

Advice for Sending Your Kid Off to the Next Step

Topics for Conversations in the Months Ahead

- 1. Communication plan.** Aim for a balance between keeping in touch and allowing students to have freedom to establish a new core network. What does each party expect?
- 2. Time and freedom.** Ask questions to prompt your student's strategies for dealing with greater independence: Will you use a calendar? Where will you study? Together, figure out how much \$ each class costs and have a ballpark for how much \$ is wasted for each hour of class missed.
- 3. Privacy.** Student academic and health records are not open to parents. Discuss expectations. Parents who are helping pay for school may expect to have passwords and access to online grading systems, and families should consider preparing legal documents. (See: [Will you be able to help your college-age child in a medical emergency? Consumer Reports](#) 7.2016 and [If your Kid is 18 You Need These Documents Investopedia](#) 1.9.2018 or [Documents You Need When a Child Turns 18 Wall Street Journal](#), 11.2017.)
- 4. Sex, drugs, and alcohol.** Students will be confronted with all sorts of situations. Discuss safe participation, limits, realities of binge drinking and sexual assault, [consent](#), campus resources, and alternative ways to have fun.
- 5. Money.** Who provides spending money? How will your student pay for things? Figure what kind of card: debit/prepaid credit/ regular credit. Monthly budget? Are there ATM / bank branches close to campus that are in your network? It may or may not make a difference since most students bank by phone.
- 6. Fitting in and finding friends.** How does one create a core of friends and support? (Get involved in clubs, intramural sports, or other organizations!) How to deal with homesickness?

When There are Difficulties

Dr. Houston Dougharty, Former VP for Student Affairs at Grinnell College, has the following advice for parents when their students call home in distress. Often, the kids simply need to get their anxieties out. Help by asking:

1. How does that make *you* feel?
2. What can *you* do about it?
3. Who *there* can help you with that?

Parents may have to figure out if and when to get involved. In general, students should handle academic and employment matters themselves (professors *do not* appreciate calls from parents!), but serious health and safety considerations call for your involvement.

Recommended Tasks

1. Together, check your student's credit report.
2. Identify the nearest urgent care facility.
3. Set up local emergency contacts.
4. See if your student's institution has an emergency alert system that you can opt into.
5. Have *your student* set up summer appointments for a dental cleaning, an eye exam, and a routine physical. Perhaps it is time for your student to graduate from the pediatrician.
6. Consider whether the student needs a Meningitis B vaccination (may be recommended).
7. Consider the implications of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act) privacy laws and, if you choose, set up four legal documents in case of a crisis:
 - Health Care Power of Attorney so that parent/ guardians can help make health-related decisions;
 - HIPAA Authorization so that providers will share health information with parent/ guardians;
 - Financial Power of Attorney so that you parent/ guardians can manage finances;
 - Education Record Release so that parent/ guardians will receive educational notices, including but not exclusively related to grades or financial aid.Institutions may have their own HIPAA and FERPA-related waivers; inquire and fill out.

Visiting

Go to Parents' Weekend. You may hear much more in person than you do via Skype, and you can assess your student's health and situation. Since the priority should be time with your student, feel free to skip college-organized activities if you want a chance to just be together.

Other than designated holidays, discuss if and how often your student will come home or you will visit.

Recommended Resources

Online

*[Tea and Consent](#) by Thames Valley Police. More entertaining with a British accent.

*[Parenting a College Student: What to Expect](#) by Marshall Duke, Emory College Professor

YouTube: Parenting a College Student by Professor Marshall Duke EmoryUniversity.

The video is long but funny and useful. Prof. Duke suggests planning your parting words ahead of time.

[College Parents Learn to Survive the First Year](#) by Steve Gladis. 10 tips: #1 Offer roots and wings; #2 Communicate, communicate, communicate; #7 Keep eyes half shut. Originally in The Washington Post.

[Rob Lowe on Sending His Son Off to College](#) Slate.com.

[Advice for College Freshmen \(& their Parents\)](#) by Dr. David S. Kantra. Psych Digest June 2010.

While making the transition from familiar constants to uncertain variables, discomforts are inevitable.

[College Parent Central](#). Blog with information & advice for parents of college students. The page on [How Parents Can Help Their College Student in Difficulty](#) has many 'what if' scenarios with ideas and tips.

Book for Parents

*[The Launching Years](#) by local authors Laura Kastner, Ph.D., and Jennifer Wyatt, Ph.D. Focuses on senior year & the first year after. Deals with family relationships, describes a "license to choose" guidance strategy.

Book for Parents & Students

*[Girls & Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape](#) by Peggy Orenstein. "Provocative and thoughtful...Both an examination of sexual culture and a guide on how to improve it." (Laura Stepp, Washington Post) "Buy two copies: One for yourself, and one for the teenager in your life. Because kids — boys and girls, gay and straight — need to understand..." (Michelle Elizabeth Williams, Salon.com)

Books for Students (only if you think they will actually read them!)

[1001 Things Every College Student Needs to Know](#) by Harry H. Harrison, Jr. I heard about this by looking at a student advice site. Very helpful and easily digestible, but only helpful if your student will actually read it!

[The Thinking Student's Guide to College: 75 Tips for Getting a Better Education](#) by Andrew Roberts. How to get a personalized education, by a Northwestern University professor. Based on research, interviews, and experience.

[The Naked Roommate and 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College](#) by Harlan Cohen. Funny, well-organized by sections: The Ultimate Roommate Rule; Why College Friends are Different; How to Get an A (or almost); About Your Parents. Use Amazon's "look inside" feature to decide if it would be helpful.

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