



Prom Guide

How to Plan a Prom

Prom is among the biggest experiences in high school, and it takes months of planning and thousands of dollars to put on a big, glitzy dinner and dance for hundreds of teenagers that they'll remember for years. Each party is unique to its student body, but PromGirl lays out the process for every prom committee to follow for a fun, unforgettable night.

RECRUIT A GOOD-SIZED COMMITTEE

The more people you have working on prom, which has a ton of logistics to iron out, the less overwhelming each task will be. Divide into subcommittees, including budget/fundraising, decorations, entertainment, tickets/invitations, publicity, royalty, venue and staffing.

PICK A THEME, DATE AND LOCATION

Look at athletics schedules, other events and when your desired venue is available. Your theme may be somewhat dependent on your venue, and can go broad like carnival or casino or more specific — a night in Paris, “Beauty and the Beast” or another movie, or masquerade ball. Or go a little nontraditional, with something like a haunted house theme. If you're not sure what your school would like, consider taking a poll of the student body.

The theme will also help determine the decorations, so keep your budget in mind as you're determining themes. Decorations that are more involved likely cost more, so factor that into your decisions. In fact, keep budget at the forefront of all your decisions.

RAISE MONEY

How much money you



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raise is going to determine a lot of what you're about to do with prom. Using your committee, figure out the best ways to raise money in your community, keeping in mind what other groups do so you're not overlapping, but if

one group had success with a certain fundraiser, consider doing it again. Talk to local businesses about sponsorships, do car washes, sell candy, popcorn or coupon books, or hold events to which you can sell tickets.

Check on Pinterest or other social sites for ideas.

PLAN OTHER ACTIVITIES

Dancing and photos are a given at prom, but you can also plan activities for people who aren't into dancing. Your

best option is to let the theme dictate your activities.

Is your theme casino night? How about having poker or blackjack tables? If your theme is carnival, have a few booths set up for games around the venue.

Girls' Attire

Prom doesn't start on prom night. Dresses, hair appointments and makeup are planned weeks in advance and can be a little intimidating, since most teens aren't dressing to the nines on a regular basis. PromGirl offers help for teenagers and their parents find the right dress and all the other little details that can make promgoers look their fanciest.

Prom dresses run the gamut — you can go classic floor-length ball gown a la Cinderella or something off-the-shoulder and knee-length for a more modern, chic look and just about anything in between.

Think about the type of fabric you want, the style that you like and what colors you'd consider. Think about your hairstyle and shoes. Look around online to get ideas and have a list of the types of dress you'd like when you go to stores to make your purchase. At dress stores, ask all the questions you want of the employees. They help teenagers get ready for prom every year and have good insight as to what will be the best dress for you. And don't forget to pay attention to your school's dress code.

Popular dress styles include the following:

- A-line, which has a tighter bodice and looser, flowing skirt, which gives you plenty of room to move if you're planning to dance the night away.

- Mermaid, which is form-fitting from neckline to hem.

- Corseted, which laces in the back for added support and style and is good for busty body types or petite girls.

- Halter dress, which provides additional support.

There are many other styles



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of dresses as well. If you're not sure which will look best with your body type, ask an employee at a dress store.

Want to go even more non-

traditional? Some girls wear a suit or tux to prom in lieu of a dress. Find one in which you feel comfortable.

When picking shoes, it's

helpful to have a swatch of fabric from your dress so you can match the colors. Keep in mind you'll be dancing, so get shoes that don't hurt your feet.

Make hair and makeup appointments as early as you can. Look through magazines or online to get an idea of how you want to look.

Boys' Attire

Sartorially, getting ready for prom is simpler for boys than girls.

They can rent a tuxedo instead of buying a full outfit, which costs less but has fewer ways to personalize the outfit. But teen boys can still look sharp and not like every other promgoer in a suit. PromGirl offers ways to step it up.

First, as with the girls, pay attention to the dress code.

