

## FRQ #1 SYNTHESIS: PROM PROMPT

Time: 55 minutes (15 reading; 40 writing)

AP LANG.

Developed by Michelle Vetter Kirk

Prom is a formal dance event for high school juniors and seniors. Associated with dressing up, dancing, and making memories with friends or maybe even with one's first love, the tradition has long been upheld in the American imagination as a momentous rite of passage, but does it still have a place in the 21st century? For some, prom is a picturesque juncture in one of the most formative periods of life, while others find it lackluster – or worse, damaging -- citing the expense, the anxiety, and feelings of exclusion that can stem from the tradition.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information (publication date, information about author, source type) for each source. **Write an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources and develops your position on the value of holding high-school proms.**

Source A (Time) [Brief History of The Prom](#)

Source B (Bustle) [7 Ways Prom Can Be A Toxic Experience](#)

Source C (Shannon) [Pandemic or Not, Proms Are Back](#) [refer to photos and/or text]

Source D (White) [The Prom Lesson](#)

Source E (Hamilton) [Why We Care About School Dances!](#)

Source F (USA Today) [How Prom Trends Have Evolved Over the Decades](#)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

### Other potential sources

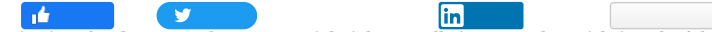
- (Visa) [Visa, 2015 Prom-Spending Infographic](#)
- (Pretty in Pink) [The perils of not going to your senior prom | Scene from "Pretty in Pink" \(1986\)](#)
- (Yin) [February Editorial: Is Prom Actually Worth It? Debating The Options](#)
- (PBS) [Why Do We Go to Prom?](#)
- (Smith) [Refinery 29: Yes, It's Okay To Not Go To Prom](#)
- (Waiver) [Sign of the Times - The Post-Prom Waiver](#)
- (Green) [Anthropocene Reviewed Podcast: Prom and the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment](#)
- (Dastagir) [Teens are breaking old rules about gender. Now they want to change old rules about prom](#)
- [The Toxic Reality of Prom: Not Everyone's Dream Night – The Charge](#)



# Brief History: The Prom

## Source A (*Time*)

By Claire Suddath | Monday, May 17, 2010



It's Time for the prom: that one special night, usually in May, when girls in colorful gowns and boys in ill-fitting tuxedos pose awkwardly for photos that they will cherish (or rue) for the rest of their lives. The night when curfews are broken and limousines are taken for joyrides. The night when the punch bowl might contain more than just punch.

The word prom is short for promenade, the formal, introductory parading of guests at a party. The prom can be traced back to the simple co-ed banquets that 19th century American universities held for each year's graduating class. A growing teenage culture pushed proms younger and younger, and by the 1940s the adolescent dance we know today had almost entirely taken hold. In the 1950s, a thriving postwar economy allowed high schools to eschew the traditional gymnasium in favor of proms held in hotels or at country clubs. President Kennedy rescheduled a 1963 \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser at the Beverly Hilton to accommodate a local school whose prom had been booked for the same time. In 1975, President Ford's daughter Susan held her high school's senior prom at possibly the best prom location ever: the White House.



Francis Miller / Time & Life Pictures / Getty Images

As cultural mores have changed, so has the prom--begrudgingly. An Alabama principal was sued in 1994 for threatening to cancel the prom if interracial couples attended. And despite the two South Dakota boys who in 1979 became one of the first known same-sex couples to openly attend a prom, some schools still have anti-gay bans in place. In April, a Mississippi school district canceled its prom rather than allow a student to bring her girlfriend as her date. And while going stag was once social suicide, some kids now attend in groups rather than as couples. But don't worry: between choosing the right outfit and attending the right after-party, there's still more than enough anxiety to go around.

# 7 Ways Prom Can Be A Toxic Experience

by **Chrissa Hardy**  
April 13, 2016



For the amount of time we spend picking out the right dress, the right shoes, the right hairstyle, and the right date, the amount of fun many people actually have at prom is shockingly minimal. That's because prom can be a toxic experience for some people, leaving you with an icky feeling of, "Why didn't I just stay home and hang out with my bae pizza and watch TV?" I totally get it.

Prom seems like a harmless formal school dance at first, right? That's how basically every movie and TV show make it seem, anyway. It's supposed to be a night in which everyone is bound to have a blast, make memories that will be cherished forever and ever, and then (safely and responsibly) rage at an epic after-prom party with their BFFs. And for many people, that is exactly how prom goes

down. It really *can* be a memorable night with friends that perfectly caps off your entire high school career. But, there are certain prom tropes that can make prom memorable for the wrong reasons, and it's important to watch out for them so that you can prevent them from ruining your experience.

Here are all the ways prom can turn into a toxic mess, and how to watch out for these classic prom crap traps.

## 1. The pressure to get a date



Prom *should be* about having fun with friends while looking like your most beautiful self. There should be no pressure to attend with a date, and no restrictions on who that date can be. If you want to take your BFF as your date so you can have a kick-ass girls' night while flirting up your crush during slow dances, fine. There should be zero judgy eyes on you upon making this choice.

## 2. The money it costs to attend



The dress, the shoes, the matching clutch, the hairstyle, the limo, the corsage, the actual prom fee — the list goes on, and it shouldn't. Wear whatever you want to prom, and arrive in whatever mode of transportation fits your budget. There's no need to create your first batch of credit card debt just to go to prom.



### 3. The over-the-top promposals



When I was in high school (my heyday was the '90s), we just asked people to prom by, you know, asking them to prom. Elaborate promposals didn't exist. To me, the cost and stress needed to pull off the whole ordeal really does not seem worth it. It's not a marriage proposal, it's a date to a dance. Don't overthink it.

### 4. The sexual pressure



Dated high school rom-coms have taught us that it's tradition for people to experience sexual pressure on prom night — and that absolutely should not be the case. Only you can decide if having sex after prom is the right choice for you. If it feels right, if you feel ready, and if you are safe, then go for it. But don't just have sex because "it's prom and that's what you do." Besides, the hype that surrounds prom night sex often leads to disappointment anyway. There will be much better sex in your future, should you decide to skip it after prom.

## 5. The clique-y limo roster



In high school, everything is a big deal. And when it comes to choosing seats in the prom limo (or whatever vehicle of choice your friends are using), classic teenage-dramz usually follows. That's because whoever is in the limo will probably take pictures together before going to prom. And those same people might even get ready together. It's the selection of your prime prom crew, so it seems like a crucial decision, but I promise, it isn't. Once you arrive at prom, you can be with everyone, so don't stress about the pre-prom roster.

