

2nd Edition



Party Rules:

A guide for parents of young people

Alcohol and under 18s –
understanding the law in Tasmania

Alcohol and young people

Teenage parties are part of growing up. With any party involving alcohol, there are risks. Whether you're hosting a party at home or your young person is attending a party, the best way to manage the occasion is to talk to them and plan the event. Good open communication is the key to ensuring a safe night for everyone.

If you can have frank discussions about what your young person might encounter on nights out, you can encourage them to work out ways to deal with them safely.

Alcohol is the most widely used social drug in Australia. Even so, young people are leading the way in living alcohol-free lives. The majority of under 18 year olds have either never used alcohol, or consume very little.

As teenagers grow up, their use of alcohol and other drugs often develop to be more like that of their family and friends. Peer preference (choosing one role model over other role models) can be a potent force for, and against, safe behaviour.

As a parent/guardian it's OK to ask questions about your young person's whereabouts, what they are doing, and whom they are with. Young people need freedom and opportunities to be independent, but as a parent/guardian you have a right to be concerned about their safety and you can provide valuable guidance.

This provides a positive influence in their development and decision-making.

Explain to them that it is better to be prepared with some forward thinking, than to be placed in a compromising situation that makes reasonable and sound decisions difficult.

“There is no safe level of consumption of alcohol for anyone under 18 years.”

(Current National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks for Drinking Alcohol)

The Tasmanian Law

It's important that you understand the Tasmanian law regarding the supply of alcohol to under 18s. These laws provide greater control for parents/guardians over a young person's consumption of alcohol.

You are breaking the law in Tasmania if you supply a person under 18 years of age with alcohol on private property without the consent of his or her parent/guardian.

Responsible adults who can supply alcohol to young people are:

Parents/guardians of young people (including step-parents or anyone with parental rights and responsibilities)

OR

An adult who has permission (written or electronic is best) from each young person's parent/guardian stating they can drink alcohol.

If you're the responsible adult at a private property, apart from having permission from parents/guardians, you must also:

- supervise the party
- not be intoxicated
- ensure the young people don't become intoxicated
- supply non-alcoholic drinks and food
- be aware of the age of the young people, and how much and what type of alcohol they are consuming.

What does being 'intoxicated' look like?

Intoxicated means being under the influence of alcohol, another drug or a combination of drugs.

Signs of intoxication include:

- changes in mood
- loss of coordination
- clumsiness
- confusion
- slurred speech
- glazed eyes

Eat something first – if you will be drinking, food will slow down the absorption of alcohol.

Have a plan for the night – work out where you're going, how you're getting there, whether you want to drink and how many drinks you'll have. Talk to your folks about when you plan to be home, how you'll get home, and what you'll do if you need help.

Don't drive if you've been drinking or taking drugs, and don't get into the car with anyone who's been drinking or taking drugs.

Look after your mates – stay together with your friends, especially while walking late at night or catching public transport. If friends start showing the effects of drinking, encourage them to switch to non-alcoholic drinks, keep them out of trouble and make sure they get home safely.

Go out and have fun, but stay safe and look out for your mates.

Stay safe – be aware of how you're feeling during the night. If you're intoxicated there's more chance you'll make lousy decisions.

Ensure you have ID and money, and that your mobile phone is charged.

If you feel unsafe or unwell, ask for help. Call a trusted adult who will come and get you without question.

Young people planning a good night out

Standard drinks

Your body takes one hour to process the alcohol in one standard drink; a young person's body takes one and a half hours to process a standard drink.

Try to stick to one standard drink for each hour and a half rather than waiting until you feel affected.

One in two Australians aged 15–17 who get intoxicated will do something they regret.

In an average week, 70 Australians under 25 will be hospitalised due to alcohol-caused assault.

Each week, four Australians under 25 die due to alcohol related injuries.

(www.drinkingnightmare.gov.au)



100ml wine
Wine at 12% Alc/Vol



285ml full-strength beer
10oz full strength beer
4.9% Alc/Vol



30ml nip of spirits
Spirit 40% Alc/Vol

Talking things over

Find out the facts about drinking, drug use and sex, and discuss your young person's attitudes to these things. Help them weigh up the pros and cons of each, and discuss how they will handle situations where they feel pressured about drinking.

