



## Setting Ground Rules for Dating

For your activity this week, we would like you to have a discussion with your teen about ground rules for dating. When you think about ground rules, it is probably best to think about two types- firm and flexible. Firm rules are those that are non-negotiable. These are ground rules that relate to safety or values that are important to you. Flexible rules are ones that can change as your teen matures and demonstrates their ability to follow the rules. Your teen also can request to change a flexible rule (e.g., asking for a later curfew to attend a special event). In setting dating rules, you want to try to balance being fair with ensuring that your teen stays safe and that your teen understands your family values in relation to dating.

Here are some suggestions to help you in developing and discussing dating ground rules with your teen.

### Firm rules

“If you want to date, I have some firm rules that you need to follow. These are rules that are set and which you cannot ask to change. These rules are in place to keep you safe when you date and because I care about you. There are also rules that reflect our values as a family (if this is the case).”

Examples of firm rules:

- You cannot date anyone who is more than two years older than you.
- I need to meet your date in person before you can see them.
- You need to tell me where you are going when you are on a date.
- You can call any time and ask to be picked up, no questions asked.
- You cannot get in a car with a date who has been drinking/using drugs.

If your teen asks why you have a certain rule, you can explain your belief about the risks of the situation (e.g., an individual who is three years older than you is an adult and could take advantage of you or pressure you to do things you are not ready for). You also could explain how this rule relates to your particular culture or values.

### Flexible rules

“I also have some dating rules that are flexible rules. These are rules that are important but can change. There are two ways in which a flexible rule can change. The first is if you show that you are able to date safely and follow the rules, then I can change one or more of these rules. The second way is for you request to change one of these rules, either one time, such as for a special occasion, or permanently.”

Examples of flexible rules:

- You need to be home at X time on weeknights.
- You can only go on dates at public places.
- You can only go on group dates.

Follow ups:



What questions do you have about these rules?

What are some ways you can show me that you are responsible enough to change one or more of the flexible rules?

What is the flexible rule you would like to show that you are responsible enough to have changed?

Do the firm rules make sense to you?

If you have already established dating ground rules for your teen, you can have a dating rule checkup instead. This is an opportunity to review your dating ground rules and discuss any changes you want to make, especially if your teen has been doing a good job following the ground rules.

Here are some examples of conversations you can have during this checkup.

-You have done a great job being home by curfew. Thank you for being respectful of the family curfew rule. Because you are older and have done so well with being back by curfew, I have decided to extend your curfew by one hour on weekend nights.

-You have done really well following the dating rules. I am so proud of how well you have done. I think you are still a little young to go on one-on-one dates, but I am now allowing you to text your dates until 9 pm on weekends.