## 6. The dress codes



It's utterly baffling that some schools will still turn students away for wearing "inappropriate attire" to prom, especially since this is usually directed at female students for dressing "too sexy." A lot of thought and consideration goes into a selected prom outfit, so for it to then be deemed essentially Not Good Enough by anyone's standards is BS. Wear whatever you want to wear. Wear whatever you feel beautiful in.

## 7. The heteronormative slow dance assumptions



When a slow song comes on, friends clear the way for couples to take the floor. Why? Anyone is free to dance with anyone during any song — no matter the tempo. So if you choose to grab your BFF and do a waltz to K-Ci & JoJo, then so be it. (Again, my heyday was the '90s.)

Sure, prom has its down sides, but it can also be an amazing time. At the end of the day, it is what you make of it. If you want to go in with no expectations, don't care about what other people think while you dance with your friends, and celebrate the end of the school year, you're likely going to have a good evening. But, if for any reason you feel like prom isn't worth the trouble, it's totally fine to skip it as well. In fact, you'll probably be happy you did.

ADVERTISEMENT

*Image: Touchstone Pictures; Giphy (7)*

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Source C (Cowan)



## Pandemic or Not, Proms Are Back

Four California high schools. Four Covid-influenced proms. The more rituals of growing up change, the more they stay the same.

By Jill Cowan Photographs by Maggie Shannon

As in any other year, teenage girls in California stepped out of salons, only to sit in front of mirrors at home carefully rearranging their coifs.

They wore jewel-toned cocktail dresses and floor-skimming gowns. Some strapped themselves into rhinestone-encrusted heels while others, planning for a night on their feet, stuck with Vans or Air Force 1s.

Their dates wore white tuxedos, three-piece suits, corsages. In Fowler, a small city southeast of Fresno, there were cowboy boots and hats.

Yet unlike any other year, there were custom-made masks to match outfits. There were silent discos to encourage social distancing, as revelers donned headphones and danced to the beat, quite literally, of different drummers. Vaccine cards or coronavirus tests were required for entry. In Petaluma, dinner was prepacked sandwiches eaten picnic-style on the football field before the dancing started on the painted lines.

The 2021 prom season has shown that American high school rites of passage are durable, flexible, pandemic-proof. Teenage traditions, like teenagers themselves, have a resilience. Somehow, the prom — that timeworn cliché of growing up — turned into something vital and emotional.



Strict pandemic rules meant that most of California's Class of 2021 spent roughly a year learning from home. As the spread of the virus has waned in California and around the country, proms — even those retooled with mask-wearing and other precautions — have served the twin function for many of celebrating both the end of high school and the end of the worst of the pandemic.

“For so long, I didn't take advantage of all the moments I had in high school,” said Michelle Ibarra Simon, a senior at Dos Pueblos High School in the Southern California city of Goleta. “Covid helped me see that I was letting time fly and letting every moment slip through my fingers.” Prom, she added, “was probably one of the best moments of my life.”

HESPERIA, CALIF.

## Encore High School



Jaired Mason, who graduated from Encore High School last year, got help from Caroline Esquivel and her mother.





Bringing the party. Maggie Shannon for The New York Times



Temperatures were checked before prom guests could enter a banquet center in Upland.



At first, no one was dancing at Encore High School's prom. It was an unusual sight: Encore is a performing arts school and some of the students are professionally trained dancers.

"I don't know," said Marco J. Gochez, a senior at the school. "They were getting shy or weird or uncomfortable."

Caroline Esquivel, Encore's senior class president, theorized that perhaps her classmates were anxious after not being together in a group for so long. The school is in Hesperia, a desert city in San Bernardino County, but the prom was held at a banquet hall in Upland.

Soon, after dinner was served, the mood changed.

"It was like a giant mosh pit," Ms. Esquivel said. "Everyone was so happy, jumping and screaming."



The dance floor.



The line for the photobooth.





Students performed their dance team's competition piece.

During Jennifer Lopez's "On the Floor," Ms. Esquivel and other members of her dance team got onto the stage and performed a competition routine in their finery.

For Jaired Mason, who graduated from Encore in 2020, attending this year's prom as his best friend's date helped give him a sense of closure he had been missing because of the pandemic.

Encore hosted a small, restricted prom of about 30 people last year, he said, and Mr. Mason's class graduated over Zoom. He postponed going to the prestigious Boston Conservatory at Berklee to study dance.

The prom signaled an end to the uncertainty. "Especially after last night, I'm feeling really good and excited about the future," he said the day after the dance.

And in the fall, his future is no longer postponed. He is headed to Boston.



The line for soda at the bar.





Caleb Daniels was crowned prom king.



The photobooth.



GOLETA, CALIF.

## Dos Pueblos High School



Twin sisters Mia and Cami get ready for prom.



Parents and siblings take photos of students in prom apparel.



Ella Molyneaux's prom date, Emmett, helping with her corsage.



Bill Woodard, the principal of Dos Pueblos High School and the parent of a senior there, described the evening as magical. “I don’t use that word lightly,” he added.

Goleta is a suburban community near Santa Barbara. Mr. Woodard said the town was sometimes mistakenly assumed to be uniformly wealthy and, thus, insulated from the ravages of the pandemic.

“We had families that lost family members,” he said. “There was economic devastation. That all was swirling as we were planning our prom.”

Initially, he said, nearby schools had hoped to host on-campus carnivals as a kind of substitute. But Dos Pueblos students wanted to do something off-campus, to make the event “as normal as possible,” he said.



The seniors of Dos Pueblos High School before prom.



Deanna Koppenjan and Luke Borders embraced.



Photos were taken at the courthouse in Santa Barbara.





Seniors are greeted and cheered by faculty members as they enter prom.

A connection at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum helped the school score a discount on the space, which is often a destination wedding venue. Flowers were donated, Mr. Woodard said, then reused at the school's graduation days later. There was a Shirley Temple bar, karaoke and air hockey.

Ms. Ibarra Simon, the Dos Pueblos senior, said she and her best friend made the silent disco not so silent when they started singing along to the Miley Cyrus anthem "Party in the U.S.A." At one point, she turned around to see an adult chaperone belting a Snoop Dogg song.