The National Health and Medical Research Council published the *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* in 2009.

These guidelines for young people under 18 years of age state that:

- Children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking ... for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.
- Risky behaviour is more likely among drinkers aged 15–17 years than older drinkers. If drinking does occur in this age group, it should be at a very low-risk level and in a safe environment, supervised by adults.
- Alcohol may adversely affect brain development and lead to alcohol-related problems later in life.

Risky and high risk drinking during early adulthood may have serious longer-term consequences, such as brain damage, including the inability to learn and remember things.

(www.drinkingnightmare.gov.au)

As a parent or guardian you have the right to be concerned about a young person's safety. It's important to help young people to make plans and think through their decisions so they can feel safe.

Parents/guardians might like to ask their young person:

- Where they are going, who with and what time they plan to be home. Ask for the phone numbers of their friends and parents in case of an emergency.
- Do they have identification, in case of an emergency?
- Do they have money to get home and a working mobile phone?
- How are they getting home? Do they need transport? Are they travelling with a designated driver? Are they staying overnight? If something goes wrong, what is their backup plan?
- Do they plan to drink?
 - Discuss what one standard drink is, and the idea of it taking at least an hour and a half for one standard drink to leave your body
 - If they, or their friends, are driving and on their Ls or Ps, remind them that the driver's blood alcohol level must be zero when driving
 - Encourage them to eat before leaving home – this will slow the rate at which the alcohol is absorbed into their systems
 - If they're going to a friend's house and there will be alcohol there, contact the parents and let them know if you do or don't give permission for your young person to drink at their party. If you haven't seen an invitation, ask for the details regarding start and finishing times, location, alcohol restrictions etc
 - Encourage them to limit their drinking and stick to it
 - Talk about spacing out their drinks, eating and avoiding shots, shots and top-ups
 - Remind them not to leave their drinks unattended
 - Remind them there is no safe level of alcohol consumption and if they choose to consume alcohol they should do so while you or another responsible adult is present

Ask them to think about situations they may confront during a night out or at a party, such as drink spiking, assaults, unwanted sexual advances, binge drinking, excessive alcohol consumption, and the possibility of other drugs being offered.

Asking them to explore how they would look after their friends in these situations is an excellent way of providing a safe means of discussion.

Party at your house

Here are our suggestions for how you can stay within the law, ensure everyone is safe and host a great party.

Considering the responsibility that comes with hosting a party with alcohol for young people, you might decide to have an alcohol-free party.

If you agree to have alcohol at your party...

You must obtain permission from the responsible adult (parent/guardian) for each of the young people attending who will be drinking, if your party is in your home. This can be written, verbal or electronic, but it must be legitimate and reliable.

As well as gaining permission, you must also supervise the party if you are the responsible adult. You are not to be intoxicated and must ensure the young people do not become intoxicated. It's important that you supply non-alcoholic drinks and food, and you are aware of what type of alcohol is being consumed.

“We decided not to allow alcohol. I didn’t want the responsibility for other people’s teenagers.”

Parent comment

Planning your party

Send out invitations that clearly describe:

- start and finish times
- your contact details (as the responsible adult)
- whether guests can stay the night, or what their transport options are if they've been drinking and can't drive.

Tip: Even ‘closed’ Facebook events can be easily shared through social media, resulting in gatecrashers attending your party. To keep control of the guest list, send it by email or preferably in hard copy.

If alcohol is allowed:

Parent/guardian permission is required by phone, letter or in person if the young person wants to attend the party. This is required under Tasmanian legislation.

If a young person doesn't have permission from his/her parents you will be breaking the law by letting them drink at your party.

Work out a plan beforehand for handling this and communicate this to those attending the party.

“No Facebook invitations. That was our rule. We’ve heard too many stories of parties getting out of hand with gatecrashers turning up. Even when the party is on a closed Facebook page it can still be shared. And we capped the number of guests too, and checked names at the door.”

