
6 Common Dating Rules Parents Set for Christian Teens

Pros, Cons, and Suggestions

Many parents set rules for their Christian teens about dating. While setting rules is a good idea, it is important for parents to think through the rules that they do set. Parents need to know why they are setting the rules, and they also need to discuss the rules openly with their children. Here are some of the most common dating rules and how they can be used most effectively to guide teens through the world of dating:

1) No dating until you are ____ years old.

Pros: You can set an age where most teens have a good maturity level and are able to think independently.

Cons: Not all teens mature at the same rate, so even though your teen comes to that age, he or she may still not be able to handle it.

The Solution: Try using that age as a "review" age. Tell your teen that you will talk about dating when he or she is ____ years old. Then you can sit down and have a conversation to see if your teen is ready.

2) You must date a fellow Christian.

Pros: The Bible says Christians should be yoked to fellow believers. If a teen is dating another Christian, there is a greater likelihood that they will remain abstinent and supportive of one another.

Cons: Some people say they are Christians, but they are not necessarily Godly in their actions. Setting this rule alone can breed lying and inappropriate activities.

The Solution: You can set the rule, but also leave it open for your approval. Make sure you meet the dating partner. Don't grill him or her about their faith, but get to know him or her to evaluate whether or not you think this teen shares your child's values.

3) Dates must be in public places.

Pros: Dating that occurs in public places prevents temptation from getting the better of teenagers. They are always being watched by other people.

Cons: Just saying that the dating has to occur in public places does not necessarily ensure that the people around your Christian teen will hold him or her accountable. Also, teens sometimes don't stay in one place for an entire date.

The Solution: There are several solutions to this issue. You can try driving your teen to and from the place where the date will happen. You can also require that your teen go on dates where other Christians will be present.

4) Double dates are mandatory.

Pros: Going on a date with another couple helps hold your teen responsible and resist temptation. Christian teens face a lot of the same temptations as other young people, so having friends there can be helpful.

Cons: The other couple may not share the same values as your Christian teen. They may encourage inappropriate activity or leave early.

The Solution: Encourage your teen to call you if the other couple leaves or does anything that compromises your teen's situation. Also, try to meet the other couples so that you can feel more comfortable about your teen associating with him or her.

5) No sex until you are married.

Pros: Letting your teen know that you expect purity is important to tell your teen. Your direct statement will be in the back of their head, even if they seem to scoff at your statement.

Cons: Demanding that your child wait until marriage to have sex without explaining why may backfire. Using a punishment approach (the infamous, "If you have sex, you will go to Hell" approach) may only make your teen more curious.

The Solution: Spend some time discussing sex with your teen so that he or she understands why God wants teens to wait until marriage. Having a clear understanding of why they should wait can help teens make better decisions.

6) Avoid situations that increase temptation.

Pros: Telling your teen to be careful when holding hands, kissing, or touching can help him or her avoid situations that can end up going too far. It also helps teens identify early when a situation is becoming dangerous.

Cons: Just making the blanket demand can make it easy for teens to rebel or go too far without understanding. Teens may also not understand what to do when they end up in a tempting situation.

The Solution: Discuss temptation openly with your teen. You don't have to divulge all of your temptations, but explain how temptation is normal and everybody faces it. Also go over ways to avoid temptation, but also ways to cope when faced with it. Be sure to include what "too far" means and how to be safe from things like date rape when in tempting situations.

While all of these rules are appropriate, it will be easier for your teen to follow your rules if they understand where the rules come from. Don't just cite scripture - explain how it applies. If you feel uncomfortable doing it on your own, bring in another parent, youth worker, or youth pastor to help.