"I think she was on a sugar rush, if I'm being honest," she recalled. "Like, 'Girl, you're dancing more than me.'"



Students playing table football, one of the activities organizers put together.





Students walked to the dance floor wearing silent disco headphones.



Masks on, hands up. Maggie Shannon for The New York Times



PETALUMA, CALIF.

## Petaluma High School



Sienna Barry getting ready for prom with the help of her older sister Sicily.



Sienna Barry's prom date, Casey Pectol, pinning his boutonniere.





The prom in Petaluma, Calif., was held on a football field. Maggie Shannon for The New York Times

“It had been such a long time since we’d all been together,” said Komal Sandhu, a senior and her school’s student body president. “Seeing everyone dressed up was worth all the stress, all the late nights.” Nicole Sienna Barry, a senior at Petaluma High School and the student body president, said the idea of having prom on the school’s football field took some getting used to.

Most years — including those when Ms. Barry’s older sisters attended the school — the Petaluma prom meant a night in San Francisco or Oakland. Groups of students would take party buses to the Academy of Sciences, hotels or other large venues.

But after a frightening winter coronavirus surge, Ms. Barry said she and her classmates were thrilled to have a prom at all — even if they only had a month to plan it.

“We usually start planning in February,” she said.

The day of the prom, Ms. Barry and her best friend since kindergarten got ready together before meeting the rest of the attendees at a local park for pictures. The Neil Diamond hit “Sweet Caroline,” which came out more than three decades before the students were born, had “for some reason” become a kind of senior class anthem. At the prom, everyone sang it together.





Taking photos in Wickersham Park in downtown Petaluma.







The track turned dance floor.

Because the students had either been vaccinated or tested, Ms. Barry said, they finally felt comfortable sending Snapchat videos, making TikToks and posting to their Instagram stories with abandon.

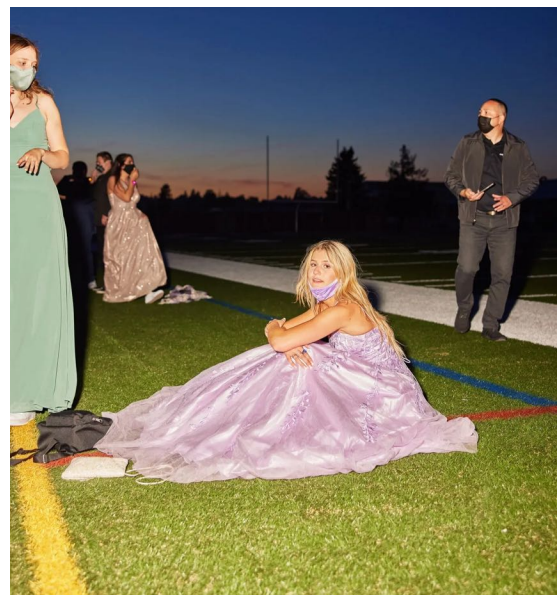
“It was like a normal gathering, being able to post with all your friends dancing,” she said. “For the last year and a half, if you go out with your friends you may be low-key embarrassed.”

All the typical drama of a big dance — the beefs, the wounded feelings, the tears — faded away.

“Why have drama on the one night you get of senior year?” she said.



Paul Leoni celebrated his prom king win.





FOWLER, CALIF.

## Fowler High School

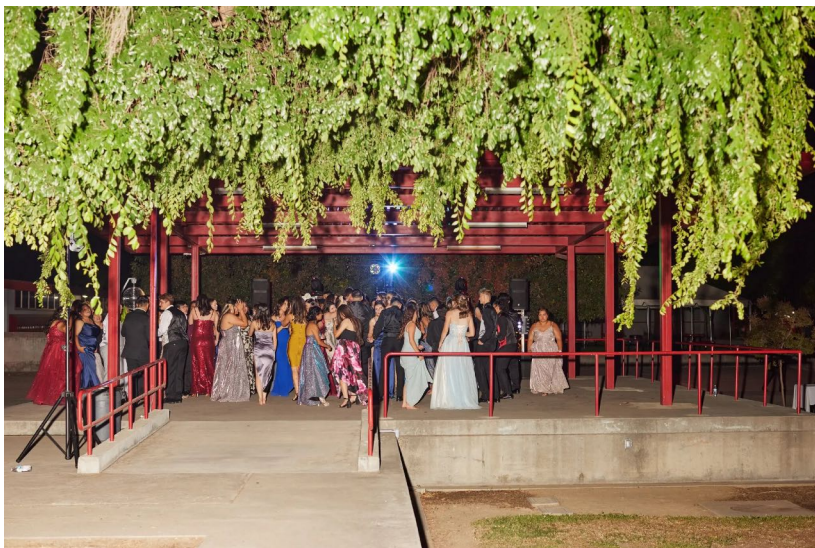


Fowler High School students arrived to campus for prom.

Nearly one-third of the student body at Fowler High School attended prom this year, roughly 220 out of the school's some 800 students.

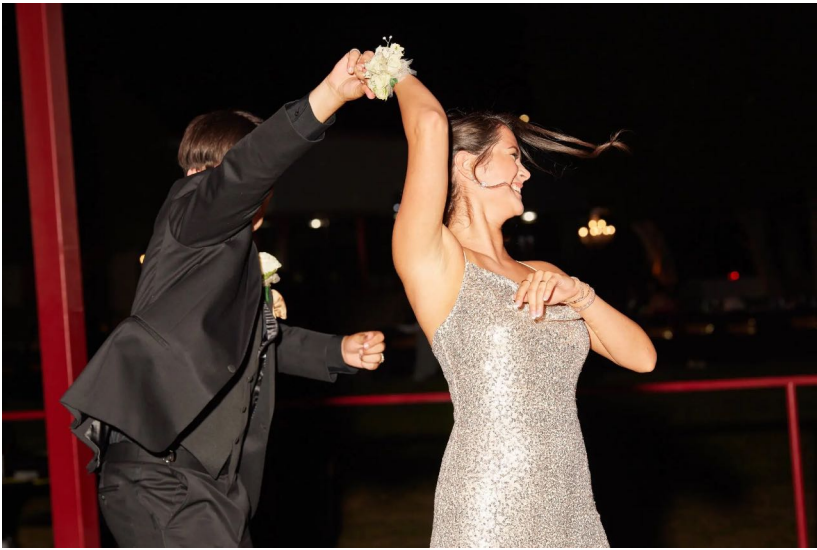
“At our school, because it’s so small, we’ve all known each other,” said Komal Sandhu, a senior and the school’s student body president. “We call it our Redcat family.”