Go look for tuxedos or a suit early. While the traditional tux is black and white, you can get colorful with a vest or cummerbund or even go a little nontraditional with a white or gray suit. If you want to get a little quirky with the color of your vest, tie or cummerbund, check with your date on the colors of their outfit. Maybe you don't mind not matching, or maybe one of you can change your outfit a bit to avoid clashing, but better to know before than to show up at your date's house wearing a bright red vest while your date is wearing a teal dress.

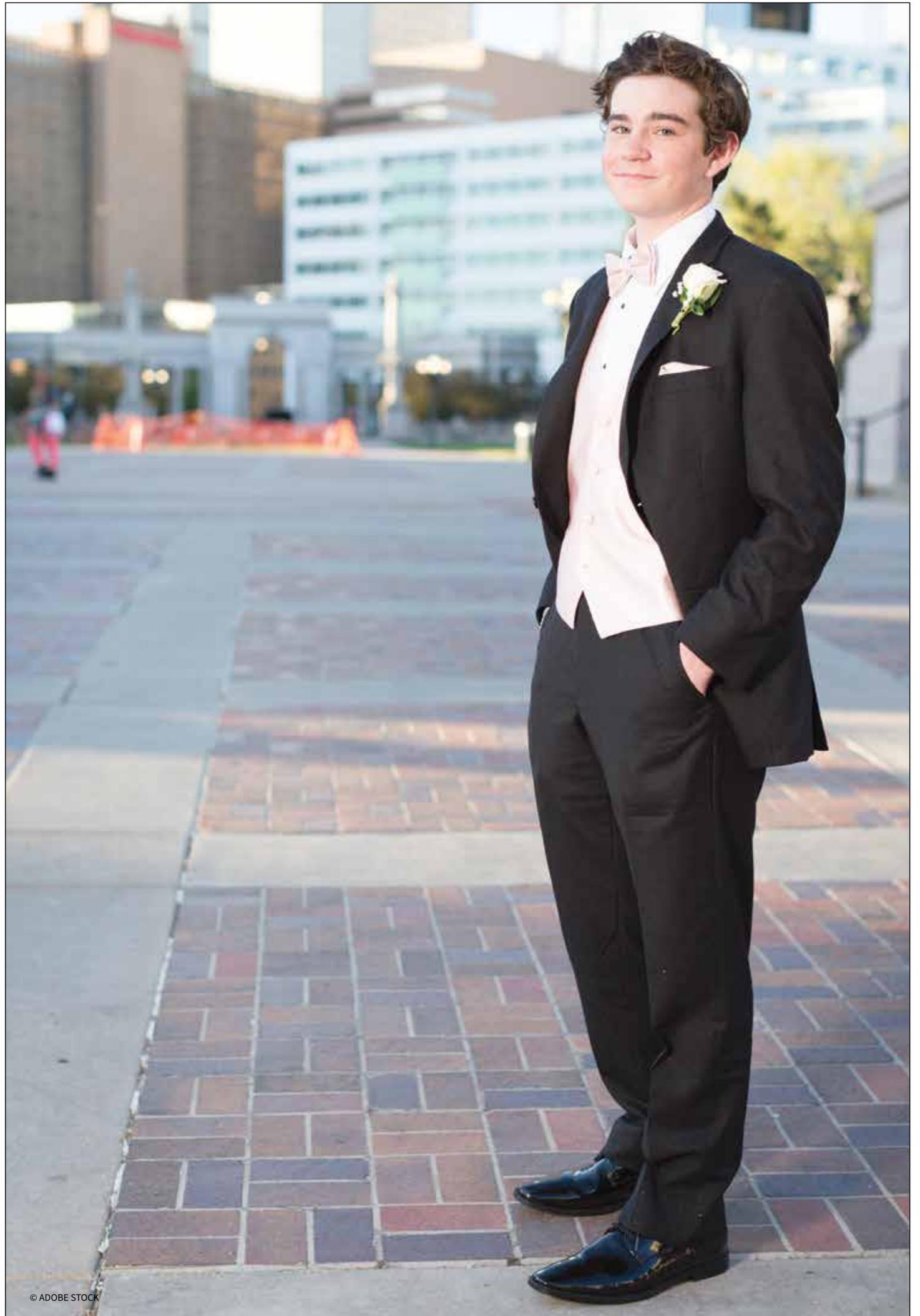
Never rented a tux before? It's a five-piece suit that includes a jacket, shirt, cummerbund or vest, tie and pants. The shirt should be tailored to fit and can have pleats; cuffs are either French or barrel style. Barrel cuffs are traditional; French cuffs are folded back to create a double-layered look.

