

Prom *Tip Sheet* for Parents

12 THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOUR TEEN PREPARES FOR THIS MILESTONE EVENT

1. Check your own prom baggage.

Before you talk to your teen, reflect on what prom brings up for you — your memories, expectations, hopes, or disappointments — so they don't shape the conversation more than your teen's reality.

7. When feelings get hurt, resist the urge to jump in and “fix” things.

Rejection, exclusion, or disappointment are painful but normal. Validate your teen's feelings (“That sounds really hard”) and ask what support they need instead of intervening.

2. Expect prom to look different than it did for you.

Teens may go with friends, attend in groups, or skip traditional dating norms entirely. Avoid assumptions about gender roles, relationships, or social expectations.

8. Explain the “why” behind your safety rules.

Teens are more receptive when they understand that rules around curfew, substances, or supervision are about safety and trust, not control.

3. Be aware of promposals — and the pressure they can create.

Some teens love grand gestures; others feel stressed by them. Talk with your child about how much (or how little) they want to participate.

9. Make yourself part of their safety net.

Let your teen know they can call or text you anytime if plans change or something feels wrong. Emphasize that their safety matters more than them avoiding consequences in the moment.

4. Know that school rules may shape the experience.

Dress codes, rules about transportation, and promposal restrictions can vary widely. Help your teen understand their school's specific expectations and plan around them.

10. Support independence while staying available.

Prom is part of your teen's transition to adulthood. Offer guidance and reminders — “Remember to buy your ticket by Friday!” — but let them take the lead whenever possible.

5. Discuss spending as part of broader decision-making.

Prom expenses can add up quickly. Use prom prep as an opportunity to talk about priorities, tradeoffs, and generally making thoughtful financial choices — skills that matter far beyond prom night.

11. Prepare for emotional ups and downs.

Teens may feel excited, disappointed, anxious, or letdown before or after prom. All of these reactions are common and deserve empathy.

6. Remember that prom drama often plays out online.

Group chats and posts about outfits and after-party plans can amplify comparison and hurt feelings. Encourage your teen to take pre-prom breaks from social media if it's making them feel excluded or anxious.

12. Keep the milestone in perspective.

Prom can feel like a huge deal when it's happening, but it's just one moment in a much fuller life. Helping your teen see the bigger picture reduces pressure and supports emotional balance.



Prom *Conversation* Guide

Whatever your teen's expectations are for prom, you want to make sure you're on the same page — and that means having conversations where you aren't talking past each other. Here are some suggestions on how to talk to your teen about spending, staying out late, and other potentially tough topics.

CONCERN	GOAL	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Budget	Avoid overspending and teach financial responsibility	"What is it about that dress that's special? If you want to spend more on it than we budgeted, we can talk about where the money will come from — maybe you can pay for part of it from money you've earned."
Transportation safety	Make sure your teen has a clear, safe plan	"Who are you riding with, and what's the plan for getting home? I want to make sure you always have a safe ride — and you can call or text me anytime if plans change."
Photos and social media	Encourage thoughtful online behavior	"Pictures last a long time. Let's talk about what kinds of photos you feel comfortable sharing and what you'd rather keep private."
Curfew	Create clear expectations	"Your curfew is usually X o'clock. Since prom is a special night, we can talk about a slightly later time."
Drinking alcohol	Make sure your teen is informed	"I know alcohol may be around. Let's talk about how you'll handle it and how to stay safe. Don't accept a drink from strangers. And let's discuss how you'll get home if the person who is supposed to drive you is drunk."
Saying no to drinking or drugs	Help your teen feel confident communicating their choices	"It can help to have something ready to say if you feel pressured. If you don't want to do something, you can have an excuse ready, like, 'I'm on medication' or 'My parents are super strict, I can't.'"
Sexual activity	Create an opening for a conversation	"Some teens feel pressure around prom to take steps they're not ready for. Are any of your friends planning to share a room with their date at the hotel? If so, can we talk about what you're thinking?"
After-parties	Set expectations about unsupervised events	"I know there may be after-parties. Let's talk now about what you're thinking about attending and what we both feel comfortable with."