By late March, students were participating in sporting events once again, and they knew that graduation was on. So prom seemed within reach. Finally, student leaders got the word they had been hoping for.



Once students were participating in sporting events again, they knew that graduation was on.





The dance floor was a popular locale.



After the location was settled, there was the matter of food. Caterers would serve teppanyaki to students seated at a horseshoe of tables around the edge of the school's quad.

Invitations were sent. Decorations were ordered.

Music that reflected the school's diversity — most students are Hispanic and there is a significant Punjabi population — packed the dance floor. "Angreji Beat" was a favorite, Ms. Sandhu said. So was "Cotton Eye Joe."

Still, for Ms. Sandhu, the best part was seeing her classmates light up as they walked in. "It had been such a long time since we'd all been together," she said. "Seeing everyone dressed up was worth all the stress, all the late nights."







Caterers served teppanyaki to students seated around the edge of the school's quad.





Photo by [Zella Duda on Unsplash](#)

I hate Prom. I know: unpopular opinion with schools cancelling Proms this year.

But my hatred of Prom started way before the Corona virus took it away from the 2020 Seniors. Every year, for the last 20 years, I give the Prom lesson in my classes on the Thursday or Friday before Prom. Since I'm not in school this year, I'm going to write out The Prom Lesson. Here goes:

## Source D (White)



Nathan White

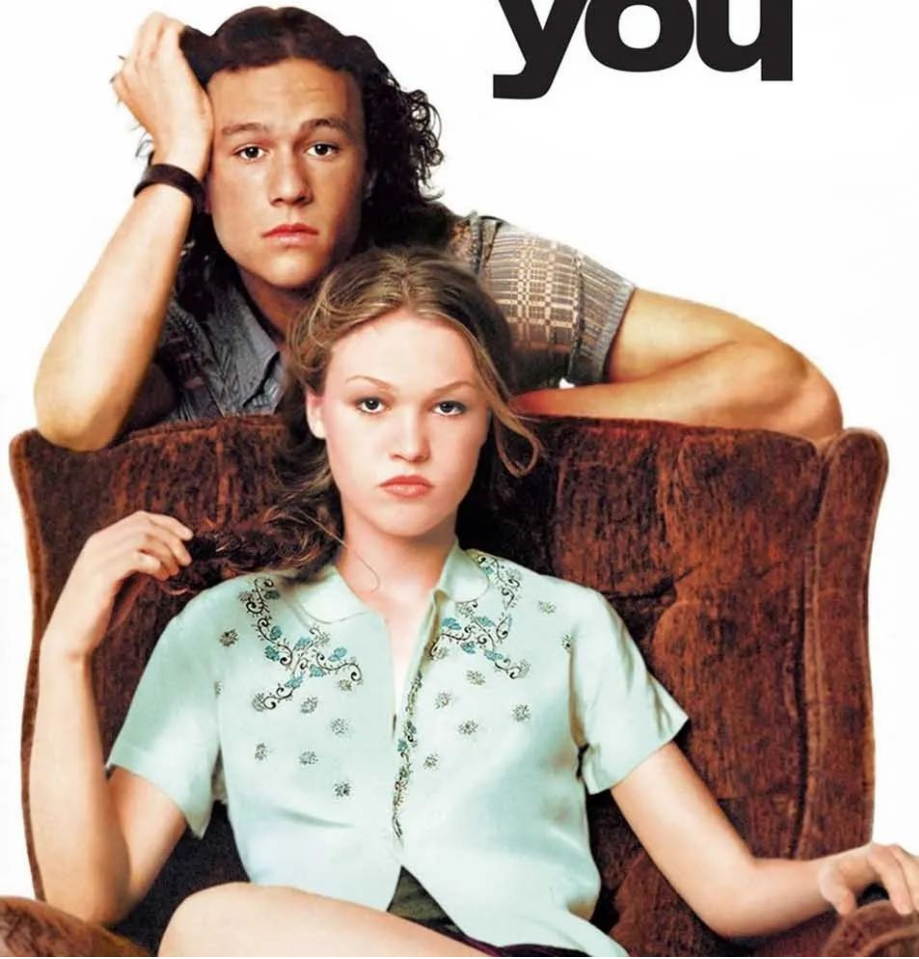
Apr 22, 2020 · 9 min read ·

Listen

## The Prom Lesson



# 10 things I hate about you



(Wikipedia)

I don't have an awesome *Never Been Kissed* or *10 Things I Hate About You* story for why I hate Prom. I wasn't dumped or never invited. I attended both my junior and senior Proms with the same girl. I was Prom royalty my senior year, even though I wasn't elected King. I show my students a picture of me and my date at my senior prom to prove that I went and let them laugh.

My hatred from Prom stems from the denotation and connotation of the night. But more on that later.

To start, I look at Prom finances with my class. I let students create a list of money for Guys and Girls to attend Prom. They break out how much people spend on all prom necessities — dresses, tuxes, dinners, tickets, flowers, pictures, and whatever else they want to add. I try to quickly average the numbers, since some people spend more than others. In 20 years of this lesson, Girls always spend more money, usually by \$100-\$200. Lately, the averages have been Guys spending about \$200 and Girls about \$300. Also, since I don't teach math, I like round numbers to work with, so those are our numbers for this lesson.

Next, I argue that not just one couple attends Prom. I teach in a 2300 student high school. Only juniors and seniors can attend Prom, but not everyone goes. I will have asked a Student Council member ahead of time how many people they are planning for. This year, let's say they are planning for 600 students.

I'm a traditionalist and assume that half of the students going will be Guys and half will be Girls. This assumption has let me down lately, but for this lesson we are going with it. Three hundred guys spending \$200 is \$60,000. Three hundred girls spending \$300 is \$90,000. Adding those two numbers together gets us to \$150,000 spent on Prom from individual families at our school.

However, that isn't all the money our school community spends on Prom. I create another category and use Student Council connections to help with these numbers. Every year, Prom is at some cool location. No longer is the school gym or cafeteria good enough. It usually costs \$5000 to rent an event center or concert hall for the dance.