Parent comment

Before the party

- Decide on the number to be invited
- Send out invitations
- Get parent/guardian permission for under-18s to drink
- Register the party with police 7 days prior to the event
www.police.tas.gov.au/services-online/party-safe/
- Tell the neighbours the start/finish times of the party
- Invite some other adults along to help out
- Put food and drinks on the shopping list
- Print out some signs if there are off-limits parts of the house
- Print signs for anything else, for example, smoking areas or where recycling items should be placed
- Prepare sleeping area, if guests are staying over (and perhaps ask them to bring sleeping bags)

Other ideas:

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On the night

- Print a guest list for someone to tick off as guests arrive
- Put a first-aid kit in a handy spot
- Put out plenty of rubbish bins
- Mark out a smoking area (if required)
- Put up signs for off-limits areas of the house
- Set up eskies or sinks with plenty of ice for drinks, including lots of non-alcoholic drinks
- Lay out snacks, other food and napkins
- Put out some cleaning supplies for any accidents
- Display numbers for local taxis and/or bus timetable information

Emergency numbers:

000 | for emergency police, ambulance or fire services

131 444 | for non-emergencies – Police Assistance Line

1800 333 000 | to anonymously report a crime to Crime Stoppers

“At my son’s 17th birthday party I told him the rules were like a music festival: No backpacks or bags of alcohol. No illegal drugs or cigarettes. No pass outs – if guests left the party they weren’t allowed back in. Most of the young people understood those rules.”

Parent comment

Planning the party

Plan the party together with your young person. Negotiate rules about alcohol and tobacco use and make your ‘no illegal drugs’ position clear. (As the responsible adult, you are liable if alcohol and other drugs are supplied at your home.)

Two weeks before:

- Inform your neighbours about the party and the start and finish times. Ask if they can help.
- Register the party with the police 7 days before the event. They won’t come and check on your party. This information simply means they can respond quickly if required.
- Organise other adults to help with supervising the party.
- Make up the guest list and check who has permission to attend.

“We made it clear to our kids that anyone turning up drunk or high wouldn’t be allowed in. Knowing we’d be responsible if anything happened, we figured it wasn’t worth the risk.”

Parent comment

During the party

To keep things safe and ensure you’re acting responsibly, here are some suggestions for the night:

- Have an adult with the guest list at the door – ensure you can identify underage guests whose parents have given permission for them to consume alcohol

You may choose to supply and serve the alcohol so you can ensure only those young people with their parent’s/guardian’s permission are drinking. Then you can see what is being consumed.

- Suggestions for monitoring the amounts of alcohol that might be consumed:
 - Nominate the maximum number of alcoholic drinks each person can bring (depending on the alcohol content)
 - Ask party-goers to leave the alcohol they bring in a central position such as an esky or in the kitchen so you can keep an eye on their consumption
 - Personally serve alcohol you have purchased or that party-goers have brought
- Serve substantial food and make non-alcoholic drinks available
- Provide entertainment so that alcohol isn’t the main focus of the evening
- Show guests where they may smoke, if you decide to allow smoking
- Have a first-aid kit handy and the numbers of emergency services, just in case
- Have a few other adults helping to keep a discreet eye on things during the night – ask them to refrain from drinking so they’ll be ready to respond if needed
- Keep an eye out for aggressive or antagonistic (violent) behaviour and intervene as soon as possible
- Provide plenty of rubbish bins and keep a keen eye out for broken glass.

After the party

- Finish the party at the agreed time, giving a warning a half-hour beforehand
- Start organising guests to arrange taxis half an hour or more before the finish time
- Ask your guests to leave quietly to avoid disturbing the neighbours – ask your supervising adults to stand outside on the street to assist with crowd and noise control
- Don't let guests take alcohol out into the street
- Help people make safe arrangements for getting home. **Remember: young people who have learners or provisional licences must have a blood alcohol level of zero.** Be willing to contact parents for young people who need to be picked up, or, if possible allow them to stay the night at your place. If they stay over they can help you clean up.

“I’ve heard of parties where young people are turning up with bottles of booze or ‘goon bags’ [cask wine bladders] and using funnels to pour alcohol into their mouths. That’s totally not on at our place. Someone could die. Drink games and shots are the same – not happening!”

