

Tips for Parents: Teen Curfews

Many parents find themselves fighting a constant battle with their teens about curfew. Often, teens see curfew as a barrier to exercising their growing independence. Parents see curfew as a way to keep kids safe and out of trouble.

If you're fighting regularly with your teen about curfew, there is a better way. Have a family meeting and calmly discuss the issue. Explain, without lecturing, why curfew is important. Then, work with your teen to develop a contract about curfew that you both can accept.

Take into consideration the teen's age, responsibility, and maturity. A kid that does well in school and has a history of making good choices should be allowed to stay out later than one who gets into trouble or skips homework. You should also consider how much sleep your teen needs. Growing teenagers require more sleep than they did in their pre-teen years but often get less. This results in chronically overtired kids that are grumpy, argumentative, and have a hard time concentrating in school.

Here are some more tips for curfew success:

- Develop a contract as soon as your child is first able to go out alone. This way, when they get older, the practice will have already been established and they'll be less likely to fight it.
- Write clear consequences for missing curfew in the contract, and stick to them.
- Tell your teen that you know that they will make good choices, and give them the opportunity to show that they can be responsible.
- Decide if there will be a grace period, and avoid likely arguments by setting every watch, clock, and cell phone in the house to the same time.
- Make adjustments to the curfew as your child matures.
- Find out if your town has a curfew, and require your child to be home at least 15 minutes before. The extra time allows for delays that might come up.
- Never negotiate an exception to curfew when your teen is away from home, and don't allow them to sleep over at a friend's house unless it has been preplanned and you have made certain that they will be supervised by a responsible adult. Last minute changes are often good indicators that your teen is getting into a trouble situation.
- Don't let them leave the house without telling you where they'll be and who they'll be with. Give them a cell phone and require that they check in every so often and when plans change.

All kids, even teens, need limits to feel secure. The key to success is including your teen in the decision making process and balancing the limits with demonstrated responsibility.

For more information:

Tips for Parents: Discipline—Lovingly in Charge.

<http://www.thelearningcommunity.us/files/DOC101.pdf>

Watching the Clock--How to Negotiate and Enforce Curfews

<http://www.teenagerstoday.com/resources/articles/archive/curfew.htm>

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