Add in another \$1000 for snacks, drinks, and decorations. Throw in another \$1000 for a DJ. Now, don't forget to pay the five Principals, 10 teachers, School Resource Officer, and extra police officers to make sure there are no shenanigans. Budget another \$1000 for this, even though it's probably more, but again, I like round numbers. We've generated another \$8000 that comes from the school itself, to get us to \$158,000 our community spends on our Prom.

Since I teach this lesson the day before Prom, I walk out in the

hallway right now and tell students that is \$158,000 in our hallways today that won't be there on Monday.

Now, I explain to students that we have five large high schools in our district. Some schools may spend more or less on Prom, but we can use our number to estimate how much our District families will spend on Prom. Five schools at \$158,000 per school will spend \$790,000 on one night of Prom.

How about the 11 teams that are in our conference? They all have Proms, too. Our conference will spend almost two million dollars on Prom: \$1, 738, 000. Don't tell me there is no money in Education.

This all started with the students' numbers about how much they were spending on dresses and dinners this weekend. Sure, this isn't scientific, but it gets us to some rough estimates. It also lets me encourage students to get jobs that deal with weddings and proms because there is a lot of money to be made.

. . .

Here is where I change the lesson a little bit. I hopefully have the students' interest at this point about money and have at least made them think about their own spending. But now it's time to discuss the denotation and connotation of Prom.

The denotation of Prom is a three-hour dance, from 8:00–11:00 PM, that has a DJ, a chocolate fountain of some kind, and is supervised by multiple principals, teachers, and law enforcement officers.

PARENTS CAN BE SUCH...  
**BLOCKERS**



(Wikipedia)

The connotation of Prom is different. Several movies play on the connotation of Prom; *American Pie* and *Blockers* come to mind. I close my eyes and ask my students to raise hands if there is still a connotation to Prom that is vastly different from the denotation. I turn my back and when I turn around, students assure me that there were lots of hands in the air. I tell myself, and them, that as long as there is still a connotation to Prom night that is vastly different than the denotation, I still have to continue onto the next part of this lesson.

I now create a euphemism for students called “Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll.” I also loosely refer to this as “Friday and Saturday Night Decisions.” I preface this by saying I don’t care where you go to church on Sunday, if you go to church on Sunday, or what your family says or doesn’t say. I don’t care if you believe that drinking is the devil or that marijuana should be legalized. This isn’t about individual students and families.

This connotation of Prom pervades our culture. This connotation exists regardless of people’s individual opinions about “Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll.” I also am not accusing anybody in this virtual classroom or asking you to tell me your deepest, darkest secret, but let us at least attempt to deal in reality. At about this time, students are getting slightly uncomfortable because this class isn’t as much

fun as it was and things are getting a little too real.

I tell students it is ridiculous that we spend almost \$2 million on a dance that most students only attend for 20 minutes. The connotation of Prom — the “Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll” — are far more alluring than the denotation. At least be honest about what we are spending our money on. It has very little to do with DJs, chocolate fountains, and well-supervised students.

. . .

At this point, after I have sucked all the oxygen out of the room and got students to look inside themselves and be honest, I tell them my story about Mike Ransdale.

Mike Ransdale was killed in a drunk driving accident in the spring of my senior year of high school. His dad was a police officer in our town. I had known Mike my entire life. I also knew the driver who killed him my entire life. I had grown up with both of them since elementary school.

Both of them were drunk in a car together driving to the coast and both of them were my friends. Sometimes, Friday and Saturday Night decisions have big boy and big girl consequences.

Next, I explain to my students that I am shallow and vain. When I was in high school, I wanted a team State Championship ring more than anything. My junior year in football and my senior in baseball were my best chances. However, when your starting centerfielder kills your starting 1st baseman in a drunk driving wreck, all of a sudden baseball and rings aren't very important anymore. In fact, you go from one of the hottest teams in the state to one who loses in the first round of the playoffs and, today, I don't have a ring.

Obviously, this isn't what's important to the story. But to talk to 17-year-olds in a real way, you need to remember what you were like at 17 and be honest about it. If you can't do that, you can't reach young people. Their bullshit meter is extremely well-tuned and they can smell hypocrisy.

One kid died. One kid went to prison. In a horrible twist of irony, I saw several years later that Mike's brother was also killed in a drunk driving wreck. I can't imagine what that family has gone and goes through.

I tell this story every year to get to this conclusion.

Nothing tears apart a school like this. Nothing ruins a senior year more than somebody dying, especially in a preventable way. Nothing prepared me for that accident, because I have been talking about it every year for the last 22 years. In my years of teaching, I have had students die in the school I taught in. Every time, it is the worst thing people go through — the teachers, the students, and especially the parents. It destroys the school year.

All those years ago, most kids knew they were drinking. Most kids knew they shouldn't have been driving. Most kids knew they should have said, "This is a bad idea." Nobody did and we all should have.

I try to challenge my students that sometimes, this peer pressure thing — this Denotation of Prom, this "Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll," this night that is what movies are written about — gets TOO BIG. The pressure of "what it is supposed to be like" gets TOO MUCH and makes us make decisions we normally wouldn't. There is so much connotation to this ONE night, this never-to-happen-again night, this HUGE expectation — that sometimes people get talked into decisions that they don't want to make and wouldn't normally make.

Students are funny; they like rules and boundaries, even though they say they don't. I tell my students I want to be an adult in your life, besides your parents, that says these words to you: You don't have to do anything you don't want to. Don't let this night get bigger than it is. Just go be you, enjoy your night, but don't make it bigger than it has to be. There are no "somethings" that have to happen on this night. It's just a night, like lots of others ahead of you.

And it's okay to say, no, this isn't what I'm going to do tonight, and no, we shouldn't drive to the coast right now. And it is really hard to be the only one to do it. It is really hard to be "the dork" or whatever

the term is now. It's easier to be "the dork" when you have someone else to be a dork with. There is strength in numbers and a lot of truth to my Grandpa's saying "it is hard to soar with the eagles when you hang out with turkeys." Find someone like you to be a dork with.

Sometimes, if you say something, others are thinking the same something and are looking for a way out. There is safety in numbers and maybe this is something worth talking about *before* Prom, rather than letting expectations lead you somewhere you don't want to go.

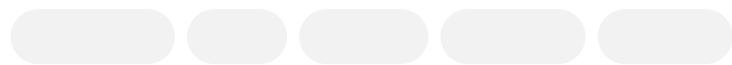
I'm not idealistic to think this Prom lesson "works." I am a Realist. I know exactly what happens. I tell my students so do your parents. They are happy for you and they like taking your pictures. However, they are terrified for you on Prom night because they all watched the same movies growing up. They also remember their own Proms and the expectations that went along with it and their own decision-making paradigms.

