

PROM GUIDE



Your Special Day

You work hard in the classroom, on the sports field and in the community. You bring home great grades and stay out of trouble — for the most part. It's time to focus on you.

Prom offers a chance to do just that, and for most students, will be an experience that only comes along twice in their lives. Fun and dancing during prom is followed by more fun — and more dancing — at the post-prom party, making it a night of liveliness, enthusiasm and excitement-filled activities.

Planning your special prom night is not the time to get flustered. So your budget has forced a change of plans in what hairstyle or dinner arrangements you can afford? Just go with it. The more time you spend stressing about the details, the less fun you'll end up having during a night that was created just for you.

START PLANNING EARLY

Many schools leave it up to individual classes to raise money for their proms. So what's wrong with starting as soon as you get to high school?

Bring up fundraising ideas to your homeroom teacher or student council to get the ball rolling. Car washes,

bake sales and cash prize raffles are great ways to secure funding that will supplement whatever the school has in its budget for your prom.

RENT A LIMO

One way to make prom the most memorable experience of your high school life is by pulling out all the stops. Renting a limousine is an expensive add-on, but one that could be funded by generous parents looking to make sure you arrive and depart from your destinations safely.

Look into local rental companies, many of which feature a suite of limos to choose from. There are traditional stretch limos or trendier SUV stretch limos — both of which will make sure you're riding in style all night long.

As with most aspects of prom, you'll want to make sure your limo company is focused on safety. Ask to see credentials, licenses and driving backgrounds when you're scouting for services. If the company is credible, it should be happy to provide this type of information to earn your business.



The Cost

How much do you think prom costs the average American family? \$400? \$500? \$600? Keep going. The average household spent \$978 in 2014 to send their son or daughter to prom.

A recent nationwide survey conducted by Visa reports that number is down over the past couple of years, including from 2013 when families spent more than \$1,100 on clothes, limousines, rentals, tickets and dinner. It is the first decrease in a few years. The average prom price in 2011 was only \$807.

FOOTING THE BILL

The reason behind the decline in prom costs may be coming from parents, who are realizing that the event is simply a dance and they don't have to spend like a celebrity for their sons and daughters to have a great time.

Still, parents said in 2014 that they were planning to cover more than half (56 percent) of prom costs, according to the Visa study, while their kids paid the remaining 44 percent. In 2013, parents said they would pay for 59 percent.

MOST EXPENSIVE STATES

In certain parts of the country — in states including California, Washington and Oregon — the average cost of prom can be as high as \$1,125, the Visa survey found.

The Northeast also had similar reported costs, at \$1,104. Midwestern and Southern families planned on spending the



© FOTOLIA

least, at \$835 and \$926, respectively, for the 2014 prom.

WAYS TO SAVE

Proms will likely never be

cheap. But they don't have to break the bank.

• **Start saving early:** If your child plans to attend prom her junior year, set a budget and start saving

every month when she's a sophomore. With small savings contributions over a period of time, you'll have the prom expenses squared away in no time.

• **Power in numbers:** One great way to save some extra cash is carpooling with a large group of friends. This can cut down on gas costs, as well as the overall limo bill.

Get in Shape

Everyone wants to look their best on prom night. A smart weight loss goal can be achieved safely and without the aid of unproven dietary supplements.

Like in all other cases, exercise and healthy eating habits are the two most effective ways of shedding the extra pounds.

Simply eating a healthy diet does not ensure that you will lose weight, which overall is a balance between the calories you take in and the calories you burn. You will lose weight if you eat a low-calorie diet in which you burn more calories than you take in.

Adding physical activity allows you to burn more calories, expediting the successful results of your weight loss plan.

GIVE IT TIME

Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and opt for fewer junk foods. Candy, chips and fast food can be high in calories, saturated fat, salt and added sugar. Choose water to wash down your healthy food options. Water has no calories, sugar or fat.

USE CAUTION

Crash-dieting or using potentially dangerous weight loss supplements are two of the worst ways of going about losing a little weight.

Some diet pills and restricted-calorie diets put the emphasis on forcing the body to eliminate more water. You may see a drop in your weight from these methods, but you won't be burning any fat.

Other supplements claim their ingredients speed up metabolism or suppress your appetite. For the most part, there is no reliable scientific research to back up their claims. Additionally, doctors consider diet supplements risky for teens because of their unknown impact on the growing body.

FIND FUN EXERCISE

Motivation is key to maintaining a regular exercise schedule. Setting a schedule is self-motivating because you'll have that appointment every day and won't want to let yourself down. Figure out a time that works well for you and stick with it.

Exercising doesn't have to be a chore. You have enough of those. Get your heart pumping doing something you enjoy. Play Frisbee with your dog. Turn up your playlist and dance an hour away. Involve your friends to make it an enjoyable experience every time.



Staying Safe

For far too long, prom night has gone hand in hand with teen alcohol-related car fatalities, sexual assaults and crime.

It doesn't have to be this way. Prom is a night that everyone can enjoy without mixing in the dangerous consequences related to drinking, doing drugs or engaging in sexual activity.

And for the most part, most prom participants return home safely with stories of fun and laughter. Some of the keys to making this happen are family communication and common sense.

TRAFFIC CONCERNS

Teen traffic deaths during prom season weekends are higher than at any other time of the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. One in three children under age 21 who died in alcohol-related accidents died during prom and graduation season.

This statistic should be a motivator for parents to talk with their children about staying safe on the roads during these high-traffic times of the year. Even if your child isn't the one drinking and driving, he could be a passenger with a dangerous driver behind the wheel, or he could be a safe driver at the mercy of an intoxicated driver sharing the road.

