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Mac OS X

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Hardware

Software

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Developer

Where to Buy

Apple Learning Interchange

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[Handouts for Parents](#)

Teenage Parties & Parent's Homework

When your teen or preteen children ask to attend a party/activity, it is time for you to do your homework. Discuss your rules for parties and activities with your children even before the invitations come. If they know what you expect of them and that you will enforce the rules, problem situations will often be avoided.

Your children, for example, should know that they must inform you about where the party/activity will be held and give you the names, addresses, and telephone numbers necessary. This rule should apply not only to scheduled parties, but parties that seem to evolve informally. Sometimes the location of a party changes; your children should know that they must inform you of this change. The bottom line is that you should know where and with whom your children are all the time.

You should always get in touch with the parents/others who are sponsoring the party/activity. With a phone call, you can find out more about the party/activity and check on chaperoning assuring yourself that a responsible adult be there will to actively supervise. You might want to offer your assistance with party supervision. At times teens and preteens will decide they want to have an impromptu sleepover after a party/activity. In this situation, you should talk with the host adults finding out if they want the children to stay and if there

will be adult supervision for the children at the sleepover.

Before your children are allowed to attend a party/activity, you should be as certain as possible that those attending will not have access to alcohol, smoking, or drugs and that the sponsors of the party will not permit alcohol, smoking, or drugs at the party. Talk with your children about party/activity behavior and what to do if drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol are present. It is best if your children know what to expect at a party/activity and how to deal with peer pressure. Remind your children, in addition, that although they may be enjoying a party/activity and think that there are no problems, that neighbors may object to noise levels present at teen and preteen parties/activities.

Specific arrangements should be made beforehand about how your children will get home from parties/activities and when they must be home. Children should know who will pick them up, whom to call, with whom they are to ride, etc. If any problems arise, they should know how to contact you or another responsible adult who will provide transportation. If your children are old enough to drive on their own to parties/activities, you should set expectations for car use such as safe driving rules, offering rides, who may drive the car, where the car may be taken, etc.

An emphasis upon polite behavior at parties/activities is important. Talk with your children about the responsibilities that adults/other parents have in chaperoning parties/activities. Encourage your children to offer to help during the parties/activities and to thank the sponsors for giving the party/activity.

If you are giving a party or hosting an activity at your home, set expectations about the party/activity with your children. Decide who will be invited, remembering not to leave out a few students in a class. When most of the students in a class are invited, this causes problems for the ones who are left out. Talk about the activities, food, and drinks during the party. What happens at the party should not be a surprise to you. Well-planned parties packed with activities generally result in fewer problems. During the party, make sure to provide direct supervision. This doesn't mean looking over each child's shoulder all the time, but instead being close enough to know exactly what is going on. Even with older students, you need to be there. Staying upstairs while a party is happening downstairs, for example, is not a good idea. With careful planning and expectations set, your children's parties and activities should be a big success.

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