



## DO'S AND DON'TS TO MAKE YOUR PROM ROCK

- Do** go as your self.
- Don't** feel the need to compete with other people.
- Do** create a buddy system with your friends.
- Don't** get wrapped up in the consumerism of the event.
- Do** be media savvy and ask yourself why prom has so much coverage.
- Don't** wait in line to have your photo taken, use a camera phone and get candid pics.
- Do** go on the cheap if at all possible.
- Don't** lie to your parents about your planned activities.
- Do** make decisions you would normally make.
- Do** decide how you feel about drinking and getting into cars with people who've been drinking.
- Do** set boundaries.
- Don't** be afraid to leave a sticky situation.
- Do** use your cell phone to call for a ride if needed.

**Source:** Courtney Macavinta, co-author of "RESPECT: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect & Dealing When Your Line Is Crossed" and who runs respectrx.com, a daily news and advice Web site for teens and their parents.

# prom night pressure

Author offers advice for navigating the 'milestones and land mines' associated with, what is for many teens, the biggest event of the year

By **AUTUMN GROOMS**  
La Crosse Tribune

As any teen can tell you, prom has grown into a production.

A Google search yields 49.2 million Web sites on the topic.

TV shows and movies are devoted to the spring formal dance. Magazines supply dress choices and other planning tips for the special night.

Hundreds of dollars are spent on the perfect gown — and that doesn't include the shoes, makeup, hair and accessories.

Corsages and boutonnières are pinned, limousines rented, expensive dinners eaten.

It is easy to see prom has become more than just a high school dance. But even as prom continues to grow, the decisions teens can face on that "special" night remain much the same.

What if the party I attend has alcohol?

Should I have sex if my date wants me to?

"Prom night is filled with milestones and land mines," said Courtney Macavinta, co-author of "RESPECT: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect & Dealing When Your Line Is Crossed," who also runs respectrx.com, a news and advice Web site for teens and parents.

Unofficial pre-prom and post-prom parties are numerous, Macavinta noted, and many teens view the night as the "ideal" time to have their first sexual experience.

Just the cost involved with the evening can give teens anxiety, Macavinta said. For many, a "Hollywood red carpet" is simply too expensive and that can create "a lot of pressure that can affect how you feel about yourself," she said.

To make prom — and other more common events — easier, teens should focus on being themselves, Macavinta said.

"Getting glammed up and having

fun" is important, Macavinta said, but it shouldn't involve making choices you wouldn't make another day.

Macavinta recommends setting boundaries before heading off to the dance.

Set goals and a value system for yourself. Decide what your boundaries are regarding drinking alcohol or smoking.

"Have a line already in your mind, and know you are not going to cross it," she said.

Also ask yourself whether you plan to lie to your parents about any of your prom activities, Macavinta said, adding, "Do you really want to take that risk?"

She recommends being honest with your date ahead of time about expectations for the evening, such as whether you're not ready for kissing or sex or anything in between.

"The big thing I like to tell girls

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## IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** Midnight Carnival post-prom event

**WHERE:** La Crosse Center

**WHEN:** Midnight Saturday, May 6, to 4 a.m. Sunday, May 7

**WHO:** Aquinas, Central, Logan and Aquinas high school juniors and seniors and their dates.

**TICKETS:** \$6 per ticket, available at the schools.

## Post-prom carnival will be at La Crosse Center

When the main prom event ends, kids won't have to go home right away thanks to Midnight Carnival, a post-prom event.

The late-night party was started by parents of high school students more than 10 years ago to provide a place to go after prom to enjoy food and entertainment.

This year's menu includes pizza, vegetables, fruit, sweets, soda and water. Entertainment will include carnival games, a caricature artist, photos, school vs. school tug-of-war, disc jockey with karaoke, Monster Trikes, Monkey Motion Bungee Jumper, Climbing Wall, Titanic Thrill Slide, Jurassic Survivor Maze and the Cash Cube, from which door prize money will be given out every hour.

Other prizes include a home theater system, DVD player and television set.

Students must be a junior or senior of Onalaska, Central, Logan or Aquinas high schools, or be the date of a junior or senior from one of those schools to attend. Students do not have to attend their school proms to come to Midnight Carnival.

## Parents, talk about expectations, scenarios beforehand

By **AUTUMN GROOMS**  
La Crosse Tribune

Parents have a lot of anxiety when their children head off for prom.

Their juniors and seniors are getting more independent. Curfews have been extended.

And a lot of what parents think goes on does, said Courtney Macavinta, co-author of "RESPECT: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect & Dealing When Your Line Is Crossed" and who runs respectrx.com, a daily news and advice site for teens and their parents.

But the answer isn't to ban kids from the prom or be overly strict with when they need to be home, she said.

"The solution is to talk beforehand."

Know what they would do if their friend got really drunk at a party or if they were stuck somewhere and needed a ride.

Ask whether they will be OK if their date pressures them.

"They have the really good solutions and answers inside them. I've never met a teen that doesn't," Macavinta said.

Parents also need to watch that they don't get caught up in the prom hype, Macavinta said.

They want their sons and daughters to have fun and get involved in the planning and wrappings of prom.

"I encourage parents to encourage kids to be themselves. To not worry about having to spend tons of money and be phony in order to pull off prom," Macavinta said.

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**"You shouldn't have to consummate your relationship to go to prom."**

**COURTNEY MACAVINTA**, author who runs advice Web site

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about sex is no one can pressure you to have sex — especially by a date on the calendar, and that includes prom," Macavinta said. "You shouldn't have to consummate your relationship to go to prom."

Should a sticky situation arise, Macavinta recommends trusting and listening to your instincts.

"After all, the point of prom is to have fun. It shouldn't be filled with these land mines," Macavinta said. "You should have fun with your friends based on who you really are."

If you need to escape a situation, have a cell phone and call home, tell a chaperone or go to the hotel front desk.

Parents can reinforce this by reassuring their children they won't be in trouble if they call.

"Parents really want to support kids and help them make good decisions," Macavinta said.

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