

# 7 Rules For Parents

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Drawing on the latest scientific studies of adolescents, Laurence Steinberg, a professor of psychology at Temple University, offers this advice for the parents of teens:

## 1. What You Do Matters

Many parents mistakenly believe that by the time children have become teenagers, there's nothing more a parent can do. Wrong. Studies clearly show that **good parenting continues to help teenagers develop in healthy ways**, stay out of trouble and do well in school.

## 2. You Can't Be Too Loving

**Don't hold back when it comes to pouring on the praise and showing physical affection.** There is no evidence that adolescents are harmed by having parents who are unabashedly loving — as long as you don't embarrass them in front of their friends.

## 3. Stay Involved

Many parents who were actively involved in their child's life during the early years withdraw when their child becomes a teenager. This is a mistake. **It's just as important for you to be involved now — maybe even more so.** Participate in school programs. **Get to know your child's friends. Spend time together.**

## 4. Adapt Your Parenting

Many parenting strategies that work at one age stop working at the next stage of development. **As children get older**, for example, **their ability to reason improves dramatically, and they will challenge you if what you are asking doesn't make sense.**

## 5. Set Limits

**The most important thing children need from their parents is love, but a close second is structure. Even teenagers need rules and limits. Be firm but fair.** Relax your rules bit by bit as your child demonstrates more maturity. If he or she can't handle the freedom, tighten the reins and try again in a few months.

## 6. Foster Independence

Many parents erroneously equate their teenager's drive for independence with rebelliousness, disobedience or disrespect. **It's healthy for adolescents to push for autonomy. Give your children the psychological space they need to learn to be self-reliant, and resist the temptation to micromanage.**

## 7. Explain Your Decisions

**Good parents have expectations, but in order for your teenager to live up to them, your rules and decisions have to be clear and appropriate.** As your child becomes more adept at reasoning, it's no longer good enough to say "Because I said so."

Laurence Steinberg's most recent book is *The 10 Basic Principles of Good Parenting* (Simon & Schuster)

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