



THE TEENAGE PHRASEBOOK

Q & A ON YOUTH AND ALCOHOL



IQ





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IQs mission is to promote a smarter, healthier attitude towards alcohol amongst Swedes. Our goal is a society in which alcohol is enjoyed, so that no one is harmed. Our ambition is that certain areas are completely free from alcohol – behind the wheel, at work, amongst pregnant women, children and youth. Find out more about IQ at iq.se.

This book contains numerous quotes from teenagers. All of the quotes are genuine, as are the ages and locations of the teenagers quoted. We have, however, changed all of the teenagers' names and the pictures do not show teenagers that have been quoted.

THE TEENAGE PHRASEBOOK

Q & A ON YOUTH AND ALCOHOL

ARE YOU AND YOUR CO-PARENT LIVING UNDER DIFFERENT ROOFS?

You can order copies of the book in Swedish, free of charge, at tonårsparlören.se

The entire book is also available in both Swedish and English
as well as an audiobook in Swedish.

KEEP THIS!

YOU MATTER – A LOT



The teenage years are a very special time in your child's life. Teenagers are navigating the frontiers between childhood and adulthood and there are a lot of new things to handle: school, friends, being allowed to stay out late, sex, parties and – not least – alcohol. And as if that weren't enough, many teenagers seem to have been cursed with parents who don't understand anything and who always do the wrong thing. Whatever they do...

But even if you, as a parent, feel pretty helpless sometimes, there's still a lot you can do. As always, you can show that you care, that you're there for them, and that you're happy to listen to them. And sometimes it's important to be clear about what you expect of them. Because teenagers definitely do care what their parents say – even if it doesn't always seem that way.

The Teenage Phrasebook has been produced in an attempt to make this period in your teenager's life easier – both for you and your teenager.

The Teenage Phrasebook is available in Swedish and audio-book, as well as a version in easy-to-read Swedish.

Kind regards, IQ



SUMMARY OF ADVICE FOR PARENTS

1

SHOW THAT YOU CARE.

Being thoughtful or talking about your feelings with your teenager is never a silly thing to do. If you're worried, tell them why.

2

BE INTERESTED AND LISTEN.

A good relationship is mainly about building trust. Show that you're interested in what your child is thinking and experiencing, and take them seriously.

3

TRUST YOURSELF.

Try to listen to yourself, to what you really think about this and that. As a parent, you have the right to do and decide what feels best for you.

4

BE CLEAR AND SET LIMITS.

The clearer you communicate your expectation, the easier it is for your teenager to take a stand or to do what you say.

5

HELP THEM SAY "NO".

Parents can be a huge support to their teenagers by giving them good arguments to use. Tell them that showing that you have a mind of your own and saying "no" to alcohol and other things, even when everyone else seems to be saying yes, is a sign of strength.

6

DON'T BUY OR OFFER TEENAGERS ALCOHOL.

Teenagers who get alcohol from their parents drink more. You can't teach your child how to drink alcohol in moderation. The only thing you're teaching them is to drink.

7

REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE A ROLE MODEL.

Think about the sort of message and values you're conveying to your child.

8

GET SUPPORT FROM OTHER PARENTS.

It can sometimes be helpful knowing how other families tackle arguments like "everyone else is allowed to" when it crops up in discussions with your teenager.

9

HAVE THE COURAGE TO LET GO.

Your teenager is exploring their slightly more adult identity. Be open to new things, and have the courage to let go of the reins. But show them that you're there for them and that you're happy to help them.

10

SHOW LOVE.

Your teenager needs to understand that you will love them, no matter what happens. Closeness and love mean a lot, however old your child may be.



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TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL

With some teenagers, it's easy to talk about anything and everything. With others, they simply mutter something inaudible and shut themselves in their room as soon as you open your mouth. And not all parents are the same either, come to that. But there is something that's true of all children, whatever they or you are like: children who have a close relationship with their parents and who know what their parents expect are the ones who do best.

BUILD UP A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP. A close relationship isn't something you build, just like that, over the course of an afternoon on the sofa. It's more about building confidence and trust over time and about accepting the relationship on the young person's terms. A lot of parents feel that their teenagers are shutting them out of their lives, but that's not actually the case. Parents are just as important as they ever were.

BE PERSONAL. The best way to win your teenager's confidence is to show them that you care, that you're interested in what they think and what they're going through. You can talk about your own experiences, but you don't have to go into detail. It shows that you know what it can be like and that you understand.

TALK ABOUT EVERYTHING. An important base for a close relationship is being able to discuss both the big and small things in life. Whether it's how their day went at school, what your child thinks about something, or how their friends are doing. Talking openly shows that you're interested. If you make it a habit to discuss things, it will make talking about alcohol and other potentially sensitive subjects – such as feelings, sex or other drugs – a lot easier.

TELL THEM WHY YOU'RE WORRIED. Simply forbidding things and telling children that they're not allowed to do something is not an effective approach. If they're going to listen to what you say, they need to understand why you're saying it. Explain why you're worried, how it feels to be a parent, and what you're afraid of. At the same time, knowing that boundaries exist and where they lie is obviously important to your child, and reassuring too.

AVOID CROSS-EXAMINATIONS. Try not to make a big thing of your teenager's attitude towards alcohol, or to worry yourself sick about it. Talk a bit about it from time to time and show them that you understand what it's like when their friends are pushing them to try it, for example. That'll help your child to talk about their own experiences. And don't assume that all young people, or your particular teenager, drink. But if you are worried, air your concerns together with your teenager, rather than launching some kind of cross-examination – all that will do is create a distance between you. And trust that your teenager will listen to your concerns.

*My parents don't talk to me about alcohol very much. The only thing they've said is, "Of course, you know it's wrong."
Johanna, aged 15, Umeå*

REASSURE THEM THAT IT'S OK TO TELL YOU THINGS. It's important that your teenager understands that you love them and want to be there for them, whatever happens. Children need to feel that they can be honest without their parents getting angry or throwing a fit. This might sound obvious, but it can actually be one of the hardest things about being a teenager's parent. On the one hand, you're worried about what might happen and really would prefer not to hear about drunken

parties. On the other hand, you'd probably like to know what's going on in your child's life. But you need to be prepared to handle the truth and your child needs to feel that they did the right thing by telling you.

“A teenager will listen to an adult who knows something and is happy to talk about it. It's as simple as that. They need the support that comes from the safety and security that an adult can provide and which they, themselves, lack.”

Bengt Grandelius, Reg. Psychologist and family therapist

WHEN YOU HEAR THINGS YOU'D RATHER NOT HEAR. When your teenager tells you what's happening, some of the things you find out about might be things you'd rather they hadn't experienced. Sit down with your child and tell them how worried you are. Try to stay calm and firm, so your child knows where you stand. Sometimes, that's not going to be possible, and it's OK to get upset for a little while. But even if you don't always manage to stay calm, your child will understand that you care.



WHY IS ALCOHOL HARMFUL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Most of us probably know that drinking a lot of alcohol isn't good for us. But what is perhaps less well known is why it's more dangerous to drink when you're young. Here are some of the biggest hazards associated with drinking in your teens.

YOUNG PEOPLE CAN SUFFER MORE PHYSICAL HARM. Even small amounts of alcohol have a negative effect on your judgement, cognitive ability, memory and reaction speeds. Alcohol damages your brain, whatever your age, but the fact that the brain is still developing up to around the age of 25 means that young people's brains are more sensitive. Body size plays a part, too. A small body contains less fluid with which to dilute the alcohol, which means you will get drunk more quickly.

“Young people's brains haven't finished developing, which means they're hit substantially harder by the harmful effects of alcohol than someone who starts drinking at a later age.”

Sven Wählin, Senior Physician, Stockholm Centre for Dependency Disorders

HARDER TO FORSEE CONSEQUENCES. Young people have an in-built urge to explore and to take greater risks, which is not only natural but, in many cases, a good thing. This is how your teenager tests their limits, develops new skills, and builds their self-esteem. It's how they become more independent and take more responsibility for their lives. But it also makes the teenage years a time when young people often take risks without thinking about the consequences. Most adults, for example, can see the consequences of their drinking. Young people find it harder to realise they're getting drunk, and they often get very drunk, very quickly. It can take only a few years for teenagers who drink heavily and frequently to become addicted. For adults, this process usually takes longer, because it can be easier to spot the warning signs and stop what they're doing.

IT CAN DAMAGE THEIR SELF-ESTEEM. As if it weren't enough that your body's developing at a fast rate in your teens, it's a delicate time for your personality, too. Your teens are when you develop your self-esteem – how you think about yourself and your sense of who you are, in other words. If you feel unsure and that you're only brave enough to do things like talking, flirting and having fun when you're drinking. There's a real risk that you that you will feel you have to get drunk to have the courage to do these things. Alcohol might initially feel, to teenagers, like a good way of boosting self-confidence and making things easier, but in the longer term, it has quite the opposite effect. It can make them avoid doing the sort of things they'd actually like to do but don't really feel they dare to – or make them do things more for other people's sakes than for their own.

*I get annoyed for a while when
my parents worry, but afterwards,
you realise it's because they care.
Jacob, aged 15, Umeå*

TEENAGERS CAN GET INTO TROUBLE. Alcohol and violence go hand in hand. Alcohol is involved in almost 6 out of every 10 cases of physical violence – either the perpetrator or the victim (or both) are intoxicated. The risk of all sorts of serious accidents increases, because when

you're drunk, your brain doesn't function as well as it usually does. Accidents involving falls, burns or drowning, to mention just a few examples. But alcohol can cause serious problems in relationships, too. Teenagers have told surveys that when they were drunk, they got into fights with their friends, had sex even though they didn't really want to, or been photographed in embarrassing or humiliating situations.

INCREASED RISK OF ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS. The risk of an accident increases when the non-sober driver has a blood alcohol concentration of just 0.2 promille. So even if your teenager isn't the one driving, it's important that they don't ride with a driver who's been drinking alcohol. 14 per cent of ninth graders state that they have done precisely that. And when it comes to fatal accidents, there are some statistics that should give you pause for thought. Just over one in every five people who die in road accidents do so in an alcohol- or drug-related accident, and that's true whether the accident involved cars or mopeds. Tell your teenager they should never ride with a driver who's been drinking. And if your child has a moped, it should be left at home if they're going to a party.

EARLY DEBUTANTS CAN HAVE PROBLEMS LATER IN LIFE. The vast majority of those who drink heavily in their teens cut down as they get older. But there's a risk that the drinking habits you acquire as a teenager stay with you throughout your life. There's also an increased risk that teenagers who drink alcohol also try other substances, such as tobacco or narcotics.



WHY DO TEENAGERS DRINK?

First and foremost, let's get one thing straight: every teenager is unique. Some haven't had a single sip of alcohol, some have given beer a try and others drink every weekend. But of those who do drink – and that's fewer than half of all ninth graders – there are some reasons that come up time and time again when asked why they drink.

BECAUSE YOU THINK IT'S EXPECTED OF YOU. There are a lot of unwritten rules about what you're supposed to do and how you're supposed to be. It can be hard to stand up for yourself when faced with other people's expectations – and that's true whether you're 14 or 44. And just like adults, teenagers naturally have their own norms, too. You might be worried that people will think you're weird if you don't drink on New Year's Eve or bring your own bottle to the party.

TO GIVE ADULTHOOD A TRY. When you're a teenager, you often want to feel like an adult, not a child. But if you think about it, there aren't that many adult things that teenagers can or are allowed to do – things like living in your own apartment, being paid a monthly wage, or studying at university. Alcohol, on the other hand, is one of all these adult things that teenagers can get hold of, and sometimes it's the desire to feel grown up that tempts teenagers to drink.

*You're scared that if you don't drink,
people will slag you off to others. Tell
them that you're boring, stuff like that.*

Petrus, aged 16, Gothenburg

TO BELONG. We were all young once, and maybe you remember that being a teenager was far from easy at times. As a teenager, you sometimes feel a little lost and alone, and more than anything else, you want to fit in. And that's when alcohol can seem very tempting, because it can help make you feel like "part of the gang". When other people are doing something, it's often easier to just go along and do the same thing too – much easier than daring to say "no."

BECAUSE IT SEEMS EXCITING. It's hardly surprising that teenagers are curious about alcohol. They've seen people drinking in films and TV programmes since they were young. And they've probably come across the odd drunken adult or two on Midsummer's or New Year's Eve. So one day, they might want to try it themselves – how it tastes, how it works, and how it feels to be drunk.

BECAUSE THEY DON'T FEEL GOOD . There's a clear link between mental health and alcohol. Young people who say they don't feel good about themselves drink more often and in bigger quantities than the rest of their age group. Among those who drink, there are also teenagers who end up feeling worse as a direct result of their drinking. If you're worried that your teenager is unhappy and is drinking, you'll find a list of organisations that offer more information and support, on pages 132-135.


FOR COURAGE. All this new friends, sex and intimacy thing can be sensitive subjects. And alcohol can feel like something that helps you take that first leap into the unknown. It can make you feel both a bit braver and a bit more attractive. And if it doesn't quite work out as you'd hoped, you can always blame the alcohol. Just like an adult.

BECAUSE IT SEEMS LIKE PART OF LIFE. TV shows and films show people drinking quite large amounts of alcohol with no particular ill effects. Young people are constantly being bombarded with pictures of fancy drinks at a Sunday brunch or wine glasses in the sunset on social media. And young people are exposed to alcohol advertising, too, because some alcohol producers try to influence potential customers even before they're allowed to buy alcohol, by advertising in places where young people can be found, like social media.

*You drink to try something
new and to see what it's like
being drunk.*

Adrian, aged 15, Umeå





SHOULD YOU OFFER YOUR TEENAGER A DRINK AT HOME?

Some parents try to eliminate the “forbidden fruit” aspect of alcohol by offering their teenager half a glass of wine with their dinner or a beer in the sauna. Others think it’s OK to allow their children to see what alcohol tastes like in the belief that they’ll find it revolting. No matter what you think is the best way to tackle this, the research findings are clear: by offering children alcohol, you’re telling them it’s OK to drink, even though they’re not adults. You can’t, in other words, teach youngsters how to drink alcohol in moderation by offering them a drink at home. The only thing you’re teaching them is to drink.