Your teen can opt for either a bowtie or a long tie in the color or pattern of your choosing. Want a little more color? Get a flashy pocket square.

Shoes typically are part of the rental; shiny black dress shoes are traditional, but don't let that hold your promgoer back.

The other good news for tux-wearers is it's usually a one-stop shopping trip, including shoes if you want. Just don't wait too long; a lot of people from your high school will be looking for tuxes for the same night. Obviously, it's a rental, so keep it clean and make sure to return it on time.

Of course, a tuxedo isn't a requirement for prom. Wear a suit, with a vest or pocket square to dress it up.



Budgeting for Prom

Prom is a big night, and parents and promgoers should expect to spend some money.

Between the dress or tux, hair, makeup, corsages, limo, tickets, dinner, jewelry and other incidentals, the night can total in the hundreds of dollars. But you don't have to — you shouldn't, in fact — break the bank.

Know how much you can afford to spend and look for ways to reduce your costs. PromGirl talks you through what you'll need to budget for and ways to reduce those costs.

When you're planning your budget, keep this list in mind: tickets; dress or tuxedo and alterations; shoes; jewelry; purse or clutch; dinner; transportation; hair, makeup and nails; boutonniere or corsage; photos; and afterparty events. Your teenager may not need all of these things, so talk that out.

For girls, the dress is the biggest cost, and that can run from \$100 to \$600, plus alterations. One of PromGirl's tips: Plan way ahead and buy a dress after the last prom season or after New Year's, when fancier dresses go on sale, or watch bridal shops for sales and look at bridesmaid dresses.

Tuxedo rental usually runs close to \$150. The easiest way to save money on a tux is to forget about it and wear a suit instead. Spring for a new tie or

shoes (or add a vest for a three-piece suit) if you want to dress up your outfit.

Dinner may be included in the prom ticket, but if not, budget at least \$50, unless you and your date or group settle on a less expensive restaurant. Also, talk to your date about who's paying; they may want to split the cost of dinner or divide up the tickets and dinner.

Corsages (for girls) and boutonnieres (for boys) are the flowers promgoers wear. Corsages cost between \$15 and \$75 and boutonnieres cost between \$15 and \$30. Order these two to three weeks in advance.

Depending on hair, makeup and nails, you can spend about \$30 if go DIY and up to about \$300 if you go to a professional salon for all of them.

Other ways to keep your costs down:

- Forgo a limo and drive yourself;

- Buy a dress second hand, borrow or have a dress swap;
- Eat dinner at someone's house;

- Wear shoes or jewelry you already own; and
- Skip the professional photos.



No Date? No Problem!

No date for the big night? That's no reason not to go to prom and have fun eating, dancing and joking with your friends and classmates. Going with friends or being your own date is a great way to plan the evening that you want without the added pressure of a date, have a good time and maybe even save a little money.

PromGirl has lots of suggestions to make the night memorable no matter who you're with.

GOING WITH FRIENDS

You can all still go out to dinner beforehand, rent a limo and have an afterparty, or you can all meet at someone's house for dinner, or you can all help each other get dressed beforehand. Pick your dress or cummerbund color with abandon; no need to worry about matching your partner if no one's pairing up. Or, your group can pick a theme when choosing clothes or find some way to coordinate outfits. You can buy your own corsages (matching or not) or opt out of flowers completely. Plus, prom pictures, both with the parents beforehand and during the dance itself, can get a little fun and goofy with your friend group.

You can also save money by going with a group of friends; everyone splits the cost of the limo, you may decide to avoid the fancier restaurants and pick your group's favorite dive and you don't have to buy a corsage if you'd rather not.

GOING SOLO

Going solo gives you the chance to design an evening doing the things you want and making last-minute changes if you want to. It's easier for a



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solo diner to fit into a busy restaurant or go a little nontraditional; a prom night food truck run sounds great! You can meet up with friends at

any point in the night, joining them for dinner, being a social butterfly at the dance or checking out all the different afterparties your high school

has to offer.

This option also saves you some money and stress; you don't have to worry about matching outfits, you don't

need to buy a corsage (although you can and should buy yourself some flowers if you like the decoration) and no need to spring for a limo.

Safety Tips for Prom

It's important to be safe on prom night, particularly as it relates to drinking alcohol and driving, but there are other factors to keep in mind to have a safe and fun prom night. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has tips for prom night and leading up to prom night that will help teenagers be safe and parents to rest easier.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

This is undoubtedly the first to come to mind; some teenagers imbibe before, during or after prom. There are two major risks: binge-drinking, which is more common among inexperienced drinkers, and drinking and driving after prom or an afterparty. The CDC recommends not drinking alcohol or using drugs at all. Teens who do should not drive home, no matter how “fine” they may think they are. They should call their parents or a cab or rent a limo for the night.

SEX AND DATING VIOLENCE

Teens may feel pressured to have sex on prom night, which can be increased if they've been drinking. Talk to your kids about sexual boundaries and saying no if they don't feel ready. Also, be aware of dating violence (the risk of which also can increase with alcohol) and make sure your child knows what abusive behavior looks like and what to do if they experience it. Teens can have a buddy that they check in with throughout the night to offer support.

GETTING READY FOR PROM

You don't need to spend time at a tanning salon or out



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in the sun tanning to look good for prom. Tanning can cause serious harm to skin and lead to skin cancer later in life. If your teen wants to lose weight, ensure they're doing it

safely — healthy eating and lots of exercise, reducing salts and saturated fats and drinking lots of water — and not through crash dieting, which can lead to disordered eating.

Pay attention to the products your teen is using, including hair dyes, spray and gel and makeup. Do not dye eyebrows or eyelashes, and follow the directions for hair dye and

relaxers very carefully. If you're using new makeup, moisturizer or other product going on your skin, test it on a small patch of skin to ensure you're not allergic.

Chaperoning the Prom

No prom is complete without adult chaperones, and maybe this is your year!

If you end up at prom as a chaperone, make the night fun for you and the students. We Are Teachers provided a list of dos and don'ts for the teachers, administrators and parents who chaperone.

DO

Bring a date. You'll have a lot more fun and be better able to engage with students if you're dancing and chatting and having fun than if you're standing alone in a corner. It's also a good chance for date night for you and your spouse or partner. And really, don't be afraid to dance! Break out the dance moves from your prom and learn a couple of the new moves your students know.

Know how to use a smartphone camera and make yourself available to take pictures of students.

Give kids plenty of leeway to have fun and be kids, but also watch for behavior that definitely crosses a line. Step in when you see students grabbing dates forcefully or dancing in a way that is making many other students uncomfortable, drinking alcohol, bullying or other behaviors.

Remind students to be careful on prom night. (This

can start before the dance.) There a lot of "traditions" related to prom night related to sex, drugs and drinking, and you can help students understand the dangers of underage drinking, drinking and driving and other risky behaviors.

DON'T

Make it your dance. We Are Teachers recommends dancing when encouraged by the students, but don't take over the dance floor.

Dress too extravagantly. Prom dresses and tuxes aren't required for chaperones. Suits and basic cocktail dresses are sufficient, though if you need a little self-expression, add a fun tie or funky jewelry.

Take selfies. Leave that to the students.

Overpolice the dress code. It should be clear and students should be aware of it beforehand. If you see serious dress code violations, handle them sensitively and appropriately and with an eye to not humiliating students.

Police dancing too strictly. Aim to be sure students are striking the right balance between mature public conduct and having a good time.



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