5 Truths About Teens and Dating

**Understand Teen Dating Pitfalls**

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While the premise of teen dating is the same as it's always been, the way teens date has changed a bit from just a few decades ago. [Technology has changed teen dating](https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-technology-is-changing-teen-romance-2608931) and many parents aren't sure how to establish rules that keep kids safe. Here are five things every parent should know about the teenage dating scene:

**1. It Is Normal For Teens to Want to Date**

While some teens tend to be interested in dating earlier than others, romantic interests are normal during adolescence. Girls are more vocal about the dating interest and tend to be interested in a greater degree at a younger age, but boys are paying attention also.

There is no way around it; your teenager is likely going to be interested in dating. When he or she does, you’ll have to step up to the plate with some parenting skills and hold some potentially awkward conversations.

**2. Teens Lack Relationship Skills**

Your teen may have some unrealistic ideas about dating based on what she's seen in the movies or read in books.

Real life dating doesn't mimic a Hallmark movie. Instead, first dates may be awkward or they may not end up in romance.

Today's teens spend a lot of time texting and posting to potential love interests on social media. For some, that can make dating easier because they may get to know one another better online first. For those teens who tend to be shy, meeting in person can be much more difficult.

**3. Teens Whose Parents Talk to Them Are Better Prepared**

It's important to talk to your teen about a variety of topics, like your personal values. Be open with your teen about everything from treating someone else with respect to your values about [sexual activity](https://www.verywellfamily.com/teens-and-sex-2611299).

Talk about the basics too, like how to behave when meeting a date's parents or how to show respect while you're on a date. Make sure your teen knows to show respect by not texting friends throughout the date and talk about what to do if a date behaves disrespectfully.

**4. Your Teen Needs a Little Privacy**

Your parenting values, your teen's maturity level, and the specific situation will help you decide how much chaperoning your teen needs. Having an eyes-on policy might be necessary and healthy in some circumstances.

But make sure you offer your teen at least a little bit of privacy. Don't listen in on every phone call and don't read every social media message. Of course, those rules don't necessarily apply if your teen is involved in an [unhealthy relationship](https://www.verywellfamily.com/unhealthy-relationship-signs-in-teens-4065362).

**5. Your Teen Will Need Ongoing Guidance**

While it's not healthy to get wrapped up in your teen's dating life, there will be times when you may have to intervene. If you overhear your teen saying mean comments or using manipulative tactics, speak up. Similarly, if your teen is on the receiving end of unhealthy behavior, it's important to help out.

There's a small window of time between when your teen begins dating and when she's going to be entering the adult world. So you'll need to provide guidance that can help her be successful in her future relationships. Whether she experiences some serious heartbreak, or she's a heart breaker, adolescence is when teens learn about romance.

**Establish Safety Rules for Your Teen**

As a parent, your job is to keep your child safe and to help him learn the skills he needs to enter into healthy relationships.

As your teen matures, he should require fewer dating rules. But your rules should be based on his behavior, not necessarily his age.

If he isn't honest about his activities or he doesn't keep his curfew, he's showing you that he lacks the maturity to have more freedom (as long as your rules are reasonable).

Tweens and younger teens will need more rules as they likely aren't able to handle the responsibilities of a romantic relationship. Here are some general safety rules you might want to establish for your child:

* **Get to know anyone your teen wants to date.**If your teen's date pulls up and honks the horn from the driveway instead of coming in to meet you, make it clear that your teen isn't going on a date. You can always start by meeting a date at your home a few times for dinner before allowing your teen to go out on a date alone.
* **Make dating without a chaperone a privilege**. For younger teens, inviting a romantic interest to the house may be the extent of dating that is necessary. Or you can drive your teen and a date to the movies or a public place. Older teens are likely to want to go out on dates on the town without a chauffeur. Make that a privilege that can be earned as long as your teen exhibits trustworthy behavior.
* **Create clear guidelines about online romance.**Many teens talk to individuals online and establish a false sense of intimacy. Consequently, they're more likely to meet people they've chatted with for a date because they don't view them as strangers. Create clear [rules about online dating](https://www.verywellfamily.com/should-you-allow-your-teen-to-date-online-2608940) and stay up to date on any apps your teen might be tempted to use, like [Tinder](https://www.verywellfamily.com/what-every-parent-needs-to-know-about-tinder-2609052).
* **Know your teen's itinerary.**Make sure you have a clear itinerary for your teen’s date. Insist your teen contact you if the plan changes.
* **Establish a clear curfew.**Make it clear you need to know the details of who your teen will be with, where they will be going, and who will be there. [Establish a clear curfew](https://www.verywellfamily.com/advice-on-curfews-for-teens-2606170)as well. It’s important to know what your teen is up to when going out on dates.
* **Set age limits.**In some states, teens can date anyone they want once they reach 16, but in other states they don’t have that choice until they turn 18. But, legal issues aside, set some rules about the dating age range. There’s usually a big difference in maturity level between a 14-year-old and an 18-year-old.
* **Know who is at home at the other person's house.**If your teen is going to a date’s home, find out who will be home. Have a conversation with the date’s parents to talk about their rules.
* **Discuss technology dangers.**Sometimes, teens are tempted to comply with a date’s request to send nude photos. Unfortunately, these photos can become public very quickly and unsuspecting teens can have their reputations ruined quickly. [Establish clear cellphone rules](https://www.verywellfamily.com/establishing-cell-phone-rules-for-teens-2609120) that will help your teen make good decisions.