IT SENDS THE WRONG SIGNALS. The law does not prohibit you offering your own children a small quantity of alcohol if it’s done in a controlled manner. It’s not illegal, in other words, to offer your teenager a splash of wine at the dinner table. But even if the law says it’s OK, it sends your teenager the wrong signals. If you explain that alcohol can cause physical harm and that it’s actually dangerous, isn’t it going to seem a bit odd if you offer them a glass now and then? It can actually give the impression that you, as a parent, don’t care.

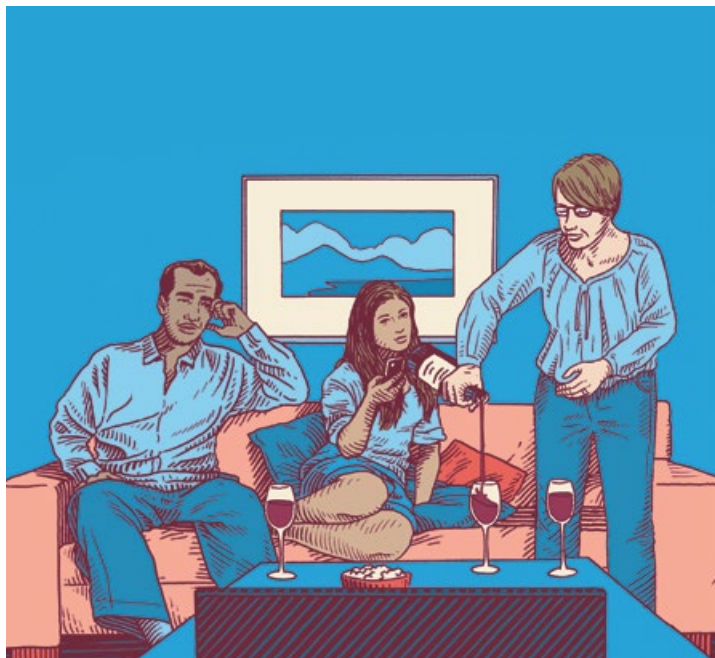
*My parents let me have a taste
when they’re drinking wine.
They don’t really mind that much.
They just laugh and think it’s fun.*

Majken, aged 15, Örebro

IT DOESN’T MAKE TEENAGERS DRINK LESS. Teenagers are seldom interested in a relaxed, moderate approach to alcohol. Teenagers who drink don’t do so to relax or because it tastes good. Young people primarily drink to get drunk. There is no research that shows that a teenager who drinks half a glass of wine at home drinks less when they’re out later that evening with their friends. There is, however, research showing that teenagers who are offered alcohol at home drink more in general. If you’re allowed to drink at home, it’s like a permission slip to drink when you’re out too.

YOUR ATTITUDE MATTERS. Your attitude is very important in determining whether your child drinks. One in every five ninth graders whose parents think it's OK for teenagers to drink alcohol binge drink alcohol every month. If you ask ninth graders whose parents say "no", fewer than 6 per cent get drunk that often.

STAND UNITED. Try to make sure that all of the adult members of the family have the same attitude towards offering teenagers alcohol at home. Come to an agreement with the other parent or the new partner as to where the boundary lies.



When my parents drink, I usually take a quick sip when they're not looking. Because that way, you know what it tastes like and can sort of get used to it.
Sanna, aged 15, Gothenburg




SHOULD YOU DRINK?

Teenagers will often say, "But you drink!" when you make it clear that they shouldn't. But the fact of the matter is that adults are allowed to drink alcohol and that teenagers below the age of 18 aren't. Just because your teenager isn't allowed to drive a car, it doesn't mean you shouldn't drive, and it's the same with drinking alcohol. Your attitude to alcohol will, however, affect the way your child views it. Just remember: you're a role model for your kids.

TALK ABOUT IT. Tell your teenager what you think about alcohol and drinking. Talk about why you drink and about why adults are allowed to drink but children aren't. And it's one thing to have a glass of wine, getting drunk is another. Regardless, talking about what to do in different situations is a good idea. You might, for example, want to decide that one member of the household will stay sober if your child is out. That can be good, if something were to happen and your teenager needed you to come and get them.

HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE AN ADULT. Be clear that teenagers shouldn't drink. The fact that adults do is a different matter, they're old enough to take responsibility for themselves. Don't give way because you're worried about a potential row, or because conflict makes you uncomfortable. You can show that you're willing to discuss the subject and help your child develop their own opinions. But you're the adult – which means your opinions are important and that you have to take responsibility by deciding what goes in your family.

GET HELP IF YOU NEED IT. Drinking habits can easily be passed on to the next generation. Children who grow up in families where alcohol is abused or is a problem are at risk, and their consumption is influenced both by their family's situation and genetic factors. If a family member is a problem drinker, help and support is available, both for the teenager and for the adult. Two useful websites are Alkoholprofilen.se and 1177.se. Through Alkoholprofilen you answer a few simple questions which in turn will give you a picture of your alcohol consumption levels. It's a test worth doing, and the results can be interesting for a wide range of reasons. You'll find tips about organisations you can contact for support and more information on pages 132–135.



SHOULD YOU BUY ALCOHOL FOR THEM?

A lot of children ask their parents to buy alcohol for them. And as a parent it can feel hard to refuse. Most parents want the best for their children, and would maybe like to show their teenager that they trust them. Or perhaps they think that doing this will prevent their kids from approaching illegal alcohol dealers. Sadly, it seldom works out that way. Here are some arguments that you might find helpful to tackle the situation.

TEENAGERS SAY IT'S WRONG. Surveys show that the majority of teenagers think that it's wrong for parents to buy alcohol for their children. It's not uncommon for teenagers to nag sometimes, to see where the boundaries lie, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they want their parents to give in to them. Because if you do, your teenager might well start to wonder what you're actually saying when you warn them about the harms of drinking alcohol but, at the same time, are willing to buy it for them. Setting rules and sticking to them is a way of showing you care. Breaking them can be interpreted as meaning that you don't care.

*Everyone knows someone who knows someone
who'll buy it for you. All they want is the money
- they don't care that you're too young.
Liv, aged 15, Gothenburg*

IT'S ILLEGAL. Selling alcohol to anyone under the age of 20 is, as you probably know, prohibited – unless they're being served in a restaurant or buying "folköl" (mid-strength beer), where the minimum age is 18. Anyone buying alcohol for minors can be fined or imprisoned, it's the person supplying a minor with alcohol who commits the crime, not the minor for whom it is bought.

IT'S NO GUARANTEE THAT THEY'LL DRINK LESS – QUITE THE REVERSE. A lot of adults think that they'll have better control of what their teenagers are drinking if they supply them with the alcohol. They think that a few ciders are better than a bottle of spirits. But teenagers' drinking is usually more about getting drunk than about sipping a cider. A teenager who's given a couple of bottles of beer or alcopop

by their parents is unlikely to be satisfied with that. It's more likely to be a bonus, given that they're planning to drink anyway. There is no evidence to show that young people avoid contacting illegal dealers, for example, just because their parents have given them a few beers.

OLDER SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS. Many young people have older friends, siblings, or other adults who'll buy alcohol for them. And it can be hard for them to refuse, even though most young adults believe it's wrong. This is where you, as a parent, can make a difference. Talk to the over-20s in your child's circle and help them say no. Tell them that you expect them to be adult enough to take responsibility. Together, you can present a united front.

EVERYONE ELSE'S PARENTS ARE NOT SAYING OK. Many parents are worried that their children will be left out. It's common for young people to believe that others are allowed to do things that they, themselves, are not. It's a concept that's called "majority misunderstanding". In reality, the vast majority of teens have the same discussions with their parents, and most parents are just as worried that their children will be excluded from the group. The answer is to talk to other parents and agree on what goes.





YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DON'T DRINK

It's almost impossible to find a parent who is OK with their child drinking alcohol. But at the same time, many people think that it's part of being young, which is a bit strange. Talking about drinking as a sort of phase that all youngsters go through is like saying that it's a natural part of their development. And it really isn't. Plus, nowadays, a lot of young people simply don't drink.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DRINKING LESS AND LESS. Both the amount of alcohol consumed on each occasion and the percentage of young people who have ever drunk at all are falling. And the number who drink a fairly large amount of alcohol every month has declined too. The number of ninth graders who have been drunk before the age of 14 has fallen from 20 per cent in 2000 to 5 per cent in 2020. It's good that we have been seeing this positive progress for some years now. But that doesn't mean that you, as a parent, can sit back and relax. Your job now is to make sure that the curve can continue downwards.

IS YOUTH CULTURE CHANGING? There's been a steady reduction in youth drinking over the past two decades, both in Sweden and in many other countries. It seems to have led to a change in the role of alcohol in teenagers' lives. Young people who don't drink are doing better in many areas in life, than young people who do - which was not the case for previous generations. Today's young non-drinkers self-report feeling healthier, their grades are also better, and they have fewer physical and mental problems. It's hard to say for sure why consumption has declined and attitudes towards alcohol have changed amongst young people, but what we do know is that the youth drinking trend has been moving in the same direction in many countries over the same period, and that alcohol seems to play a less important role for young people today.

SOBER ISN'T THE SAME AS BORING. Attitudes towards people who seldom drink or who avoid alcohol completely are often judgemental. Some people have this idea that people who choose to be sober are wimps or boring, and that they don't know how to have a good time. It's a good idea to talk to your teenager about how someone who chooses not to drink is just like anyone else.

DOUBLE STANDARDS. Some adults remember their own teenage years as a time when you drank to be sociable and to let go. And indeed, society's norms often say that you should drink alcohol, but do so in moderation. Most of us tell our teenagers not to drink, despite possibly expecting them to do what we did. Think about what messages you're sending to your child: if you ask your teenager not to drink but, at the same time, give them the impression that alcohol is part of enjoying yourself, of having fun, you might be guilty of double standards in your child's eyes.

HARD TO RESIST GROUP PRESSURE. Just over 500 young people aged between 15 and 17 were asked whether it was difficult to say "no" to alcohol. 24 per cent said that it was difficult and 13 per cent said that it could be very difficult. The most common reason they give for this difficulty is peer pressure. A whopping 61 per cent drink because others do. A little bit of help from you, as their parent, can make it easier to say "no". Tell them if you found it hard to say "no" when you were young. That it's a good thing to do so and that having the courage to stand up for yourself often wins you a lot of respect. You might also like to tell them that it isn't true that all young people drink.

TALK ABOUT YOUR OWN DRINKING. Not every adult drinks, of course, but almost 8 out of every 10 do. Talk about your own experiences with alcohol without going into details about the sort of things that might embarrass you. You're telling them simply to show that you know what it's like. Alcohol is a taboo subject in some families, but try to keep an open mind when it comes to your own drinking. And be prepared to be criticised and questioned.

*Not drinking is strong.
It shows you have self-respect.
Jasmine, aged 16, Umeå*





YES OR NO?

Being a parent often means handling tricky decisions. You've been a parent for a while now, and you know what it can be like. You want to show your child that you trust them, but at the same time, you don't want them to get into trouble. No one else can tell you where you should draw the line for your teenager from one context to another. You're the one who has to decide what is OK and what is not OK

HAVE THE COURAGE TO STICK TO YOUR CONVICTIONS. Listen to yourself and trust your opinions. As a parent, you have the right to decide what you think is the best thing to do. The more clearly you show your teenager what you expect, the easier it is for your teenager to accept it. And try to stand by what you think, even if someone ends up getting angry. The anger is simply an expression of how hard it can be to deal with a set-back – nothing worse than that.

EXPLAIN WHY. If you say “No” to something, make sure you tell your teenager why you're saying it. It's not about your child deciding whether you're right or wrong. It's about them understanding that there are good reasons why you've said “No” and that you're not just saying it for the sake of saying it.

*Getting whatever you want
doesn't make you happier. You
have to long for some things, too.*

Elina, aged 15, Örebro

ENCOURAGE DEBATE. Teenagers are in the midst of developing their own opinions, and it's important that they know what their parents think about things. The best thing you can do is to stand up for what you believe and tell them why you want things to be a particular way. Over and over again, if necessary. If you start quarrelling, it's not the

end of the world – it can sometimes be good for both of you to get things off your chest and it's also a way for teenagers to understand where you draw the line.

IF IN DOUBT, THINK ABOUT IT. You can't always expect yourself to have an opinion or be prepared when an unexpected situation arises. If your teenager asks you something and you're not really certain what you think, you can try saying that you'd like to think and maybe talk to someone else before you give them your answer. It's about showing respect for your teenager and showing them that taking a stand on different issues isn't always easy.

BEING A PARENT ISN'T THE SAME AS BEING A FRIEND. Letting things slide doesn't make you a nicer parent. Teenagers don't need another friend – they need an adult they can rely on. The trick is to be close to your child, be able to talk about anything and everything, to share confidences – and, at the same time, to be an adult.

If your parents just say OK all the time, they don't really care.

Eddie, aged 15, Umeå





HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU WORRY?

Many teenagers would probably like it if their parents didn't worry all the time. But the vast majority of them, in their heart of hearts, probably want someone to show that they care. Worrying yourself to death, on the other hand, doesn't help anyone or anything. Try to turn your worries into something constructive instead.

AGREE ON WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS. Talk about the best way to resolve your worry issues together. Maybe your teenager could call or message you during the evening while they're out? Maybe you could agree on a time when they'll call or text, so you avoid calling a mobile phone that no one answers and getting more worried.

TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL. However good your intentions, even the most caring reminders can be boring and sound like nagging. Teenagers can, just like everyone else, attempt to empathise with another person's feelings, so tell them how worried you are, what it's like being a parent, and how it feels when you don't really know they're OK. By explaining, you show them that you trust them to be able to be responsible.

KIDS DON'T WANT TO MAKE THEIR PARENTS UNHAPPY. It might sometimes feel as though your teenager wants to hurt you, but you have to try and look past this tough shell and remember that behind it, there's a child. No teenager really wants their parents to be unhappy or disappointed. The chances of a teenager taking slightly better care of themselves increase when they know that they have a parent who cares.

YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING. If a teenager has made up their mind to drink, then they will probably do precisely that. It's unfortunate that it's so easy for teenagers to get hold of alcohol, but that's not something that you can guarantee to prevent. So there's no point in shouldering all of the blame and feeling like a bad parent. You can, of course, influence your teenager through the stance you take, but you can't eliminate all the other factors that may influence them.



WHAT IF THEY BREAK THE RULES?

If you've agreed upon a rule and they break it, then it's important to put your foot down. Some parents use grounding as a punishment, while some settle for a thorough telling off. It's up to you to decide what the best approach is. The most important thing is that your teenager understands that what they did was wrong so that they learn from the experience.

TELL THEM HOW WORRIED YOU GET. Showing that you care or talking about your feelings with your child is never ridiculous or stupid. Make it clear to your teenager that you get very worried – when they drink alcohol or come home late, for example. It's not about guilt-tripping – you're just saying how it makes you feel.

ESTABLISH THE CONSEQUENCES OF BREAKING THE RULES. Parents and teenagers alike tend to handle the situation better if they've agreed in advance what the consequences will be if they break the rules. Why not have an open discussion about what will happen if your teenager comes home late, for example. It's good if it feels like a mutual agreement.

TALK ABOUT IT TOGETHER. If your teenager comes home late and you haven't already decided on the consequences, then it's a good idea to say something. If you say nothing and simply impose a punishment, there's a risk that your teenager will close themselves off. The punishment might have the opposite effect then you intended. Talk to your teenager about what they think is a reasonable consequence and what you both can do to ensure it doesn't happen again.

AVOID EMPTY THREATS. Sometimes, your patience runs out and you simply can't handle a talk right now. When this happens, it's very easy to just impose a punishment without having really thought it through. You might regret what you've said when you've calmed down a bit. Or you might even forget what you said in the heat of the moment and it becomes an empty threat, rather than something that enables your teenager to learn from their mistake. Using empty threats regularly might just lead to a less respectful relationship between you. So try and stand by what you've said and what you've agreed. If you've said something in haste and now regret it, then say so. The most important thing is that you talk about it.

My parents haven't told me what I am and am not allowed to do. I do what I want and deal with the consequences, whatever they may be.

Axel, aged 15, Umeå



If you get punished, you just get annoyed and angry. You don't learn anything from it.

Melissa, aged 14, Örebro





NEW FRIENDS

The teenage years are often a time when you make new friends. A lot of this is due to the fact that many teenagers change school at this age, of course, but it's also because, as they grow older, they outgrow their old friends. And who you socialise with is particularly important at this age. As a parent, it's important that you don't attempt to control their friendships – rather that you provide support, when necessary.

DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU'RE UNIMPORTANT. If your teenager makes lots of new friends, it's very easy for them to get swept up in all the novelty. As a parent, you can feel unimportant and excluded, which can sometimes be a bit painful. But don't forget that a parent is always important to a child. Be curious instead, and happy about all the new friends that your teenager has made.

BE OPEN. You might feel that your teenager's new friends are not the sort of friends you would have liked them to choose. Try to keep an open mind and not to preach about who is a suitable friend and who isn't. After all, it's your teenager who will be spending time with them, not you. It's better to tell them that their friends are welcome in your home, so that you have the chance to get to know them. And talk about it with your teenager too – talk about why they want to be friends with these particular people. Listen, but don't judge.

If your friends freeze you out because you don't drink, they're not real friends.

Armin, aged 16, Umeå

ASK FOR A NAME AND A NUMBER. There's nothing strange about asking your child for the phone number of their friend or the friend's parents. Start by asking your teenager, or looking it up for yourself. Make sure you explain why you want the number. It's not because you don't trust your teenager: it's because it's good to have if something happens. And if your teenager is going to be sleeping over at a friend's house, it's always a good idea to check with the friend's parents that it's OK. Your teenager might complain a bit, but you can be sure that in their heart of hearts, they appreciate you keeping an eye out for them.



PREARRANGED TIMES?

Most adults would probably agree that rules and prearranged times are a good idea when you have teenagers in the family. And most teenagers will understand that parents do worry and that they have to be home by a set time. But making the concept work in practice can be a bit tricky sometimes. Here are a few ideas that might help.

REACH AN AGREEMENT. It's often a good idea to sit down and discuss a suitable "home by" time with your teenager. Be clear about why prearranged times are important and the sort of things you worry about. Listen to what your child thinks, to their opinions. You don't have to agree – children expect parents to have the final say. But once you've talked things over between you, most teenagers say they find it easier to stick to an agreement and come home on time. If your teenager repeatedly disregards what you've agreed, talk to them about agreements which are, fundamentally, about showing each other respect. And try to trust that your child is hearing what you say, even if you don't get a clear response.

As adults, we have a shared responsibility for creating the climate in which our children grow up. It's not always easy, but if the parents discuss the issues before problems arise, it does make life considerably easier.

Lotta Hjalmarsson Österholm,
Drug Prevention Coordinator, Östergötland County Council

TALK TO OTHER PARENTS. One of the arguments teenagers most commonly use as to why they don't like prearranged times is that "everyone else is allowed to...". But that's usually just a perception that a lot of teenagers share. One way of dealing with this is to talk to the parents of some of your teenager's friends about establishing a shared set of rules. This also makes it easier for your teenagers, because they can all come home together. But you don't have to do what everyone else does – the most important thing is you stick to your principles and show that you care.

STAND UNITED. It's important to be consistent if you're going to ensure that your teenager doesn't lose respect for the whole prearranged time thing. If one parent says that the teenager can come home at 01.30 when the other has said 23.30, it sends mixed signals. It's worth striving to present a united front, even if you share custody of your child and have different views on the subject. A united front makes life easier and avoids bickering.

I'm a little scared of getting drunk. You don't want to embarrass yourself, after all.
Mikaela, aged 16, Gothenburg

SET AN INTERVAL. Getting home at a precise time can be tricky and that's not just true for teenagers. Something could happen on the way - the bus might be late or the walk might take longer than expected. So try to show some understanding if your teenager comes home 15 minutes late.

I sometimes tell my parents that I'm going to see someone they know so that I can stay out longer.

Simon, aged 16, Umeå





WAITING UP?

Should you stay up at night, waiting until your teenager strolls through the door or can you rely on them coming home as planned? This is obviously going to differ from one family to another, but the important thing is that you, as a parent, are happy with the situation. Some teenagers feel a sense of security if their parents are up when they come home. While others feel that if their parents go to bed, it shows that they trust them. But the one thing they all have in common is that they all want their parents to notice if something's gone wrong.

RELAX WHILE YOU WAIT. If you decide to wait up, it's perfectly OK to just relax and be there. Once your teenager comes home, pay attention and be ready to listen if they want to talk.


ASK THEM TO WAKE YOU. If you simply can't stay up late, there's nothing wrong with that. It doesn't have to mean you don't care. Ask your child to come into your room and gently wake you to let you know that they've come home. That way, you'll know that everything is OK, and you can relax and go back to sleep.

SET YOUR ALARM CLOCK. If you'd rather not be woken up and don't like the idea of lying awake, worrying, you could set an alarm clock to ring in the hall outside your bedroom. Say you set it for half an hour after the time when your teenager's supposed to be home. If they come home on time, they can simply turn the alarm clock off and you can continue to sleep undisturbed. Otherwise, you'll wake up and can figure out why your teenager hasn't come home.

KEEP IN TOUCH. Ask your teenager to call or message you at some point in the evening, to check in. Agree a time when you'll be in touch and what they should do if they're delayed.

IF THEY DON'T COME HOME. The first and most important thing is, of course, to find out where your teenager is. If they don't answer their phone, try contacting your teenager's friends or their parents. If you don't get an answer, it might be time to go out and start searching, partly because it's incredibly stressful just sitting at home waiting and getting more worried, and partly because just getting out and actively doing something about your concerns can feel good. It can also act as a clear signal to your teenager that you care and that the time you agreed actually means something. Make sure you agree in advance what you will do, if necessary.





IF YOUR TEENAGER COMES HOME DRUNK

No matter how much you've talked about and discussed things, given them information and shown them that you care, there's still a possibility that your teenager might come home drunk. In one sense, you can be glad that your teenager has come home, because once they're at home, at least there's someone there who cares. Which is far from certain if they end up somewhere else. But what do you do when your teenager is standing there in the hall?

THE DISCUSSION CAN WAIT. You may well have drunk too much, yourself, at some point in your life, and you know just how bad you can feel. When that happens, you don't feel very big or strong, however old you might be, and it's nice to have someone there to help you and to talk calmly to you. Throwing a fit and starting a row is not the right thing to do – not there and then. Make sure your teenager drinks some fluids. Putting a bucket beside their bed can be a good idea, too. Let them sleep for a few hours and sober up before you talk about it. But you can still let them know that this is not OK and that you want to talk about it the next day.

TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL. Don't hide the fact that it's unacceptable to you that your child is drinking. Show your feelings, rather than worry yourself sick and getting angry in silence. That'll just make things worse. Being quietly upset is worse than saying what you think.

*I never come home on time. As long
as I come home, my parents are happy.
Ted, aged 16, Umeå*

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING STUPID AND DOING SOMETHING STUPID. Coming home drunk doesn't mean that your teenager is stupid. What it means is that they have done something stupid. Teenagers are particularly sensitive to what people think about them because they're busy finding out who they are. Being judged as being stupid can hit them hard. Being stupid is also a lot harder to change than behaving stupidly. Say, "What you did was stupid," not, "You were stupid to do that."

*My Mum says she'll film me if
I come home drunk, and then show
me to make me feel ashamed.*

Molly, aged 16, Gothenburg



*When you're drunk, you often
feel sad, and when you're sad,
you don't want your parents
to be angry. All that does is
make you angry back at them.*

Jenny, aged 16, Umeå



HOME ALONE

Leaving your teenager home alone is no guarantee they're going to throw a massive party. But you might, as a parent, find it helpful to be aware of the sort of situations your teenager may face when there are no adults around. A lot of young people feel peer pressure when it comes to parties and partying. They're often not ready to throw a party, to go to a party or to drink alcohol, but they end up in these situations all the same.

CALL HOME TO SEE HOW THEY ARE. If your teenager is going to be home alone, you can call home during the evening to see how things are going. Calling home shows that you care. It's a good idea to tell them in advance that you're going to call so they're expecting it.

TALK ABOUT ONLINE RISKS. Teenagers live in an increasingly connected world where news spreads fast and easily online. If your teenager posts that they're home alone or invite people to a party, the information can very easily end up in the wrong place. Not being cautious on social media increases the risk of ending up in unexpected situations. It's a good idea to talk to your teenager about what posting content on social media can entail.

A good relationship between parents and their children is the most important thing in ensuring a child doesn't start drinking. Clarity is also incredibly important. Your child has to know what the rules are and what you expect of them.

Håkan Fransson, drogfröbyggare, Öckerö Kommun

ASK OTHER ADULTS FOR HELP. One of the problems with parent-free parties is that if they get out of hand, young people are sometimes too scared to contact an adult in time. Maybe they've been drinking and are afraid of being found out or they're so embarrassed that they don't dare to ask for help. Which is why it can be a good idea to reassure your teenager that it's always best to call you or another adult if the situation starts getting out of hand. You can also ask an adult in the neighbourhood to drop by during the evening and check that everything is OK.






*I was at a party once where
they broke all the windows.
It was chaos.*

Victor, aged 15, Umeå

HELP SAYING "NO". The majority of teenagers don't actually want to throw a party just because their parents are away. But they often feel pressured by friends or people around them, which makes it much harder to say "no". Explain that it can sometimes feel a bit awkward saying "no", but that that is actually the mature and smart thing to do. If saying "no" still feels too difficult, maybe you can agree that your teenager can put the blame on you?

REMOVE THE ALCOHOL. If it's party time and you know about it, it can be a good idea to put away anything that poses an unnecessary temptation. If you've got alcohol in the house, it might be a good idea to remove it to avoid the risk of your teenager or one of their friends helping themselves to it. By no means do all teenagers help themselves to their parents' alcohol, but around 10 per cent of all ninth graders who drink say that they've taken alcohol from their parents without permission. You might also like to think about other sorts of things that could be lying around at home which could be dangerous in the hands of a teenager. It might, for example, be a good idea to keep an eye on your medicine cabinet if you know that it contains strong sleeping pills or painkillers.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LEAVE YOUR TEENAGER HOME ALONE. If you decide not to allow your teenager to be home alone, it doesn't have to mean that you don't trust your child. Spending family time together outside the home is good too, and it's by no means certain that your teenager will find it boring – which they might, initially, pretend. Learning to compromise is an important skill, too.



HOW MUCH CAN YOU TRUST TEENAGERS?

Parents of teenagers often wonder how much they can trust their children. A lot of teenagers will, undoubtedly, withhold some information from their parents, but you shouldn't assume that young people are lying. Every teenager is, of course, different and the extent to which you can trust your specific teenager largely depends on what has happened before. The best thing you can do is to talk to your teenager and show them you care.

TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL. Being a parent of a teenager can mean swinging between hope and despair. One moment, everything seems to be fine and then the next moment, you feel uncertain or that they've let you down. That's completely normal, but not talking about it is a problem. Silence is the biggest barrier to a close relationship and simply results in suspicion on the part of adult and teenager alike.

I talk to my Mum about everything, so she trusts me. Some things are a bit awkward, but she wants me to be honest.

Tim, aged 16, Umeå

STRAIGHT ANSWERS. If your teenager tells you something spontaneously, you can be fairly sure that it's true. If you have to drag the information out of them, by contrast, there's a much bigger risk that what you're hearing is the censored version. If you've encouraged your child to feel safe in telling you anything at all and assured them that you're there to listen, you've laid the best possible foundations for being told the truth.

TRUST YOUR FEELINGS. You can usually tell when something doesn't sound or feel quite right. Tell your child that you're a little doubtful whether what they've told you is actually true. There's a risk that they will get angry, but in the majority of cases, that feeling you're getting is accurate. And if it isn't, at least you've been honest about your feelings.

ACCEPT THAT YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO KNOW EVERYTHING.

Many parents want full insight into their teenagers' lives, but being told everything is an awful lot to ask. Teenagers also need to be allowed to keep some things private. The important thing is that your teenager knows that they can tell you the truth, even when it's an uncomfortable one, without being judged or yelled at.



*My parents can always
tell if I'm lying, so there's
no point in even trying.*

Dennis, aged 15, Örebro



YOUNGSTERS' ONLINE LIVES

The majority of teenagers live out a large part of their social lives online. It's a place where they talk to their friends, watch movies, listen to music and learn about a variety of subjects. But there are also a lot of online pitfalls too, of course, and it's important that you, as a parent, keep a look out and teach your teenager how to handle and avoid them.

USING ALCOHOL TO BUILD AN IMAGE. Partying and alcohol are common themes when young people are creating their image on social media. For many of them, showing themselves in settings with alcohol signals that they have an outgoing, successful lifestyle. This means that young people who use social media such as Snapchat, Instagram or follow famous role models, often encounter posts where young people are drinking alcohol.

My friends drink a lot when I'm out with them because they know I'll take care of them when they're drunk and throwing up, and stuff.

Stella, aged 16, Gothenburg

HELP YOUR TEENAGERS LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES. Most millennials watch YouTube, listen to music, and chat to other people online. Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok are the most popular social media – Facebook, less so. Virtually all young people also play games or watch other people playing – boys commonly do this on a daily basis. It's important that teenagers can handle themselves in the digital world, because it's such a natural part of young people's lives. Talk to your teenager about how important it is to protect their integrity and not to hurt anyone else's feelings or allow themselves to be hurt. That they shouldn't, for example, write nasty things about people, post pictures of someone else without their permission or do things in other people's names. You should also make it clear to them that not everything written and said online is true.

REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING IS POTENTIALLY PUBLIC. Social media keeps on expanding and different channels cooperate with one another. Which means that you can end up sharing your pictures and thoughts with a virtually unlimited number of people. Anything you post online can stay around for a very long time and it's often very difficult to get rid of it. Even if the picture is deleted, you have no control over who may have used it or shared it. This is why it's so important to understand what posting something actually means and why it's a good idea to discuss with your teenager what is – and is not – appropriate.

BE CURIOUS AND INTERESTED. A lot of teenagers feel that their parents don't always keep up with what's happening or know how the Internet works. And this can mean they avoid turning to adults if they run into problems. This is why it's important to get involved and talk about what your child is doing online, just as you would ask them how their day went, for example. You could also check out some of the places where a lot of young people hang out and familiarise yourself with how these channels work. Or even ask your child for help – it shows that you're interested and that you're there for them if something's gone wrong. Remember that even if your child knows more about the online world than you do, you're still the one who has the greatest experience of norms, rules, and dangers.

SET THE RULES. It can be good to know how the various forms of social media work and what you can do if your child runs into trouble. But as the parent, you're the one who decides what is OK and what isn't. Be clear about what you think is appropriate – it's never a good idea, for example, for them to visit sites that are not appropriate for young people. A lot of social media sites require some personal information as security or to give access to the site. Talk about the sort of informa-



tion they should share, and about how and when it's appropriate to share personal information. One tip is to decide that your teenager is not allowed to provide personal details such as their address, school, or phone number, or to post videos and pictures of themselves, without checking with you first.

IF YOUR TEENAGER GETS IN TROUBLE. Many young people seek appreciation by posting pictures or texts about themselves online. This makes them vulnerable, which can be exploited by others. Online hate speech is increasingly widespread among young people, as is adults initiating contact with young people in order to commit sexual abuse or assault. This can happen on sites or games with chat forums, and both girls and boys are subjected to it. If you find out that your child has been exposed to or the victim of something online, it's important to be truly supportive. Teenagers are often filled with regret when something has happened and they realise the consequences. Be clear that you're there for them, that you can help them, and that it's not too late to ask for help – even if something has already happened. Whatever the issue is, try not to judge. If whatever has happened is unacceptable, you should report it. Most social media sites allow you to report pictures, videos or comments. If what has happened involves something illegal, then it's important you report it to the police. You can also, to the extent that it's possible, talk to those involved.

ALCOHOL-RELATED ADVERTISING AND MESSAGES. Social media has created new ways for alcohol-related advertising and messages of reaching out to young people. The Internet offers previously unimaginable opportunities for anyone marketing beer, wine and spirits. Teenagers are often exposed to alcohol advertising, even if targeting this kind of advertising at people under the age of 25 is illegal. Many teenagers also receive alcohol messages from their older friends or

the influencers they follow on social media, for example. The Swedish Consumer Agency is the authority responsible for supervising alcohol advertising, you can approach them with your questions or to report advertising that you think may be improper.

*Haters are going to hate if you say no.
They'll take the piss out of you on social
media, and stuff like that.*
Emmanuel, aged 16, Umeå

IT'S ALSO A SOURCE OF ALCOHOL. A fairly new but nonetheless worrying trend is alcohol being sold through social media, and the alcohol in question is often smuggled. It's relatively easy for a teenager to use a social network to get ahold of beer, wine or spirits. Posting a request on Snapchat, for example, tends to result pretty quickly in "tips" from someone who knows someone. There are also anonymous accounts, on Instagram for example, run by dealers, who can be contacted by young people who want to buy spirits or beer. As a parent, it's important that you're aware of this. If you come across an account that you suspect is selling alcohol, it's easy to report the account directly to Instagram. Talk to your teenager about alcohol sales via social media too. Explain why you don't want your child to buy from these accounts and that people who do, are supporting criminal activity and exposing themselves to substantial risks.



TRAVEL

Teenagers mature at different rates. But even if your teenager is very mature for their age, it might be a good idea to stop and think for a moment when they start talking about going away on holiday with their friends.

ADULTS ON HOLIDAY. Think about what you do when you're away on holiday. Many adults see partying and alcohol as a natural part of their holiday. Once the bags are checked in, the airport bar tends to fill up pretty quickly, even if it's only 6 a.m. And once you're on the plane, spirits, wine and beer are on sale, and then, and once you've reached your holiday destination, how about a celebratory drink on the balcony? Alcohol norms that apply back home often disappear when you're on holiday. Having a beer with your lunch and a drink in the afternoon is perfectly natural for many adults. Not everyone does this when they're on holiday, of course, but it's very common, nonetheless. So it's hardly surprising if teenagers think about alcohol when they think about travel. Think about what you're doing and remember that you're a role model for your child.

Everyone was drinking like crazy when we went on an All Inclusive. You could just go up to the tap and help yourself to beer. Even the kids were doing it. No one was keeping track.

Sasha, aged 15, Örebro

THERE'S NO ONE TO SAY, "ENOUGH". A lot of organised trips are designed to appeal to party-mad young people. Alcohol and drugs are both widely available and there are no adults standing in their way. The youngsters can just go into the first bar they see and get drunk, whether they head for "Bar Street" on Rhodes, to a ski resort in the Alps, or to Malta to study English. Even if your teenager would rather not drink, travelling without adults is risky, so it's up to you, as a parent, to weigh up the positive experience of independent travel against the risk of something going wrong.

LANGUAGE COURSES. Most of the big language course travel firms have a total ban on alcohol and narcotics. Anyone caught with drugs will be sent home at their own expense and will not get a refund for the course. But it's worth bearing in mind that the organisers can't keep an eye on every single teenager, 24/7.

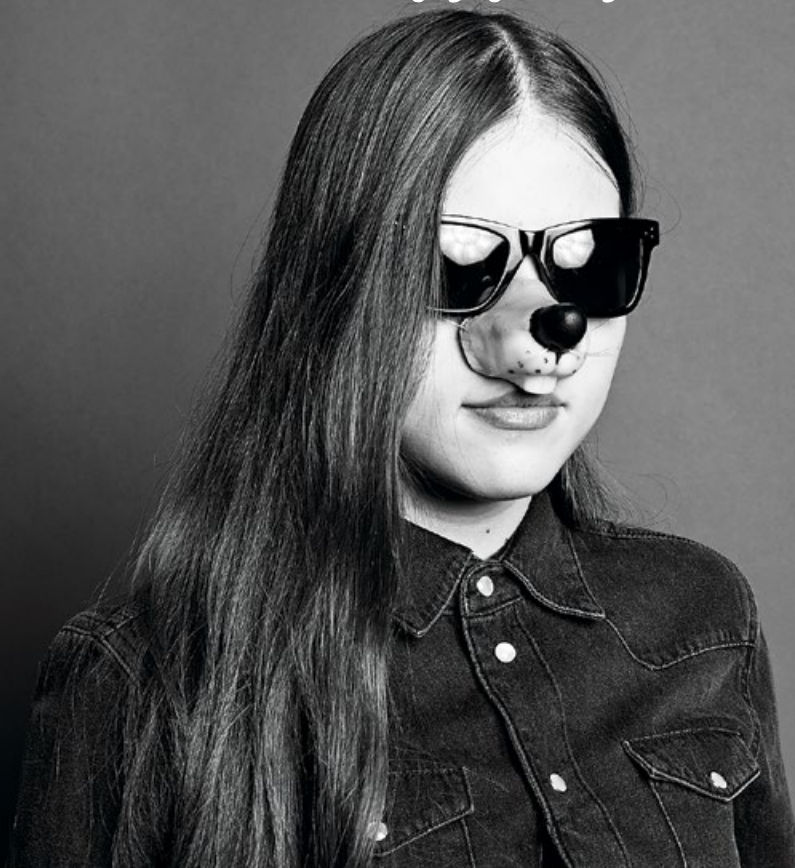
CHARTER TRIPS. There are, alongside the well-known travel firms, a number of companies specialising in travel for young people, where partying and alcohol are often the main attraction. Most travel firms have an age limit of 18, but travelling unaccompanied when you're under 18 is still possible if you can show a signed authorisation from your parents.

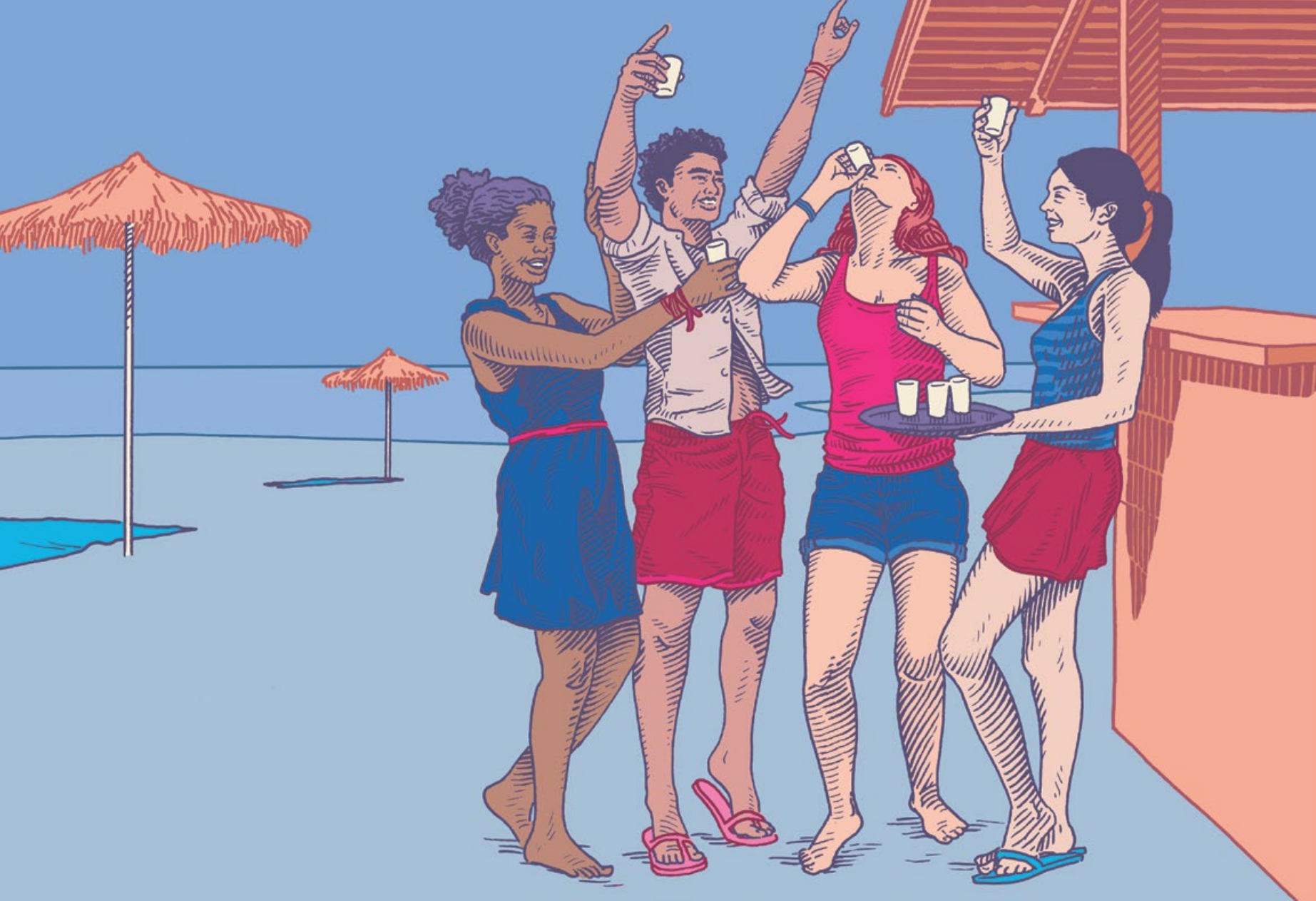
TALK ABOUT THE RISKS. You're the parent, so it's obviously you who decides, but you don't have to automatically say, "No" without thinking about it. Travelling independently can be both exciting and educational. Discuss what might happen and how important it is that they take care of themselves. You also need to make it clear to your teenager that people from different cultures may have a completely different attitude towards alcohol and that the way they handle drunken youngsters might be a lot different from what they're used to.

NO, EVERYONE ELSE DOES NOT GET TO GO. There's nothing odd or wrong about saying "No" to a teenager who wants to go on holiday with their friends. You have every right to refuse. You're not a cruel parent, even if your teenager's friends are being allowed to go and you have said, "No." Consider how often that's actually true – that everyone else is allowed to do something – and about how often it works out that way because that's what every child says to their slightly dubious parents.

*When you're abroad, you can just party
as much as you want. There's no one
there that you know and who you'd
rather didn't see you in that state.*

Saga, aged 16, Örebro







FESTIVALS

Going to a festival can be a real adventure. Heading off with your friends, seeing your favourite bands, meeting like-minded people, and sleeping in a tent. For many youngsters, it's the best thing ever. But festivals can also be risky. Here are a few things to bear in mind.

ALCOHOL AND FESTIVALS OFTEN GO HAND IN HAND. Alcohol is an important ingredient for visitors to a lot of the big festivals. Many festivals are also sponsored by alcohol producers, thereby further signalling that alcohol and festivals go hand in hand. Drinking alcohol is often prohibited in the stage areas. There are different enclosures selling beer and wine, where there's a minimum age limit and the checks are thorough. But that doesn't mean they are the only place you'll find people who've been drinking. There are a lot of people moving around the stage areas and some of them will have had too much to drink. Alcohol tends to be around in the camping areas too, but there's no one there checking whether drinkers are over the legal age or whether anyone's getting too drunk. If you haven't brought any alcohol with you, there will be plenty of people willing to share, plus there doesn't tend to be anyone checking how much alcohol you bring in with you.

*I'd never be allowed to go to a festival.
They're full of drunks and anything
could happen.
Moa, aged 15, Umeå*

KEEP IN TOUCH. Make sure that your teenager has a mobile phone with them or that you have a means of contacting them if they're at a festival. Mobile coverage can sometimes be flaky when there are lots of people in the same place, and teenagers' phone batteries seem to have a unique ability to discharge in no time at all. The music can be loud too, making it hard to hear the phone ring, so it can be a good idea to agree on times when you can be in touch.

FIND OUT WHAT THE RULES ARE. Every festival has different rules about age limits as well as alcohol. Find out what the rules are for the festival that your teenager wants to go to. There are also a lot of drug-free events organised specifically for young people.

TALK ABOUT THE RISKS BEFOREHAND. Prepare your teenager for the risks in and around the festival. It's not just about the fact that there will be alcohol and people who are intoxicated. There are large numbers of people in the same place at festivals and it's hard, for both security personnel and visitors, to keep an eye on what's happening. It's a good idea to talk about the sort of things your teenager may encounter there, such as sexual approaches or harassment, drugs, violence, and theft.

My parents want me to tell them everything. But they'd have a heart attack if I did.

Mona, aged 15, Umeå

GO TOGETHER. If you don't want to let your teenager go to a festival by themselves, why not suggest that you go with them? It could be a fun, shared experience and good for your relationship. You don't have to stick to them like glue and tag along with them everywhere they go, but you being there can act as a safety net in case something happens.

STAND UP TO PEER PRESSURE. Don't let your teenager go to a festival just because everyone else is allowed to go. Many parents are worried about their teenagers being excluded from their social group if they don't go, but there's no guarantee that this will be the case. No one – however old they are – can do everything, and it might be useful to learn this at an early age.

MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO SAY, "NO". Help your teenager by giving them reasons why they shouldn't drink. Be clear about what you feel and what your concerns are. Your teenager might choose to drink anyway, but studies show that what you say does matter in terms of what happens and how things turn out.





*My parents drink so much on
New Year's Eve that they never
notice if I nick their alcohol
and drink too.*

Gabrielle, aged 16, Gothenburg

*A lot of people drink at the end
of term. People want to celebrate
and there's nothing much else to do.*

Josef, aged 15, Örebro





HOLIDAYS

Many adults can't imagine a New Year's Eve without some bubbly, and a lot of young people associate partying and alcohol with the end of the school year. A lot of young people drink for the first time during holidays. They're also the days when a lot of them get into fights and have accidents because they're drunk. As a parent, there's a lot you can do.

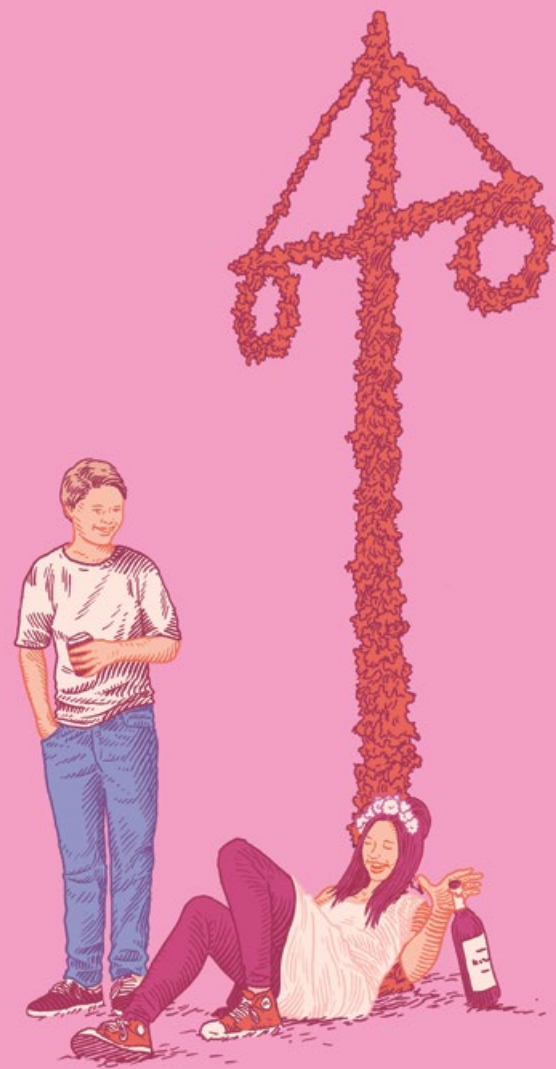
TALK ABOUT IT. Ask your teenager about their plans for the day, whether people are going to be drinking alcohol, and what they think about that. Tell them what you think about drinking and that it's unacceptable to you that they drink alcohol. Teenagers care what their parents say – even if it doesn't always seem like it at the time. Show them that you're there for them, whatever happens. It's always better that your teenager knows they can come home drunk, even if that's unacceptable to you.

*It's chaos on New Year's Eve.
Everyone's drunk. People are throwing
up and running around town.*

Greta, aged 15, Umeå

DON'T BUY THEM ALCOHOL. Young people who are given alcohol by their parents drink more. And if you buy them alcohol, you're also telling them that it's OK to drink, even if you're not an adult. Some parents think it's OK to give their teenagers alcohol on special occasions, e.g. at the end of the ninth grade or at Midsummer. But warning your child about alcohol and then helping them to drink makes no sense, even if it's only for one evening. What's best is to be clear and consistent.

TALK TO OLDER SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS. Many teenagers get hold of alcohol through their boy- or girlfriends, friends, friends' siblings or other adults. Talk to the ones who are aged 20 or older and who are around your teenagers, and help them say "no". Tell them that you expect them to be mature enough to act responsibly.

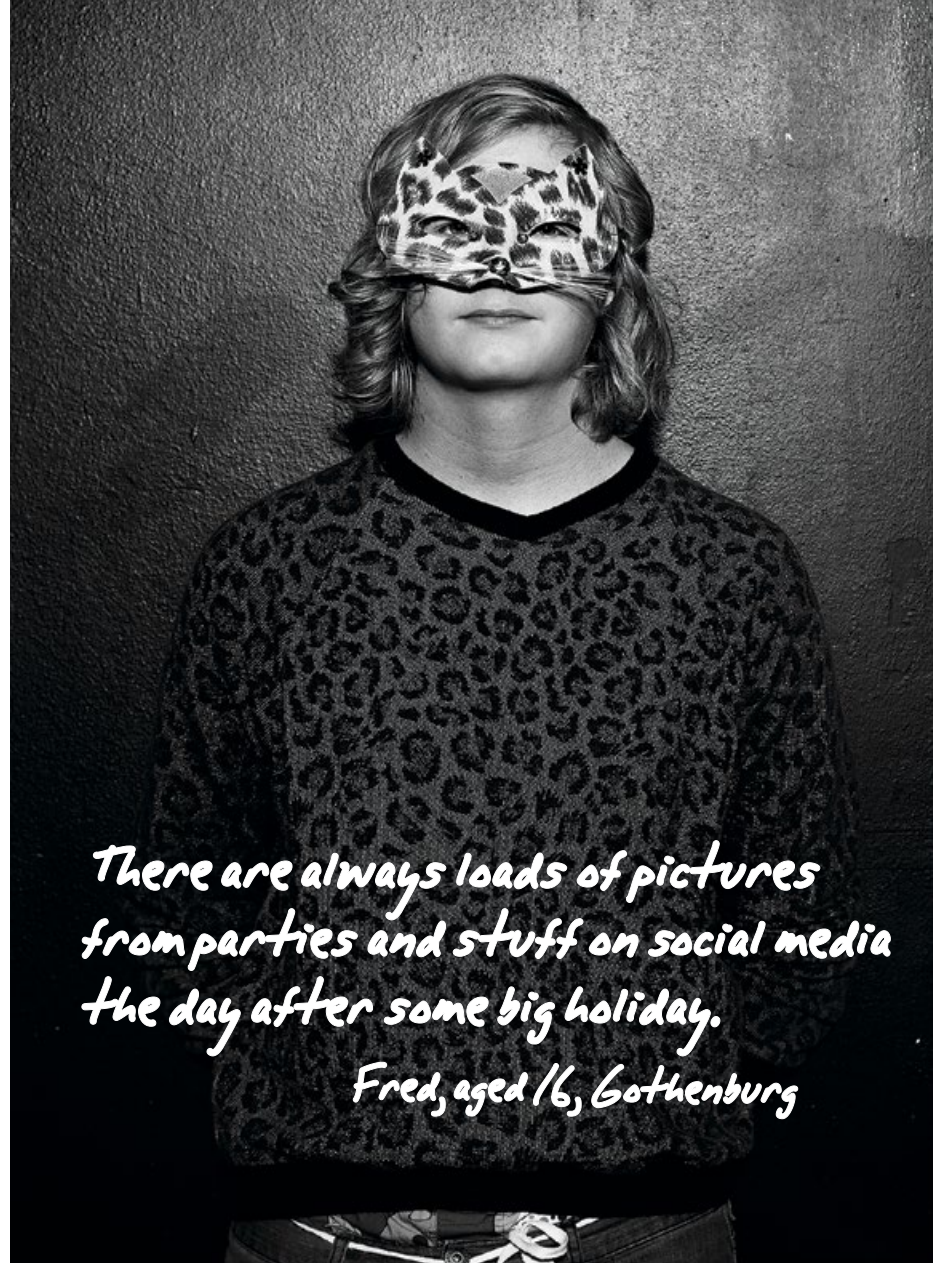


KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS. Make sure that your teenager has their mobile with them, or that you can get in touch with them in some way during the evening. Maybe you can agree in advance on some times when you check in? And ask your teenager to let you know if they go on somewhere else or if their plans change. Make sure that you, or another adult, are sober so that there is someone who can come and get them or help them, if necessary. Maybe you can also visit the places where your teenager or other young people tend to hang out? Get together with other parents and be out and about that evening. But talk to your teenager about it first so that they understand that you're not spying on them – you're just being there for them if things go bad.

TALK TO OTHERS. Talk to other parents about the do's and don'ts of holidays. If your opinions differ, you don't have to change your mind because other people think differently. You're the parent, and as such, you're always the one who decides what goes for your child. It isn't the end of the world if you as parents don't all agree. The important thing is that you have talked about it and that you and your teenager know where other families stand.

SUGGEST ACTIVITIES. There are lots of things young people can do on holidays. Maybe you can help your teenager find something suitable to do and get involved in helping your teenager and their friends take part. If there's an agreed activity for them to look forward to, there's less of a risk of them wandering aimlessly around town.

TALK ABOUT IT. It's a good idea to be awake when your teenager comes home or have a talk about their evening the next morning. Don't turn it into a cross-examination. Try and show them, instead, that you're interested and that it's important that you talk to each other about what they got up to and how things went.



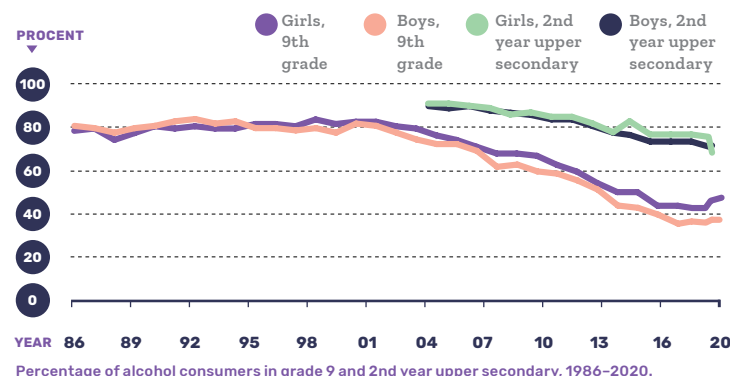
*There are always loads of pictures
from parties and stuff on social media
the day after some big holiday.*

Fred, aged 16, Gothenburg

YOUTH DRINKING – THEN AND NOW

The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) carries out a survey of school students' use of alcohol and other drugs. The study examines, amongst other things, how many ninth graders and the 2nd year of upper secondary school students drink alcohol, and if so, how often and how much. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the upper secondary school survey could not be carried out in 2020. So the findings presented for upper secondary school students are from 2019, when they were last included in the survey.

NO, EVERYONE ELSE DOES NOT DRINK. The number of ninth graders who drink has fallen sharply since 2000. In the latest survey there were more drinkers amongst the girls (48 per cent) than the boys (38 per cent). These figures are amongst the lowest since the survey began in 1971, and show that most ninth graders choose not to drink alcohol. The percentage of 2nd year upper secondary school students who drink has also fallen from almost 90 per cent (2004) to 69 per cent (2019). So in other words, it's definitely not true to say that "everyone else drinks".



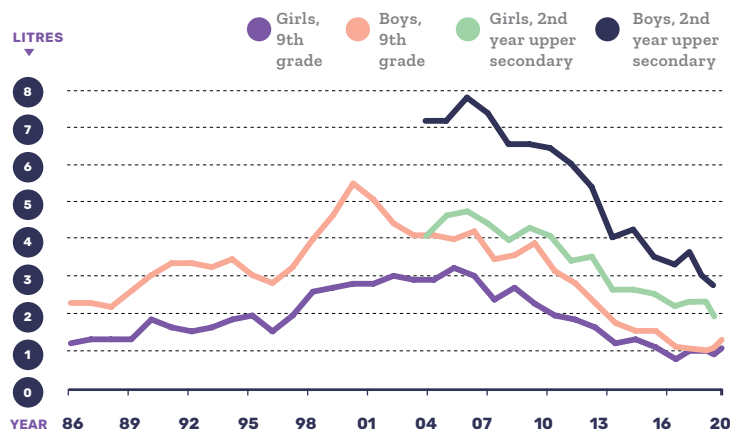
FEWER ARE GETTING DRUNK BEFORE THE AGE OF 14. The percentage of ninth graders who got drunk before the age of 14 has fallen from about 20 per cent (in 2000) to 5 per cent, in 2020.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IS IMPORTANT. The fact that the trends are moving in the right direction doesn't mean, however, that everything is OK. These positive trends we have seen over the last few years seem to have stalled or reversed slightly. But making a difference is possible. Efforts by parents and society can ensure that the number of youngsters who drink continues to fall. Your role as a parent is very important.

HOW MUCH DO TEENAGERS DRINK?

The amount of alcohol that teenagers drink on a yearly basis varies. Surveys of the annual consumption of young people in the ninth grade have been carried out in Sweden since 1977 and surveys of year 2 upper secondary school students since 2004, with the exception of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS DECLINING. Drinking levels fell in the late 1970s and early 80s, but in the 90s, consumption levels rose again, and by 2000, boys in the 9th grade were drinking 5.3 litres of pure alcohol per year, which is the highest volume ever measured. The figures for girls peaked in 2005, when they drank 3.2 litres of pure alcohol (apart from 1977 when the volume was even higher). Consumption levels by boys and girls have been more or less stable over the recent years, totalling around 1.0 litre. Annual consumption levels amongst upper secondary school students have also fallen over time and boys and girls drank, on average, 2.6 litres and 1.9 litres, respectively, in 2019.



The estimated average annual consumption, measured in litres of pure alcohol (100%) in year 9 and 2nd year of upper secondary school, and by gender, 1986–2020. (1997–1989 are estimated values).

THE PERCENTAGE WHO DRINK HEAVILY AND OFTEN HAS DECREASED.

The amount that young people drink every year doesn't give the whole picture, however: it's equally important to look at how many are drinking in a risky way when they're drinking. 8 per cent of ninth graders said that they binge drink (one bottle of wine or corresponding amount of other alcoholic beverages) at least once a month. The corresponding figure for students in year 2 of upper secondary school was 20 per cent in 2019. Which is far fewer than ten years ago.



THE MOST COMMON PROBLEMS. The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) also asks, as part of their survey of school students, about the sort of problems young people have experienced in connection to alcohol. Here are some of the most common responses by teenagers who have drunk alcohol during the past 12 months:

	9th grade		2nd year, upper secondary	
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Arguments	18	22	24	23
Damaged possessions or clothing	19	21	26	25
Fights	10	5	12	4
Lost money or valuables	13	14	16	19
Been photographed in compromising/offensive situations	16	22	19	19
Issues with friends	8	19	11	14
Had an accident or been hurt	13	13	13	11
Difficulties in their relationship with their parents	9	15	7	9
Had sex they've regretted the next day	8	10	13	14
Ridden a moped, driven a car, or other vehicle under the influence of alcohol	18	10	11	6
Ridden a moped or been a passenger in a car when the driver had been drinking	14	15	8	8

Perceived problems in connection with alcohol, students in year 9 (2020) and 2nd year of upper secondary school (2019), by gender.



WHAT DO TEENAGERS DRINK?

Ninth graders and upper secondary school students usually drink spirits, strong beer, alcopops, or cider. The fact that teenagers are drinking so much spirits is a cause for concern. If a young person finds it harder to judge the effects of alcohol in general, they're hardly going to find it easier under the influence of 40% spirits.

SPIRITS, CIDER AND ALCOPOPS. Upper secondary school boys mainly drink strong beer, followed by spirits, cider and alcopops. Wine and mid-strength beers are less common. Upper secondary school girls usually drink alcopops and cider, followed by spirits and wine. They drink considerably less strong beer and mid-strength beer. Spirits are most common amongst ninth graders.

*Most people drink spirits.
It gets you drunker and you don't
need to drink so much.*
Jesper, aged 15, Umeå

SMUGGLED AND ILLICIT SPIRITS. In 2020, 28 per cent of ninth graders had drunk some form of illicit alcohol, i.e. home-distilled or smuggled beer, wine or spirits. The corresponding share amongst upper secondary school students was 44 per cent, 2019. The percentage who had drunk smuggled alcohol has not changed very much over the past 20 years, while the percentage of who had drunk home-distilled or home-brewed alcohol (7 per cent in ninth grade) has declined sharply over the same period. Drinking illegal alcohol is more common amongst girls than boys.

MID-STRENGTH BEER IS STRONGER THAN MANY THINK. When teenagers start drinking stronger and stronger beverages, there's a risk that they will regard weaker drinks as harmless. Getting drunk on mid-strength beer can seem almost impossible. However, it definitely is. A sixpack of large cans of mid-strength beer contains almost as much alcohol as, for example, 6 normal-sized drinks.

*Cider's good. It tastes like a
soft drink and you don't get
totally plastered.*

Michelle, aged 15, Örebro



*A lot of people
pretend to be
drunk because they
don't want to
stand out from
the crowd.*

*Max, aged 16,
Gothenburg*





WHERE DO THEY GET THE ALCOHOL?

It's actually pretty remarkable just how easy it is for young people to get hold of alcohol. Not only is it illegal to buy alcohol for them, but most adults don't think teenagers should be drinking alcohol. So where are teenagers getting their alcohol?

OTHER ADULTS, FRIENDS, OR FRIENDS' SIBLINGS. Teenagers who drink are most likely to get their alcohol from Systembolaget. 26 per cent of ninth graders say that an adult who is not a sibling or parent bought it for them. The second most common sources are boy- and girlfriends, friends, or friends' siblings - who were mentioned by 17 per cent of boys and 30 per cent of girls. The corresponding percentages amongst year 2 upper secondary school students are 28 per cent of boys and 45 per cent of girls (2019).

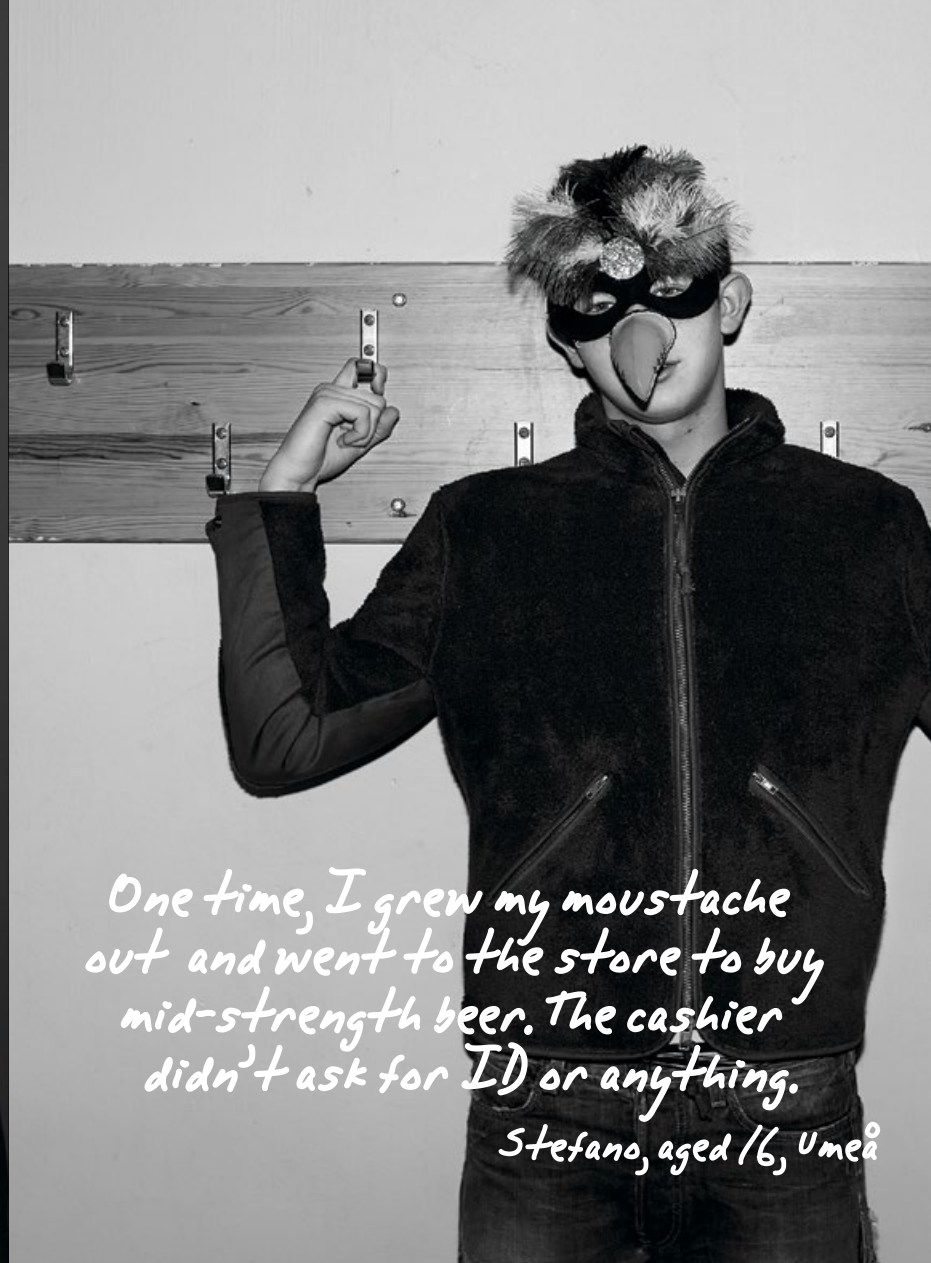
If you're outgoing, it's no problem at all getting hold of alcohol. You just have to know the right people.
Kevin, aged 15, Umeå

FROM HOME. Some teenagers get alcohol from their own parents, with 13 per cent of ninth graders cite their parents as a source of alcohol. The corresponding figure amongst upper secondary school students in 2019 was 23 per cent.

SMUGGLING. 31 per cent of the ninth graders who had drunk smuggled alcohol got it from an adult who bought or sold it. 25 per cent got their alcohol from a boyfriend or girlfriend, friends or friends' siblings. The alcohol is usually cheap, which means the teenagers can buy more of it.

*My sister asked me if I wanted
her to buy for me. I said no,
but then she asked me again if
I was completely sure.*

Nicole, aged 14, Örebro



*One time, I grew my moustache
out and went to the store to buy
mid-strength beer. The cashier
didn't ask for ID or anything.*

Stefano, aged 16, Umeå



ILLEGAL ALCOHOL

In the past, young people often bought home-distilled alcohol from someone they knew. Nowadays, they buy alcohol that has been smuggled into the country from illegal dealers, instead. One in every five ninth graders who drinks alcohol have bought smuggled alcohol.

INDIVIDUALS AND CRIMINAL NETWORKS. The people engaging in this illegal trade include both private individuals and a range of organised criminal networks, with large amounts of alcohol brought into the country through buying trips by car to countries where alcohol is considerably cheaper than in Sweden. The car trunks are usually packed to the brim with beer, wine, and spirits – when stopped by Customs, it's not uncommon to find over 1,500 litres there. If they're not stopped, once they're back in Sweden, they sell the alcohol to anyone at all. It doesn't matter whether it's to an adult or to a child.

*You just put up a post, asking if
anyone can get hold of some spirits.
And then, like one second later,
someone messages you and asks you
what you want.*

Wille, aged 16, Gothenburg

24/7 SALES. The dealers usually keep substantial stocks of the illegal alcohol at home, in their cellars, garages or other storage areas. And they are open 24/7 to anyone. Their mobile numbers are spread around schools and, in particular, online. All you need to do is text them and the seller will deliver directly to the address of your choice.



THEY SELL TO ADULTS. AND THEY SELL TO KIDS, TOO. Some adults buy cheap alcohol from the same illegal dealers who sell to teenagers. The signals it sends to teenagers probably never crossed their mind. But if parents buy from a garage, they might find it hard to be credible when talking to their teenagers about the law and age limits. And by buying alcohol in this way, they're also encouraging an illegal business that makes it easier for young people to get hold of alcohol.

I don't know where the alcohol comes from. It's my friends who hook us up.

Petra, aged 15, Gothenburg

IT'S NOT JUST THE ALCOHOL THAT CAN BE DANGEROUS. Selling alcohol illegally is a serious crime punishable with heavy fines or prison sentences. Teenagers who buy alcohol from dealers are, in other words, doing business with criminals who are often involved in other forms of illegal activity too. Which means not only that they're encouraging an illegal trade, but that the relationship itself can be directly hazardous.



OTHER DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES

It's sometimes said that alcohol is a gateway drug to narcotics. That youngsters who drink alcohol will look for stronger kicks and eventually try hard drugs. Fortunately, this isn't the case. Most young people don't even consider trying narcotics. However, smoking cannabis, for example, is more common among heavy users of alcohol or tobacco smokers.

TOBACCO. Just like alcohol, nicotine increases your body's production of dopamine, which makes you feel happy and feel good. But nicotine is strongly addictive and has a massive effect on your body. Effects include an increased heart rate, higher blood pressure, and poorer overall fitness. Memory and learning abilities are also affected. It was previously thought that to get addicted to nicotine, you had to use tobacco every day, but research has shown that you can become addicted even if you don't smoke or use snus (moist snuff) every day.

SMOKING AND SNUS USAGE. 11 per cent of girls and 8 per cent of boys in the ninth grade say that they smoke. The corresponding figures in year 2 of upper secondary school (2019) were 21 per cent of girls and 20 per cent of boys. More than 6 out of every 10 smokers want to quit, but the majority of them said that they would do so "at some point in the future". It's hard for teenagers to understand that quitting will get harder and harder for every year that passes and that it may eventually become one of the hardest things they could do. The percentage who use snus has declined since the start of this century. However over the past few years it has increased again. Snus usage is more common amongst boys, but the figures are increasing for both girls and boys. In 2020, 13 per cent of boys and 7 per cent of girls in the ninth grade said that they used snus. The corresponding figures amongst upper secondary school students (2019) was 22 per cent of boys and 10 per cent of girls.

PARENTS AND TOBACCO. If you're an adult who smokes or uses snus, you should still try to convince your teenager that they shouldn't start using. Who knows? Maybe, if you have that discussion, it'll persuade you to try quitting yourself?

E-CIGARETTES. Electronic cigarettes are a relatively new product and one that has rapidly grown in popularity amongst young people.

In 2020, one third of all ninth graders said that they had used e-cigarettes. The liquids inhaled when vaping often contain both nicotine and additives that can be harmful to health. The minimum age limit for both e-cigarettes and ordinary cigarettes is 18 years.

ALL NARCOTICS ARE ILLEGAL. In Sweden, it's illegal to buy, sell, use, produce or possess narcotics or controlled medicines without a prescription. The attitude towards cannabis, for example, is more liberal in some other countries. But in Sweden, it's illegal for young people and adults alike.

WHERE DO THEY GET THE NARCOTICS? Young people who have used narcotics most commonly get them from friends or from their boy- or girlfriend. Just over half of 9th graders and 6 out of every 10 upper secondary school students mentioned this as their source. The second most common source is dealers or acquaintances. The more frequently teenagers use narcotics, the more likely they are to buy from dealers or to order online.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE BODY? Cannabis and other types of drugs affect the brain. You may experience problems concentrating, your memory may be poorer and you may find it harder to learn things. That's not good for anyone, but it's perhaps worst of all for anyone who is in school. Not only that, but young people's brains are particularly sensitive, so drugs will cause more damage in young people's brains than in adults'.

CANNABIS – THE MOST COMMON NARCOTIC. Cannabis (marijuana or hashish) is the most common narcotic in Sweden. 6 per cent of girls and 9 per cent of boys in the ninth grade said they had tried narcotics. It's even more common amongst year 2 upper secondary school

students, with 13 per cent of girls and 19 per cent of boys (2019) stating that they had used narcotics. Around 9 out of every 10 of these students had tried cannabis.

CAN YOU GET ADDICTED TO CANNABIS? Absolutely. Approximately 1 in 10 people who ever use cannabis and 1 in 6 of those who start using cannabis at an early age, become addicted. Half of those who use it daily will develop an addiction.

*I'd never try drugs. If someone offered, I'd just walk away.
Ida, aged 15, Örebro*

PHARMACEUTICALS. Many pharmaceutical products are classified as narcotics because they can give you a rush and cause addiction. 5 per cent of ninth graders have, at some point, used sleeping pills, tranquillisers, analgesics, or central nervous system stimulants. Around 3 per cent of 9th graders (2020) and 4 per cent of upper secondary school students (2019) have combined alcohol with pharmaceuticals in order to become intoxicated. 8 per cent of ninth graders have used narcotics, if you include those who have also used pharmaceutical products classified as narcotics without a prescription. You'll find tips about organisations you can contact for information about other substances on pages 132 –135.



ALCOHOL AND SPORTS

Sports aren't just about performing well on the pitch, horseback or in the swimming pool. It's also about being part of a team, a group, and about having a captain or team leader. Most people would agree that sports and alcohol are a bad combination. Sports are a good forum for talking to young people about alcohol because a great many teenagers are regularly involved in sport through a club or association. But we also know that many youngsters come into contact with alcohol in sporting contexts. Why?

A LOT OF TEENAGERS DRINK TO FIT IN. Teenagers are often curious about all the things you haven't tried. Plus you want to have fun and to fit in. So if your teammates have a beer in the sauna, you might worry that you'll be seen as boring if you don't join in. For many teenagers, it's that beer that is their first contact with alcohol. But alcohol and sports don't belong together, not for adults nor for children. Talk to your teenager and help them come up with reasons that make it easier for them to say "no". If the team or club has a permissive attitude towards alcohol, it's a good idea for you, as a parent, to raise the subject with the leaders or with the parents of the other teenagers on the team.

*The first time I got drunk was
at a training camp in Germany.
Ella, aged 15, Gothenburg*

ALCOHOL HAS MANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS. The vast majority of young people know that alcohol affects the body, but far fewer of them are aware of the effects of alcohol on sporting performances. Drinking substantially harms your performance – not just when you're drunk, but the next day too. Alcohol also affects the coordination that is so important in team sports, and prevents your body from building muscle and recovering as it should. Playing less well because you're hung over can be seen as a massive let down by your teammates.

IT'S EASIER TO SAY "NO" AS A TEAM. Sports can act as a protective factor by offering young people a meaningful and fun leisure activity. Taking an active stance concerning alcohol can make a big difference and is actually something young people want. Two thirds of young people agree that teams and sports clubs should talk more about the risks associated with drinking alcohol in conjunction with sport. As a parent, you have an important part to play, too. If there is a permissive alcohol culture in the team, training group, or sports association – raise the issue with the team leaders and other parents. Ideally, the club should have a unified stance on what is and isn't allowed and should state these rules in the form of a policy. Over half of all young people say that it would be considerably easier to say "no" to alcohol if there was a shared agreement not to drink.

You're not allowed to smoke or drink at my club. If you do, they contact your parents and you might get kicked off the team.

Nimo, aged 16, Gothenburg

TALK AND DISCUSS. Formulating a policy on paper is one thing, but theory needs to be put into practice. Keep the conversation between the team leaders and teenagers alive: what do you do if you see a teammate drinking and how might the group suffer as a result of drinking? Some team leaders find it easy to talk about this sort of thing with young people, but some have no idea how to approach the subject. Furthermore, many team leaders are young people themselves, and lack the experience that you have as an adult. Which is why it's good if you, as a parent, can help out.





ALCOHOL AND SEX

Alcohol affects both your feelings and your judgement. Many people feel more relaxed after a few beers, that a few drinks help get the conversation started and will make those around you both more attractive and better company. But alcohol and sex are a bad combination.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES. Your teenage years are when your interest in sex increases and when the majority of young people have their first sexual experiences. Many adults believe that youngsters are intoxicated when they have sex for the first time. But that isn't the case. The majority of young people have not drunk alcohol when they make their sexual debut. Teenagers themselves also state that their most recent sexual experiences were positive and felt secure.

IT CAN DAMAGE SELF-ESTEEM. The whole closeness and sex thing can be tricky, and for many, it feels easier when you've drunk alcohol. Even small amounts of alcohol can reduce our nervousness and inhibitions, and can make you feel more relaxed and bold. And if it felt embarrassing, there's always something to blame it on later. But it's hard to feel the intimacy that you can both give and receive during physical contact with someone else if you have alcohol in your system. And if your first sexual experience with another person happens when you're drunk, there's also a real risk that, over time, it will feel natural to be intoxicated during sex. And eventually, you may not know how to get close to someone or have sex without having drunk alcohol.

*A lot of people cheat when they're drunk.
It's like you don't think, you just do.
Julius, aged 15, Örebro*

UNPROTECTED SEX. Alcohol impairs your judgement, and the same is true when it comes to safe and consensual sex. We're less aware, and what may initially be perceived as a positive effect of the alcohol can turn into something negative. It can lead to unprotected sex,

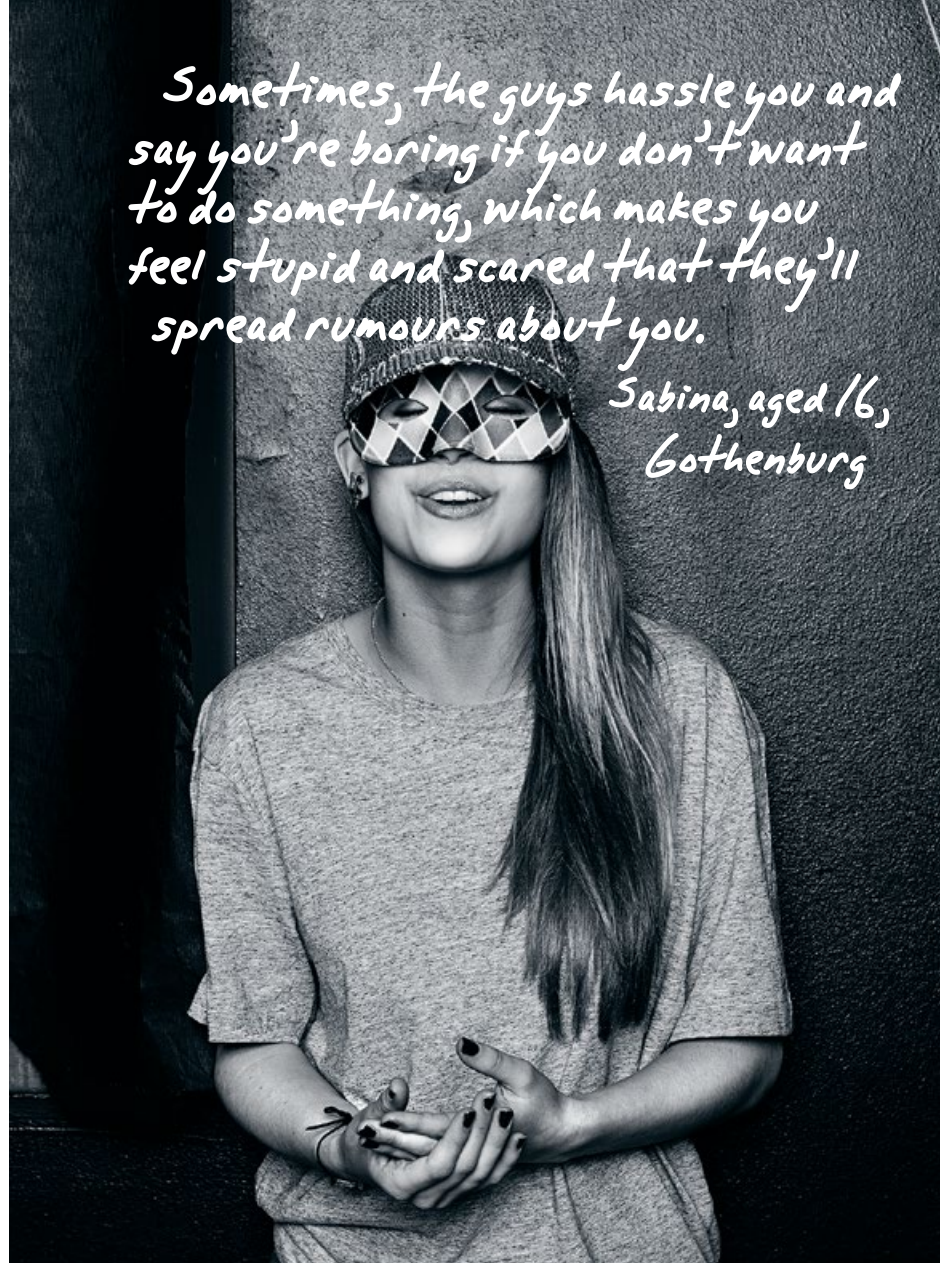
23 per cent of upper secondary students state that they didn't use protection when they had sex under the influence. Girls take greater responsibility than boys, not just before and during sex, but afterwards too, e.g. when it comes to testing for sexually transmitted infections.

SEX YOU REGRET. 9 per cent of year 2 upper secondary school students who drink state that they have had sex when drunk, that they later regretted. And sadly, young people do have sex against their will when they're drunk. As an adult, it's important that you talk to your child about the importance of sex being both safe and consensual. Make it very clear that they should only have sex if they really want to. And that there are, of course, no excuses whatsoever for sexual assault.

YOUNG PEOPLE WATCH PORN. Pornography has become an easily accessible and major part of many teenagers' lives. Most boys and the majority of girls have consumed pornography at least once in their teens. It is easy to acquire a distorted image of what's expected of you. Porn is usually one-sided and emotionally disengaged. The content that young people encounter is often crude, aggressive, and degrading. And porn often has a number of negative effects on teenagers, ranging from physical harm and sexual violence to performance anxiety and an impact on body image. We also know that young people who watch a lot of porn also drink more alcohol than young people who don't. It's important that you, as an adult, talk to your child about how what they're seeing does not reflect the reality of intimacy or sexual relationships. Nuance the picture that porn paints and highlight the risks.

Sometimes, the guys hassle you and say you're boring if you don't want to do something, which makes you feel stupid and scared that they'll spread rumours about you.

*Sabina, aged 16,
Gothenburg*





WHEN OTHER PEOPLE'S KIDS ARE IN TROUBLE

If you find out or suspect that someone else's teenager is drinking, in a bad place or that their home circumstances are giving cause for concern, you can try to do something about it. But you have to handle it sensibly, even if it's not your child who's involved. Here are a few things to bear in mind.

DON'T GO BEHIND PEOPLE'S BACKS. If your teenager tells you something about a friend and you don't think it's right to keep quiet about it, you have to explain why you feel that way. It's not about telling tales – it's about caring what happens. Your teenager has chosen to tell you, so they're probably hoping, that you'll act on the information. Let your child know what you're intending to do, so that they don't feel that you're breaking a confidence.

DON'T TAKE ON THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE OFFICER ALL BY YOURSELF. If you're worried about another teenager, get help from other adults. Start by getting in touch with the teenager in question's parents, as long as the concern doesn't relate to something the parents are doing. If that's the case, or if they don't act on your concerns, try contacting the school's Guidance Officer or the social services. The important thing is that someone reacts quickly. No teenager should have to suffer without any adult noticing or caring what happens.

*If I had a friend who drank a lot,
I'd tell my parents. But I don't
think they'd do anything.*
Nellie, aged 15, Gothenburg

HOME CIRCUMSTANCES THAT GIVE CAUSE FOR CONCERN. Studies have shown that around 320,000 children in Sweden have been negatively affected by growing up with at least one parent who

has an alcohol problem. The environment for children and young people living in close proximity with an adult who drinks too much is often a very unpredictable one, and increases the risk of a deterioration in both health and educational outcomes. But it can be difficult to know what to do and how you can best be of help. It's important to remember that you don't have to solve all of the problems at once. Showing that there's an adult who cares can be a big help. Simple actions, like asking how they're doing, setting an extra place at the table, or offering a lift home from training, can be a big help.

TALK TO OTHER SENSIBLE PEOPLE. If you're worried about someone else's child, or if something's happened, it's a good idea to talk to someone. Maybe there's someone in your circle who has experience of similar issues and with whom you can share your concerns. There are also a number of different organisations that are used to talking to both teenagers and parents about all sorts of issues and concerns. You'll find some suggestions on pages 132 –135.

Why should I tell my parents about things that involve my friends? They're not my parents' friends, after all.

Nadia, aged 16, Gothenburg





ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE

There's no doubt that alcohol and violence go hand in hand. In over half of all cases of assault, the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In one third of cases, the victim had been drinking, too. And it's often young people who are involved.

YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO GET INTO FIGHTS WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK. People who are drunk are more likely to fall victim to unprovoked violence than those who are sober, maybe because you aren't as good at keeping an eye on things when you're drunk. If you were sober, you might avoid eye contact or take a different route if you encounter someone who wants to fight. When you're drunk, your protective mechanisms may not work as well as they normally do.

IT'S USUALLY BOYS. Boys are more commonly involved in violence than girls, with 12 per cent of boys and 4 per cent of girls in year 2 of upper secondary school who drink alcohol saying that they have ended up in a fight when they've been drinking.

“**One of the major facts for success in our work with alcohol-related violence has involved interventions with young people who've got hold of alcohol illegally. Police seizures of alcohol have been shown to have a clear impact on the number of violent crimes in the areas studied.**”

Peter Ågren, Police Coordinator, Stockholm

MOST FIGHTS WHERE ALCOHOL IS INVOLVED HAPPEN IN PUBLIC. Most fights involve two young males of more or less the same age. The reason for the fight is often trivial, such as supporting the wrong football team or accidentally bumping into someone. Much of the violence takes place in public spaces, such as in and around food outlets that are open late at night or on public transport. It's also common in the sort of places where a lot of young people gather – at parties,

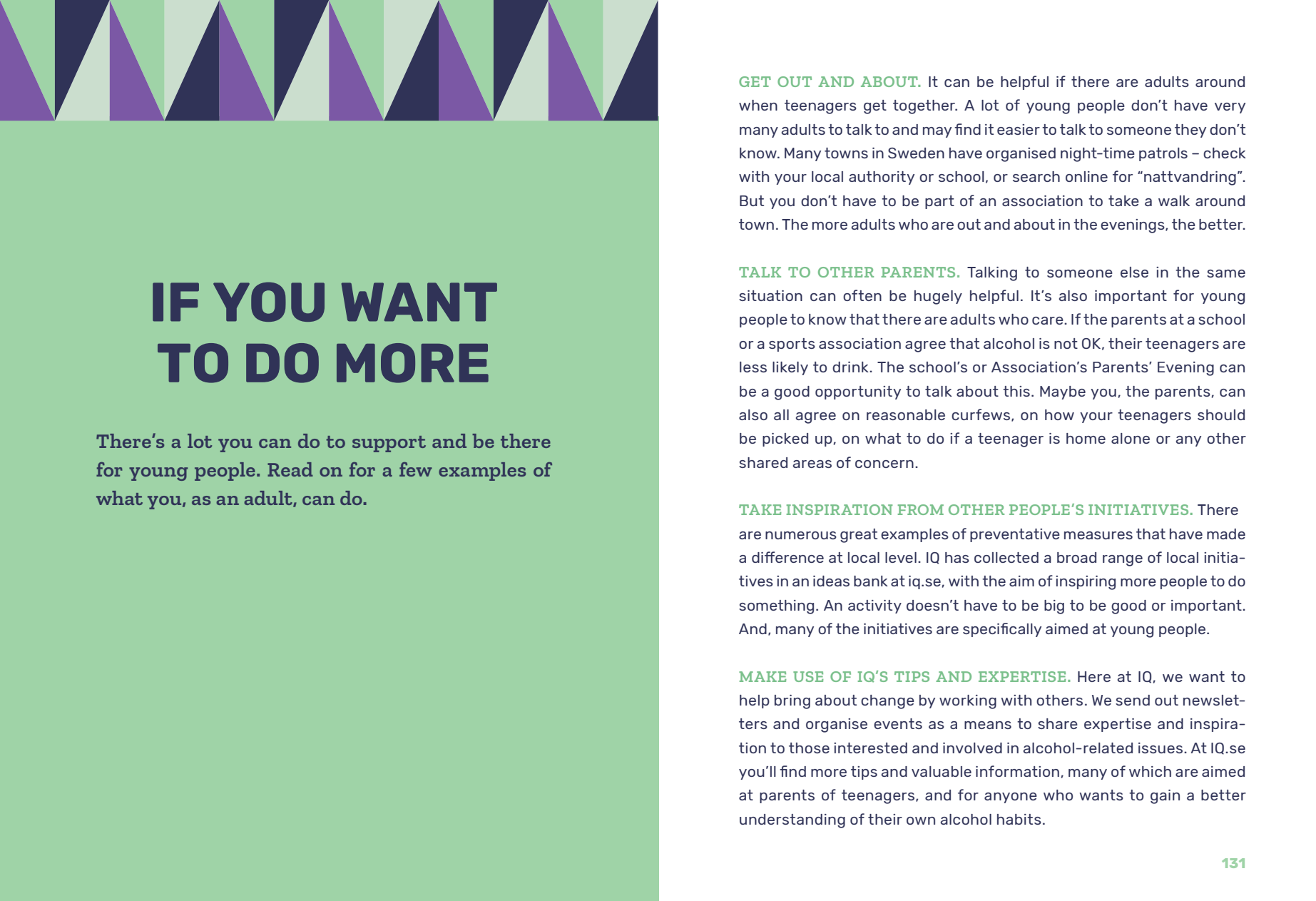
in parks, or during festivals. Talk about this with your teenager. They need to be aware so they can ensure they don't expose themselves to unnecessary risks.

All your emotions come to the surface when you're drunk and you tell people what you really think. And then some people get mad and you end up with a fight.

Paulina, aged 15, Örebro

STAYING SOBER REDUCES THE RISK. Not drinking alcohol is a good way to avoid fights. Alcohol not only lowers your awareness of what's happening around you, it reduces your ability to interpret a situation, making it harder to spot that someone is getting upset or spoiling for a fight. Most people also feel bigger and tougher when they're intoxicated, and they say things they wouldn't otherwise have said. Equally, it's easier to get mad and take offence when you're drunk. But even if it's usually drunken teenagers who end up in trouble, being sober doesn't mean you're risk-free – it is often, sad to say, about being in the wrong place at the wrong time. You might like to suggest to your teenager that they should avoid hanging out in places where violence might be more likely to flare up. Walking away doesn't make you a coward. Think about the time of day, too – the majority of assaults take place in public spaces at night (between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.). When at least one of the people involved is under the influence of alcohol.





IF YOU WANT TO DO MORE

There's a lot you can do to support and be there for young people. Read on for a few examples of what you, as an adult, can do.

GET OUT AND ABOUT. It can be helpful if there are adults around when teenagers get together. A lot of young people don't have very many adults to talk to and may find it easier to talk to someone they don't know. Many towns in Sweden have organised night-time patrols – check with your local authority or school, or search online for “nattvandring”. But you don't have to be part of an association to take a walk around town. The more adults who are out and about in the evenings, the better.

TALK TO OTHER PARENTS. Talking to someone else in the same situation can often be hugely helpful. It's also important for young people to know that there are adults who care. If the parents at a school or a sports association agree that alcohol is not OK, their teenagers are less likely to drink. The school's or Association's Parents' Evening can be a good opportunity to talk about this. Maybe you, the parents, can also all agree on reasonable curfews, on how your teenagers should be picked up, on what to do if a teenager is home alone or any other shared areas of concern.

TAKE INSPIRATION FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES. There are numerous great examples of preventative measures that have made a difference at local level. IQ has collected a broad range of local initiatives in an ideas bank at iq.se, with the aim of inspiring more people to do something. An activity doesn't have to be big to be good or important. And, many of the initiatives are specifically aimed at young people.

MAKE USE OF IQ'S TIPS AND EXPERTISE. Here at IQ, we want to help bring about change by working with others. We send out newsletters and organise events as a means to share expertise and inspiration to those interested and involved in alcohol-related issues. At IQ.se you'll find more tips and valuable information, many of which are aimed at parents of teenagers, and for anyone who wants to gain a better understanding of their own alcohol habits.

USEFUL CONTACTS

It can sometimes be good to talk to someone who knows a bit more about teenagers and alcohol. Below you'll find a list of some of the organisations you can contact if you feel that you need help. Some of them are aimed at adults, others at young people.

FOR ADULTS

Social services

The place to contact social workers who are used to talking to teenagers and parents about all sorts of issues. You'll find contact details on your local authority's website.

Childhood and adolescence psychiatric services (BUP)

This is the place to go if you want support from a psychologist or doctor. Search online and contact your local clinic.

Alkohollinjen: tel. 020-84 44 48

For anyone worried about their own or someone else's alcohol consumption. Open: Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m. and Friday 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Find out more at alkohollinjen.se

BRIS Adult helpline: tel. 077-150 50 50

Help line for adults who want to talk about matters involving children and young people. Open: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–12 noon.

Föräldrarlinjen: tel. 020-85 20 00

For anyone who wants support in their role as a parent, or who's worried about either their own child or a child in their circle. Open: weekdays: 10 a.m.–3 p.m. and Thursdays from 7–9 p.m. Find out more at mind.se

FOR YOUNGSTERS

Youth guidance centres

Open to anyone aged between 13 and 25 years of age. Find answers to your questions about relationships, sex, alcohol, drugs and other subjects. Go to umo.se for a list of phone numbers to every UMO clinic in Sweden.

BRIS helpline and chat: 116 11

Call, chat, or email with a Guidance Officer. For everyone under the age of 18. Open: 7 days a week, 2–9 p.m. Find out more at bris.se

jourhavandekompis.se

A Red Cross chat helpline for young people up to the age of 25. Open: weekdays, 6–9 p.m. and Saturday–Sunday, 2–5 p.m.

teamtilia.se

Chat function for young people and young adults who need someone who listens. Open: 7 days a week, 9–10.30 p.m.

killar.se

Support website for guys aged between 10 and 20. Chat open: Sunday–Thursday, 7–9 p.m.

tjejzonen.se

Support for girls up to the age of 25, including "Big Sister" support and chat. Chat open: Sunday–Thursday, 8–10 p.m.

maskrosbarn.org

Support for young people growing up with parents who have mental health or substance abuse issues. Chat open: in the evenings, Sunday–Friday.

tryggabarnen.org, tel. 070-47 77 910

For young people living closely with someone who has problems with alcohol, drugs, or mental health. Open 7 days a week. Chat function on Snapchat, username: Trygga Barnen.

ADDITIONAL INFO

FOR ADULTS

iq.se

More facts and tips about alcohol and the work of IQ.

tonarsparloren.se

Online and download version of The Teenage Phrasebook, along with information in other languages. Available to order and as an audio-book version in Swedish.

folkhalsomyndigheten.se

The Public Health Agency of Sweden. Facts, news and statistics about alcohol and other drugs.

can.se

The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs – CAN. Facts about alcohol and other drugs.

1177.se

Self-test and information on alcohol, etc.

alkoholhjalpen.se

Tips and advice for anyone worried about their own or someone else's alcohol consumption.

omsystembolaget.se

Information and facts about alcohol and health.

nonsmoking.se

Information and support aimed at persuading young people not to use tobacco.

fmn.se

Parents Against Drugs Association. Information and support for family of narcotics users.

cannabishjalpen.se

For anyone affected by cannabis.

mind.se

A charity that works to promote mental health and to support people in crisis.

raddabarnen.se/rad-och-kunskap/foralder

Support and handbooks on a number of subjects for parents and adults dealing with children.

FOR YOUNGSTERS

umo.se

Youth Guidance Centres online. Information and support for young people on a range of issues, including alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

drugsmart.com

Information and a discussion forum on alcohol, cannabis, tobacco and other drugs.

ungadrogforebyggare.se

Charitable organisation of young people who work to prevent drug use by spreading knowledge and moulding public opinion.

bris.se

Children and young people can call the BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) helpline on 116 111, or email them (BRIS mail) or chat online (BRIS chat) via bris.se.

tjejjouren.se

Facts and figures database. Girls' Guide and contact details for all "tjejjouren" and youth clinics throughout Sweden.

cannabishjalpen.se

For everyone affected by cannabis.

trafikverket.se/ddd/

The Swedish Transport Administration. Don't Drink and Drive – promoting sober driving and helping prevent young people from being injured in traffic.

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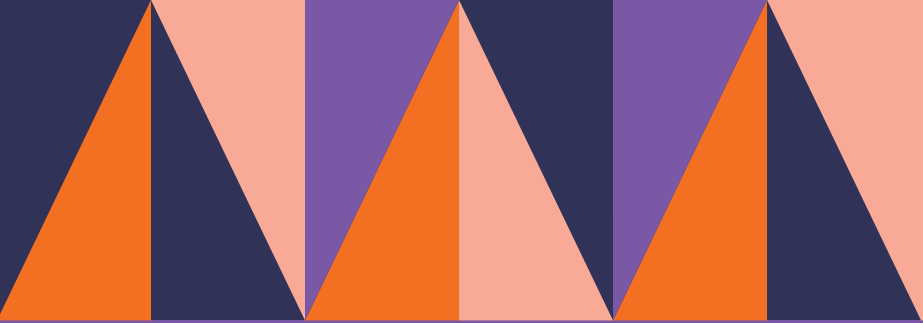
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Should you offer teenagers alcohol at home? Should you stay up and wait for them to come home at night? What do you do when your teenager doesn't stick to an agreement? What do young people think about drinking?

Being a teenager's parent isn't always that easy. This book is full of tips, arguments, facts and figures that you might find useful. Make life a little easier: read it!

TONÅRSPARLÖREN.SE



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