
- Stay engaged. Be ready to talk when your teen is eager.
- Engage in further practice. If your teen shares struggles, explore how you can create additional plans to help them feel supported.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

Trap Don't create a situation where your rules are so tight, strict, and inflexible that you invite your teen's rebellion. Show that you value their opinions and are reasonable. Learn together about the risks so that you are revisiting rules as a team. Teens need to understand (and review) the importance of rules and why they are reasonable.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice small successes. *"I noticed you designated a safety buddy and got home on time. Yes! Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include hugs, high fives, and fist bumps as ways to appreciate one another.

Celebrate yourself for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your teen's success today and in their future!

Connect with other Montana parents about underage drinking and drugs at [LetsFacetMt.com](https://www.LetsFacetMt.com).

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2020). *Establishing Rules About Alcohol Summary. Ages 15-19*. Retrieved from <https://www.ParentingMontana.org>.



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