When I left my house in high school, my mom always said "make good choices." That's how I leave this lesson for my students: make good choices and if today's lesson makes just one student think about the money they spend, their Friday and Saturday Night Decisions, and the connotation of Prom, maybe I have earned my money as a teacher today.

I am sorry about the interruption to life in general, academics, spring sports, and graduations for the Seniors of 2020.

But I stick to my unpopular opinion, every spring, for my junior and senior students — I hate Prom.

<https://coachwhite17.com/>



**Nathan White**

187 Followers

A high school English teacher/football coach with a Jeeping problem.

<https://coachwhite17.com/>





## Source E (Hamilton)

# Why We Care About School Dances!

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February 1, 2019

*"Why do you care so much about school dances?"*

*"It's just a school dance, who cares?"*

Many people ask why we care so much about high school or middle school dances. A lot of people look at dances in a general view rather than looking at them with a deeper meaning. **My School Dance** (<https://www.myschooldance.com>) strongly believes that school dances or events like this have a huge impact on our student's lives.

In today's world, it seems that teenagers are **more disconnected than ever**. With the rise of technology and more ways to communicate over the internet, teens are forgetting the importance of face-to-face interaction. On average, high schoolers spend up to **9 hours** connected to digital media ranging from social apps like Facebook and Snapchat, to computers and television. **55%** of teenagers say that their phones are almost always out when they're spending time with friends and family. When in school, students spend time learning and studying, sometimes also behind a screen. At home, between extracurricular activities and homework, they're checking Instagram stories and watching the latest episode of Riverdale. Most of the time, once kids get to high school, they are not having playdates with a variety of friends.

More than **15 million** Americans are suffering from social anxiety. This usually begins at the adolescent age. **13%** of teens have had at least one major depressive episode. **32%** have a diagnosed anxiety disorder. In order to get teenagers to socialize more with kids in positive manners you need to provide opportunities to build social skills, cultivate positive emotions, and practice face-to-face communication skills.

**School dances, like Prom or Homecoming, serve as a place for social interaction.**

Some of the benefits of school dances are:

- *Incredible fundraising opportunities for student activities*

- *Create a greater sense of community within the school and boost morale*
- *They provide a supervised safe space for students*
- *Create memories that can last beyond school*
- *They force students to spend time interacting with others & better their social skills*

Our students have so much going on in their lives nowadays between school, extra-curricular activities, college applications, etc. It's important to have events like school dances for them to get out of the classroom environment and have fun.

Now that you know the importance behind school dances, let's start planning and managing your school's next dance with **My School Dance** (<https://www.myschooldance.com>) today! ***It's free for schools to use. Sign your school up now!*** (<https://app.myschooldance.com/register>)

Contact:

Stephanie Hamilton

833-336-8656



**Source F (*USA Today*) "How Prom Trends Have Evolved over the Decades)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3A\\_DNQrtdM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3A_DNQrtdM)



## ADDITIONAL SOURCES

### Other potential sources

- (Visa) [Visa, 2015 Prom-Spending Infographic](#)
- (Pretty in Pink) [The perils of not going to your senior prom | Scene from "Pretty in Pink" \(1986\)](#)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3cCbp\\_6loQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3cCbp_6loQ)
- (Yin) [February Editorial: Is Prom Actually Worth It? Debating The Options](#)
- (PBS) [Why Do We Go to Prom?](#)  
[https://www.pbs.org/video/why-do-we-go-to-prom-2tn68y/?fbclid=IwAR2eKL63SQjasoMPhCeRQ2p\\_eAYmfNZ9jdBkoiVINvkyprMG4-UbRFlo-DE](https://www.pbs.org/video/why-do-we-go-to-prom-2tn68y/?fbclid=IwAR2eKL63SQjasoMPhCeRQ2p_eAYmfNZ9jdBkoiVINvkyprMG4-UbRFlo-DE)
- 
- (Smith) [Refinery 29: Yes, It's Okay To Not Go To Prom](#)
  
- (Waiver) [Sign of the Times - The Post-Prom Waiver](#)
- (Green) [Anthropocene Reviewed Podcast: Prom and the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment](#)
- (Dastagir) [Teens are breaking old rules about gender. Now they want to change old rules about prom](#)

# POPPING THE PROMPOSAL QUESTION

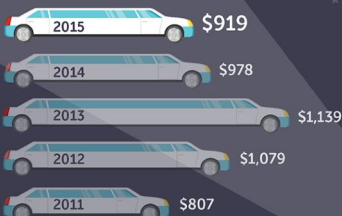
American households plan on spending a whopping **\$324** on promposals

**\$919** average total 2015 prom spending

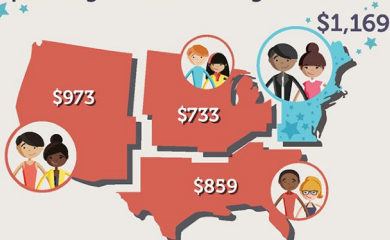
2015 Visa Prom Spending Survey

## American Families Plan to Spend 6% Less on Prom in 2015

Parents are shelling out **73%** of total prom costs – an average of **\$989** for daughters versus **\$893** for sons



## Northeast Leads Prom Spending for Third Straight Year



## Dads Dish Out the Dough

American Dads are supporting their child's prom spending by giving **63%** more funding for the extravagant promposal invite than moms – and **19%** more for the big night



## Expensive Prom for Smaller Wallets

Households that earn less than **\$25k** spend an average of **\$1,393** on prom

Families with household incomes of **\$75k** or more spend **41%** less, averaging **\$818** on prom costs



## Cut Costs with the Free Plan'it Prom App

Customize your prom budget and timeline to help plan a night – and promposal – you'll never forget



Download for iPhone or Android  
[practicalmoneyskills.com/prom](http://practicalmoneyskills.com/prom)



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» [February Editorial: Is Prom Actually Worth It? Debating The Options](#)

[Editorial](#) [Opinion](#)

## February Editorial: Is Prom Actually Worth It? Debating The Options

📅 February 24, 2020 👤 Michelle Yin

Often times we have expectations from prom to be this magical where we present ourselves in glamorous outfits, accompanied by people we've planned the whole thing out with. Yet, despite how phenomenal the idea of prom is to many people, it can also be seen as a complete waste of resources for others. So with all the steps to prepare for the big night, is it truly worth all the money and effort?

For some people you may get to meet your life partners on the night of prom; others get to create a new memory for their last few days of senior year; and some may also find that prom is a great way to spend time with friends.

Habitually during prom season, conversations are filled with the pressures of preparing for prom. For girls, that pressure can be finding a date, choosing the perfect dress, or trying to live up to the dream you've created in your head. For guys, it's worrying about renting a tux, creating the perfect promposal, or even getting the courage to ask that one person you've been crushing on. Yet, it's rare to see people sit down to talk and calculate the prices of everything totaled down.





A female corsage.

From my perspective, girls typically worry about the cost of transportation, tickets, buying your dress, getting your hair done professionally, maybe getting your makeup and nails done, jewelry, etc. Now maybe that doesn't seem as bad to you, but women averagely spend about six hundred dollars on prom. They will spend that much for a dance that is only a few hours; which means that the amount of money

they spent on one day would not even be useful after a few hours. Additionally you only wear your dress to prom and then it's just something that hangs in the back of your closet. However, many people argue that prom is worth it because it creates memories that will never be forgotten. It's meant to be a great time spent with friends. Most people can agree with those reasons but the question remains if it is worth the stress and should students be going above and beyond to be "perfect."

Furthermore, the American dream idealizes the sacred traditions of prom, although tradition is not considered a negative concept, some prom traditions need to adapt to the society we live in today. Putting money aside for a second when talking about prom, there is the whole pressure of finding a date. I've heard so many times throughout my high school career— friends regardless of gender— worrying about not being able to find a date. Now what I mean by date is the traditional concept of having the male ask the female to prom through a promposal. Frankly, I believe that although prom is a once in a lifetime event for many, the judgment towards not fitting with the social norms of prom creates a whole lot of pressure for attenders to try to fit in with their peers. I think the whole point of the event is to create memories that you will never be able to forget so having that be said, go with anyone you want, forget about all the traditions.

I personally think that although the price of prom may not seem worth it at the end of the day, it is a one time experience. Prom is considered a “big” event before graduation so even if you are trying to save money for college, consider the idea before you decide to miss out on something you may never experience again. Many students really enjoyed prom. In general, many people consider prom to be a good way to end the year.

So even with some negative sides to prom, the general idea is mostly positive with a great experience. Prom is basically the last fun night and moment of senior year before going off to college. It’s a really big moment in your life; from the food, to dancing, to the red carpet, it allows you to really feel the spotlight of your last days in high school. It should be a beautiful night where you get the opportunity to go over the top and just enjoy yourself. I think everyone deserves the opportunity to attend and have an amazing night. Prom is ultimately the night that you can take some amazing photos; whether it be with a date or with friends. There is a photo booth at prom so it would be the perfect time to capture the moment in photos that you can share with others. Live up to the dream that you may have had since freshman year or maybe even middle school. The majority of your friends will also be going so don’t miss out on a chance to socialize with them at a big formal high school event with them.

Lastly, just know that things happen. Although prom is hyped up by everyone, it might not end up meeting your expectations, and that is fine, just make the best of it. And if you don’t go either, know that it is completely up to you and that is totally okay!

 editorial, life, party, prom

## Related Posts



Story from PROM >

# Yes, It's Okay To Not Go To Prom

ERIKA W. SMITH

MARCH 13, 2019, 3:05 PM





Prom season is here, which means that [prom #content](#) is everywhere. I've definitely *awww*-ed over some [cute promposals](#), but with all the prom articles, Instagram posts, and ads everywhere, it can be hard to remember that prom is not actually mandatory.

I skipped prom for a few different reasons: I'd been to two [homecoming dances](#) before, and while I'd had an okay time, it didn't feel the need to repeat it with a [much-pricier ticket](#) (another reason I skipped). My friends were all going with dates, and I was dateless; the few boys I would have liked to go with already had plans, and [same-gender prom dates](#) were not a thing in my small, conservative hometown. I would have gone with a group of friends that included [other single people](#), but I didn't want to be a third-, fifth-, or eleventh-wheel. And finally, while I had a handful of amazing friends, I didn't love my [high school experience](#) overall and didn't feel the need to celebrate as a class.

Instead, I hung out with another friend who skipped prom: we went to Chili's, watched *the Nightmare Before Christmas* at her place, and met up with a few friends for a bonfire later on. It was a pretty good night — and ten years later, I don't regret skipping.

Earlier this week, I put out a call via Twitter and Facebook, saying I wanted to talk to other prom-skippers. I was overwhelmed with responses, from an 18-year-old who skipped prom in 2018 to a few people in their 50s — not to mention all the people who *did* go to prom but *wished* they'd skipped it. Some people I talked to regretted skipping prom, especially if they'd skipped because they were struggling with self-esteem issues or were insecure about going without a date. But the majority of prom-skippers had no regrets.

Whether they were glad they skipped or wished they'd gone, most people I talked to had similar advice for current high school students: If prom sounds fun and you think you'll have a good time, then go for it! But if you're already dreading all things prom, you don't have to go — especially if you know you'll have a better time doing something else, whether spending a low-key evening in watching a movie with a friend, or creating iconic plans like *Paperback Crush: The Totally Radical History of '80s and '90s Teen Fiction* author Gabrielle Moss, who told me, “I skipped my prom and went to a concert instead because I had read that [Carrie Brownstein](#) had skipped her prom to go to a concert.”

Ahead, people who skipped prom share their stories — and their advice for current students considering not going to prom.

1 OF 13

— “ —

It still just wasn't very cool to be gay. I stayed in and got drunk on my dad's living room floor with my best friends. We were probably "the gay kids" at school.

— ” —

**Kristie Foran, 26, Long Beach, CA; skipped prom in 2010**

**Why she skipped:** "It still just wasn't very cool to be gay. I stayed in and got drunk on my dad's living room floor with my best friends. We were probably 'the gay kids' at school."

**Her advice:** "I'd tell students, 'Look, you already know if you like going to school events, and getting dressed up, and dancing in public. And if you do, great, prom will be just like that! But if you don't already enjoy those things, prom isn't going to be any different. So don't feel bad for choosing a different path for yourself. The only thing you will ever regret is putting yourself in a situation that makes you feel unauthentic or uncomfortable.'"