ALCOHOL & DRUGS

Unfortunately, sexual assault can

be a major issue at prom and post-prom parties. Most date rapes and sexual assaults against girls are alcohol- and drug-related, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A DHS national survey reported that 39 percent of high school senior boys considered it acceptable to force sex on a girl who is intoxicated by alcohol or high on drugs. This level of acceptance starts at home, with parents taking the brunt of responsibility for instilling values and good character in their children.

HOW TO STAY SAFE

Parents: Before prom night, talk to your child about how their entire evening will unfold. Come to a fair decision on curfew, remembering that you are ultimately in charge. Listen to your child's concerns and be willing to compromise if she has proven to be trustworthy in the past. And be sure to reinforce your trust and belief in her decision-making before she leaves.

Students: Don't be afraid to decline any offers from other students that will compromise your values. One night of getting in trouble, getting hurt or even worse is obviously not worth the pain it could cause your loved ones or the future goals it could cost you.



Skin & Hair Care

Prom is your day to go glam. That means loading up your look with jewelry, sparkle and glitz.

But don't forget that your skin and hair will have to live with your prom night decisions for months and even years to come.

Artificial tanning has been proven to be a dangerous activity, yet still teens decide to partake for the sake of looking darker for special events like prom. Additionally, dyes or chemicals in hair care products can cause discomfort or even serious injuries if not applied correctly.

Making sure you heed all warnings related to tanning and beauty care will ensure your safety and well-being on prom night and beyond.

HAIR TIPS

Are you having your hair professionally styled? Be sure to make your appointment weeks if not months before prom. This is the busiest time of year for hair salons and beauty boutiques. Go into your appointment with an idea of what you're looking for. You can bring in magazine examples or your phone with photos you found online.

If you happen to wait until the last minute are unable to find a stylist, check out online tutorials for DIY hair styles. Just make sure you have plenty of time to practice to see which style looks best on you.



© FOTOLIA

TAN SAFELY

When it comes to your skin, you should protect it from harm. This means avoiding indoor tanning and sunburns.

Artificial tanning or just a few serious sunburns can increase your risk for skin cancer later in life. While outdoors,

make sure you protect yourself from the harmful effects of UV rays and use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.

FOLLOW PRODUCT SAFETY

If you're changing hairstyles

or hair color, carefully follow all directions, cautions and warnings on the label. If you're unsure of how to apply a product, opt to have the service performed by a licensed professional. This may cost you a few extra dollars out of your budget, but you will be at a lesser risk of damaging

your hair.

For new makeup or creams, always test on a small area of your body first. Allergies can occur quickly. For some people, cosmetics may cause itching, redness, rash, sneezing or wheezing, so stop using the product if you experience any of these side effects.

All About the Shoes

“**B**eauty hurts” goes the old saying — one that rings true for many girls and their shoes on prom night.

Blisters and sores can quickly turn your special night from fun to painful, so it's important to know what your feet can handle before putting them through the rigors of a night filled with dancing, walking and working the crowd.

High heels may be in style, but they can increase your chances of falling if they're too high or you are unfamiliar with them. The best option will always be to choose shoe that won't affect how you walk or dance.

MATCHING YOUR DRESS

If you are wearing a simple gown without too much sparkle, you can jazz it up by adding a pair of fancy shoes. You can find a shoe with beading, sequins or shimmer to really tie the dress together with your other accessories.

If you've settled on a shiny dress, look for a shoe that will match its metallic appearance. Doing so will accentuate your dress much better than a plain gold or silver that will actually take away from it. Likewise for sparkles. The more sparkle in your gown, the better your shoes will match if they are filled with glimmer and glitz.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

It's important to remember that you won't simply be walking in your prom shoes but dancing as well. If you are wearing a shoe with a high heel, you may want to find an option with an ankle strap.

The straps will keep you secure and prevent you from slipping out of your shoe while you dance the night away. They also can give your feet the feel of extra support to help you if you're not used to walking or dancing in a high heel.

BACKUP PLANS

If you are afraid your feet will begin hurting before the first dance is over, that's probably a sign that you haven't selected a great shoe for you. Just in case, bring along a pair of fancier flip-flops or slippers. They're usually small and lightweight enough to fit into your purse, helping you make a subtle yet feet-saving switch.



Tips for Guys

Guys generally luck out when it comes to preparing for prom. Fancy hairstyles, French manicures and make-up? Nah! Slap on a nice tux and some hair gel and you're good to go.

But just because it's easier to be a guy around prom time doesn't mean you shouldn't be putting in great effort to make sure your night is one to remember.

Prom offers a chance for young men to look and feel their best. Even if dressing up isn't your thing, there are many ways you can still ensure a great time for you and your date.

BE A GOOD DATE

Chivalry is only dead if you don't put it into practice. And while charming to many, it may not be welcomed by all. Feel free to ask your date if you can take her coat or open the door. If she declines, at least you offered.

You also can go the extra mile by clarifying what type of flower arrangement she wants. Certain styles will complement different gowns, and your understanding of this can earn extra brownie points with your date.

BE HUMOROUS

Prom is all about fun. Going with a traditional tuxedo is all well and good — or you can choose to really make a statement.

Think top hat, cane and patent leather shoes to really push your outfit over the top. A colored vest paired with a traditional tux is a great way to mix fun with a classic style that will set you apart from the crowd.

BE BUDGET-MINDED

If cost is an issue, look for alternatives to spending a lot of money on your prom night. Expensive doesn't necessarily mean better when it comes to choosing your ideal outfit. Decide if your money would be better spent at dinner or buying your date a prom gift.

Don't be afraid to check out discount websites that carry designer attire for lower prices. Never count out big box stores, retail chains or even downtown clothing destinations for affordable formal wear.

