



Toolkit for Parenting Teenagers
Tip Sheet #6: Establishing Rules

It can be difficult to adjust household rules as a child emerges into the teenage years. Parents try to balance guidance and freedom when setting particular expectations for their teen. Rules can be a good indicator of maturity in a teen; if they struggle to follow the rules it may be a sign that they aren't ready for the responsibility, and if they are able to follow the rules than they may be ready for more independence. Here are some rules to consider:

1. **Work-** Homework and chores are often jobs that teenagers try to avoid the most. Establishing a time to do homework or connecting a privilege to chores can encourage them to complete everything in a timely manner.
2. **Free Time-** While teens deserve a break, it is important to make sure that their spare time is spent productively. Try to set limits on how long your teen is allowed to use electronics. Encourage your child to pick up a hobby or sport.
3. **Money-** Show your teen how to budget and manage their money. Set rules on how much they need to save and show them how to make good choices when spending.
4. **Honesty-** Set rules that encourage honesty. Make consequences more severe if your teen attempts to lie to cover up his or her tracks. Consider rules that discourage lying (even for friends), cheating on homework, and following other rules.
5. **Curfew-** Set a clear curfew time and explain the importance of safety to your teen. As age and responsibility increases, consider extending the time.
6. **Drugs and Alcohol-** Set a drug and alcohol-free policy. Inform your teen about the realities of these substances and why abstinence is the best decision. Make sure the consequences are clear on what will happen if your teen is caught with or under the influence of these substances.
7. **Dating-** Tell your teen that their safety is your main priority. Set clear rules about what activities are allowed and how much contact is acceptable.