2 OF 13

— “ —

I determined that I would get to do plenty of awesome things when I'm an adult, and that prom was really just another dance at the end of the day. I was right.

— ” —

**Aura Bishop, 36, Brooklyn, NY; skipped prom in 2000**

**Why she skipped:** "I was sick a lot in high school, so I missed out on a lot of things. I knew I wouldn't be able to go to prom. I treated myself to Taco Bell and watched [\*Romy and Michele's High School Reunion\*](#) on TV in my room, and determined that I would get to do plenty of awesome things when I'm an adult, and that prom was really just another dance at the end of the day. I was right. I'm still okay with having missed prom."

**Her advice:** "If prom is going to be an overwhelming financial burden, or if the thought of going doesn't bring you joy, it's okay to miss out. You will be fine. Do find another time to meet up with your friends to celebrate the passage of time."

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I was so self-conscious. My friends kept telling me to go regardless, and I wanted to as well, but my own thoughts kept me from going. I totally regret skipping prom.

— ” —

**Heysell R., 21, Dallas, TX; skipped prom in 2016**

**Why she skipped:** "The reason I didn't go is because I was overweight. I was so self-conscious about wearing a dress. I would see other girls who were much skinnier than I was, and I used to think that prom wouldn't be for me. My friends kept telling me to go regardless, and I wanted to as well, but my own thoughts kept me from going. I totally regret skipping prom, especially when seeing girls trying to get ready for it and stuff every year."

**Her advice:** "I honestly believe if you want to go but you're like me, self-conscious, you should go! You don't have to have the fanciest dress or anything, just go out there and have fun. But if you really don't want to go but feel pressured, just follow your own feelings. It's okay to stay in and do something else as well."

— “ —

I was working out my gender identity at that point in time. I



still had long hair and went by my deadname and didn't even know what I would have felt comfortable wearing.

— ” —

**LJ Vogel, 22, Brooklyn, NY; skipped prom in 2014**

**Why he skipped:** "I was working out my gender identity at that point in time. I still had long hair and went by my deadname and didn't even know what I would have felt comfortable wearing. I ended up staying home with my family and just enjoying the night. I don't really have any regrets, and I'm glad I have an understanding of who I am now."

**His advice:** "I would tell anyone considering skipping prom that it isn't the most important night of your life. You're going to have so many other amazing nights as you get older with people you care about, so if you're 17 or 18 years old and you feel like you're going to regret it forever, chances are you won't even think about it by the time you're in your twenties. Do something for yourself that night. Stay in with family, go to a movie you really want to see, take yourself to a fancy restaurant."

5 OF 13

— “ —

I skipped prom because I was very aware of the cost and I was only working as a nanny — I definitely couldn't fully afford it on my own, and I felt bad asking my parents.

— ” —

**Courtney Ruiz, 23, Dallas, TX; skipped prom in 2013**

**Why she skipped:** "I skipped prom because I was very aware of the cost and I was only working as a nanny — I definitely couldn't fully afford it on my own, and I felt bad asking my parents. I also didn't have any romantic interests at the time or a close group of friends; my friends were kinda scattered in different groups. I had a quiet night in instead. I don't regret

skipping prom, even after all these years."

**Her advice:** "Prom is not necessarily a defining or crucial experience in high school, and it's totally OK to skip out on that for whatever reason. Don't let anyone pressure you into going strictly out of fear that you'll regret it."

6 OF 13

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Skipping prom is one of my biggest regrets as an adult because for me, it really symbolizes a time when I sabotaged myself from doing something I might have enjoyed.

— ” —

**Meghan Sara, 34, Brooklyn NY; skipped prom in 2002**

**Why she skipped:** "I desperately wanted to ask the girl I had a crush on, but by the time I worked up the nerve, she'd already asked someone else. To mask my hurt, I took up the "anti-prom, prom is weak sauce" banner. I successfully talked myself out of going because "prom is for sheeple." I stayed at home and watched *Law & Order: SVU* (my life has not changed much, tbh).

"Nowadays, I love any excuse to wear a gaudy gown and cut a rug. I think I had this chip on my shoulder about asserting my identity as an individual who didn't cow to society's norms, which meant I was a lonely, angry kid who either had it my way, or it was the highway. Skipping prom is one of my biggest regrets as an adult because for me, it really symbolizes a time when I sabotaged myself from doing something I might have enjoyed."

**Her advice:** "I believe it was Wayne Gretsky who said, 'You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.'"

7 OF 13



— “ —

While I was grieving, I felt GREAT about not going. I don't remember how I spent the evening, but I do remember reveling in it.

— ” —

**Sara, 37, Philadelphia, PA; skipped prom in 1999**

**Why she skipped:** "I might not have gone anyway (never was much of a joiner) but my father died in March of my senior year, and I pretty much skipped out on all end-of-year festivities except the graduation ceremony. Oddly, several of my teachers pressured me to go to prom — even offered to waive the ticket fee — but while I was grieving, I felt GREAT about not going. I don't remember how I spent the evening, but I do remember reveling in it, just really feeling glad to have some peace and quiet in a tough year."

**Her advice:** "Prom is not your last best chance at making a memory with your friends or connecting with a crush."

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My high school was not and still is not “gay-friendly.” Women were expected to dress as “women” and men as “men.”

— ” —

**Paris Talley, 25, Columbus, OH; skipped prom in 2012**

**Why she skipped:** "My high school was not and still is not 'gay-friendly.' Women were expected to dress as 'women' and men as 'men.' You weren't allowed to go with friends or someone of the same sex. It all seemed very heteronormative, and I was not very feminine back then. Instead of prom, I went to a gay bar/club with my girlfriend and a few other friends who did not attend prom. I don't regret not going to prom, but there are times I wonder what it would have been like to have attended."

**Her advice:** "I would tell current high school students to do what makes them feel comfortable and what will make them happy."

9 OF 13

— “ —

My friends at the time couldn't understand what I was going through, and were unwilling to change certain behaviors of theirs that would trigger my PTSD.

— ” —

**Alexa Cardelli, 24, Chicago, IL; skipped prom in 2013**

**Why she skipped:** "I was clinically diagnosed with PTSD early 2012 from an event that I experienced with my friend group at the time. I underwent a serious lifestyle change to prevent myself from experiencing future trauma and to literally save my life. My friends at the time couldn't understand what I was going through, and were unwilling to change certain behaviors

of theirs that would trigger my PTSD. