

# Parent Survival Guide

Created by the Winchester Coalition for a Safer Community



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Dear Parent(s)/ Guardian(s),

As part of our ongoing commitment to provide information and support to parents in their efforts to set standards for and provide guidance to their child and/or teen, the Winchester Coalition for a Safer Community is presenting you this excerpt from our Parent Survival Guide. This guide contains information on topics like **ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE, BULLYING, AND THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES**. All of the topics included in this guide are divided into age-relevant sections, allowing you to easily consider the common dilemmas or situations that your child/teen may encounter as they pass through elementary, middle, and high school.

Also included is a section of general information for all parents to keep in mind, including helpful suggestions for communicating effectively with your child. We hope that you will keep these materials handy and find them a positive source to help you deal with the many stresses of parenting.

**The Winchester Coalition for a Safer Community (WSAC)** is a comprehensive community based organization that focuses on bringing together key town organizations in order to work towards our common goals. The WSAC works collaboratively with individuals and town agencies to reduce substance use among town residents, particularly youth. The WSAC implements activities such as the Winchester Youth Risk Behavior survey, effective-based substance use prevention education, and the monthly Parent Conversations held at both the middle and high school. If you would like to learn more about the coalition or participate in any of our events, please call Liz Silva or Dot Butler at (781) 721-7121.

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**To Access the Guide online go to:**

<http://tiny.cc/Yjmi9>

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Friend the WCSC on Facebook to access latest adolescent development information, coalition updates, parenting resources, and much more.

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Winchester Substance  
Abuse Coalition



**PARENTS, YOU  
MAKE THE  
DIFFERENCE**

Your Influence Counts  
the Most in Preventing  
Smoking, Drinking, and  
Other Drug Use

WCSC Parent Survival Guide 2010

## Raising Kids in a Material World

*You know that we are living in a material world, and I am a material girl. -- from "Material Girl", by singer/songwriter Madonna*

Certainly, we do live in a culture that values and promotes materialism. Advertisers spend a lot of money to ensure that we, and especially our children, want more, more, more of their stuff. "Consumer confidence" is even understood as one measure of our country's economic vitality. It's up to us as parents, however, to shape our individual family culture regarding how we use and share our resources. Here are some tips that can help:

### For all parents

- Think about what you buy and why, and talk with your kids about your values when you shop. Are you influenced by advertising? Price? Quality of the product? What factors influence your choices? Engage your children in conversations about how you make decisions about money. You are their strongest influence on how they will manage money in the future.
- Be aware of key times when you may need to think more carefully about your family spending decisions: vacations, back-to-school times, holidays, and birthdays. Some families set aside money in a "celebration" fund, out of which they pay for gifts, parties, and the like. Other families buy school supplies through a school program that pre-packages them at a discount and also raises funds for classroom expenses.
- Do a regular "check in" of your income and expenses, even if you don't keep a weekly or monthly budget. Occasionally track all of your spending and earnings during an extended period. You may be surprised at how expenses change as your children grow.

### For parents with children ages birth to 5

- Maximize your available time, energy, and skills by trading services with friends or family for such needs as childcare, meal preparation, or house cleaning. Include young people in the work.
- Steer clear of giving gifts or money as rewards. Instead, use stickers on a calendar, special time together, hugs, and other forms of acknowledgment that teach your child the good feeling that results from helping the family do things that need to be done.
- Encourage your kids to donate coins- their own or ones you give them- to good causes.
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### For parents with children ages 6 - 9

- As soon as they can write their names, help your children apply for and use a library card, which gives them free access to books, videos, music, computers, and other resources for entertainment and learning. Kids learn that some of the things they like don't need to be purchased.
- Talk with your children about how you make spending choices based on more than just affordability. For example, if a child asks for a toy you feel is overpriced, explain your values by saying, "We're not going to spend our money that way because..." or "It's not a good value because...", rather than just saying, "It's too expensive", which may give the impression that you would buy it if you could afford it.
- Swap and share toys, videos, games, and miscellaneous "kid stuff" with other families. You'll get new stuff in return without spending a fortune, and your kids will appreciate the "cool factor" when it's not the same old stuff you're used to.
- Begin teaching your child the importance of thinking of others who might not have as much as they do. Encourage your kids to "hand down" items they no longer use to charitable organizations.

### For parents with children ages 10 - 15

- Talk to your kids about your values regarding money. Share with them what money represent to you: security, time, opportunity, stability, worry, generosity, and so on. This helps them start thinking about and shaping their own financial values and goals.
- Agree to certain parameters about what you'll spend money on: clothes, entertainment, and so on. If your children want "higher end" (i.e. more expensive) options, help them make a plan to use their own money to make up the difference in cost.
- Engage your child in family discussions about how you spend your money. Let them help make decisions about causes you support, larger items you plan to purchase, and how much you want to save.



## Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying, which is sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying, can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group
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Children and youth can cyber-bully each other through e-mails, instant messaging, text or digital imaging sent on cell phones, web pages, blogs, chat rooms or discussion groups, social networking sites, and other information communication technologies.

### **Tips to Help Prevent Cyber-bullying:**

- Keep your home computer(s) in easily viewable places, such as a family room or kitchen.
- Talk regularly with your child about online activities he or she is involved in.
- Talk specifically about cyber-bullying and encourage your child to tell you immediately if he or she is the victim of cyber-bullying.
- Encourage your child to tell you if he or she is aware of others who may be the victims of such behavior.
- Explain that cyber-bullying is harmful and unacceptable behavior. Outline your expectations for responsible online behavior and make it clear that they will be consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Although adults must respect the privacy of children and youth, concerns for your child's safety may sometimes override these privacy concerns. Tell your child that you may review his or her online communications if you think there is reason for concern.
- Consider installing parental control filtering software and/or tracking programs, but don't rely solely on these tools.

### **Tips for Dealing with Cyber-bullying that Your Child has Experienced:**

- Strongly encourage your child not to respond to the cyber-bullying.
- Do not erase the messages or pictures. Save these as evidence.
- Try to identify the individual doing the cyber-bullying. There may be a way to track them through your Internet Service Provider even if they are anonymous.
- If the cyber-bullying is coming through e-mail or a cell phone, it may be possible to block future contact from the cyber-bully.
- Contact your school. If the cyber-bullying is occurring through your school district's Internet system, school administrators have an obligation to intervene. Even if the cyber-bullying is occurring off campus, make your school administrators aware of the problem. They may be able to help you resolve the cyber-bullying or be watchful for face-to-face bullying.
- Consider contacting the cyber-bully's parents. Proceed cautiously, as the parents may react badly to your contacting them. Communicate with them in writing- not face-to-face. Present proof of the cyber-bullying (e.g. copies of an e-mail message) and ask them to make sure the cyber-bullying stops.
- Contact the police if cyber-bullying involves acts such as:
  - Threats of violence
  - Extortion
  - Obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages
  - Harassment, stalking, or hate crimes
  - Child pornography

If you are uncertain if cyber-bullying violates your jurisdiction's criminal laws, contact your local police, who will advise you.

# Movie List for Parents

In today's media-centric world, sometimes it can be difficult as a parent to keep track of the many movies and T.V. shows that our youth are watching. However, not only is it important for parents to monitor the content of programs that their children view, but these movies and shows may provide valuable insight into the concerns, interests, and mindsets of the current generation.

Following is a list of movies and T.V. shows that both demonstrate youth culture and are commonly watched by our own children. We recommend you take the time to view some of these programs and consider the content as well as the messages that they send about today's youth.

## Movies

- Stick It
- Odd Girl Out
- 13 Going on 30
- Bring It On
- Can't Buy Me Love (old or new version)
- Sleepover
- Transformers
- Cruel Intentions
- Mean Girls
- Dazed and Confused
- Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants
- Juno
- Scary Movie
- High School Musical
- Fast and the Furious
- American Pie
- Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist
- Crash
- Just One of the Guys
- Better Off Dead
- Clueless
- 10 Things I hate About You
- Election
- Thirteen
- Clique
- Twilight

## TV Shows

- Gossip Girl
- Hannah Montana
- The Suite Life of Zack & Cody
- The Naked Brothers Band
- iCarly
- That's So Raven
- Wizard of Waverly Place
- As the Bell Rings
- FunAMATION Channel
- Ultimate Fighters
- Life with Derek
- That 70s Show
- Glee
- JONAS
- The Vampire Diaries
- The Secret Life of the American Teenager
- 90210

## These are all on MTV

- The Hills
- Super Sweet 16
- The Real World
- MADE
- True Life of...
- 16 and Pregnant

## Try visiting internet sites that have high youth traffic, such as:

FRED: A lonely 6-year-old with anger management issues, an alcoholic mom, and a dad who is in prison begins posting videos to a You Tube channel

<http://www.youtube.com/user/Fred?ob=1>

Perez Hilton: Welcome to PerezHilton.com- Hollywood's Most-Hated Website!

<http://perezhilton.com/>

## Questions parents can ask to help children process what they see on TV or in a movie:

OBSERVE: "What happened?"  
"What did you see, hear, feel, think, do?"

ANALYZE: "Why do those things happen?"  
"Can you describe causes and effects?"

PREDICT: "What if..."

SUGGEST: "What did you learn?"  
"How will you use it?"

## Buying the Latest Technology

Modern children are power technology users. Younger teens consume technology and electronics for hours upon hours. Parents need to be informed because making the right decision about which electronics and technologies to buy for children is difficult. As with most purchases, cost of technology is also a big factor.

### **Computers and Laptops**

As kids grow up and become teenagers, they require more and more technology. Schools assign young teens homework that needs to be done on the computer. There has been an explosion in social networking sites, blogging, and instant messaging. Before you know it, the child has taken over the family computer.

Should a teenager have his own computer? That decision is up to the teenager and his family. But once the decision to buy the teenager a computer of his own is made then the family should make sure that the system integrates well with the family's existing technology. The parents should know how to use the teen's computer operating system.

### **The Technology of Music**

Mp3 players come in all shapes and sizes and every older teen seems to have one. But they are not all created equal. In order to pick the right music technology for your child, you should give careful thought to the music service and type of music files your child is going to use.

Apple's music service, called iTunes, encodes all downloads in an .aac extension and plays only AAC and mp3 files. An iPod can play these music files but some other players may not be able to. Music files come in many formats so you need to ensure that the music player you choose for your child is compatible with the music files that you already have. If you have a digital music player of your own, you will want to make sure that it plays the same type of music files as your child's music player.

### **Gaming Systems**

Between the Nintendo Wii, Playstation, and Xbox and a variety of handheld devices, there is a lot of video game technology for your younger teen to choose from. This decision is largely one of personal preference. But to get the best value, your teen should be satisfied with their decision for many years to come.

One key point to remember is that the newer versions of game systems are generally compatible with their older counterparts. This means that a PlayStation 3 console can play PlayStation 2 games but not vice versa.

### **The Price of Technology**

The latest technology can cost a bundle. So, it is important to set limits on how much your younger teen can spend on technology. One way to cut technology costs is to make sure that all family members are using the same technologies. Once you make the investment in the hardware then the family can share the add-ons like software, games, and music (subject to licensing requirements and copyrights, of course). However, the price of technology can be looked at as an investment in a child's overall education.

Winchester Coalition for a Safer Community

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**Support the health of our community by participating in the  
annual WCSC Medication Take Back Collection in May.**