Parent comment

“I confiscated a couple of bottles of spirits at our last party and rang the girls’ parents. They know I’m serious now.”

Parent comment

Safety zone

Intoxication

It is your responsibility to ensure that young people do not become intoxicated. This includes ensuring they have not pre-loaded (consumed alcohol before arriving), and have not been accessing more alcohol than they were permitted. Remember there is no safe level of alcohol intake for people under 25.

What to do if someone has too much to drink

- If someone is intoxicated only time will sober them up. Coffee and cold showers won't help. It takes at least one and a half hours for the alcohol from one standard drink to leave the average person's body
- Ask what they've had to drink, and whether they've taken any other drugs or medication – some medical conditions have symptoms similar to intoxication
- Stop providing alcohol – encourage the person to drink water and eat something
- Let the person rest in a safe, quiet place
- Enable them to sleep it off, however do not leave them alone. Listen for snoring as this may indicate breathing difficulties. Alert their parents.
- Drivers under 18 will be on their Learners or Provisional Licence and must not drive with any alcohol in their system, so help them find a safe way home, or let them stay the night.

Excess alcohol consumption

Alcohol can lead to brain damage and even death.

If a person shows any of these signs:

- confusion, stupor
- vomiting
- seizures
- slow breathing (less than eight breaths a minute)
- irregular breathing (a gap of more than 10 seconds between breaths)
- blue-tinged skin or pale skin
- low body temperature (hypothermia)
- unconsciousness ('passing out'), and can't be roused.

Call 000 for an Ambulance, or take them to a hospital emergency room immediately.

Act immediately and do not allow the situation to become worse. Don't leave the person alone and don't assume they will sleep it off. Alcohol can continue to be released into the bloodstream after a person has stopped drinking.

The majority of Australians are aware that underage alcohol consumption can affect the developing brain (75%), can lead to problematic drinking later in life (69%), can increase the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour (67%), can result in injury (62%) and can result in death (51%)

FARE Alcohol Poll 2013

Drugs

If you suspect people possess, are supplying or using illegal drugs at your home, ask them to leave immediately.

Violence

If party guests become violent, try to calm them down, separate the arguing parties, ensure other party-goers are safe and ask the trouble makers to leave. If it's an emergency, call 000.

Medical emergency

For any medical emergency, call an ambulance, apply first aid and stay with the person. If they're unconscious lie them on their side, check their airway, breathing and pulse.

“[at our daughter’s 18th birthday party] some of her friends were still 17. Their parents said they could drink so I told them they could each bring only two cans of beer and I made them put them into an esky. The party wasn’t about drinking – it was about a birthday celebration.”

Parent comment

More information

Emergencies

Call 000 if you urgently need help from police, ambulance or fire services.

Support and questions

If you're worried your party might get out of hand or you're not sure of your responsibilities:

Call Tasmania Police on: 131 444

To anonymously report a crime, call Crime Stoppers on: 1800 333 000

Information about drugs and alcohol

For more information about alcohol and other drugs, and how to talk to young people about these subjects, you can talk with an educator at the Drug Education Network on 1300 369 319, or visit www.den.org.au

Legislation

The *Sale or Supply of Alcohol to Youths (Police Offences Act 1935)* legislation regulates the supply of alcohol to people under the age of 18 years, on private property. This legislation supports a reasonable approach by parents, guardians and other adults with parental rights who choose to supply young people with alcohol.

Find out more at: www.police.tas.gov.au/services-online/party-safe/

Watch these clips

www.teendrinkinglaw.vic.gov.au/parents/find_out_more_resources.php

Sale and supply of alcohol to youths: – https://youtu.be/HL_wRTvJxcQ

“Registering our party with the police was the best thing I did. A couple of the boys got rowdy outside after the party and I was worried they’d end up fighting. The police came along and quietly moved them along.”

Parent comment

Notes

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**“When did drinking become the main event?
Parties used to be about having fun with other people.
I want my sons and daughter to experience that.”**

Parent comment



Supported by:



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Almost 60% of students aged 12-17 don't drink. They prefer to take part in exercise, playing sport, studying, pursuing interests and hobbies, and having fun with friends.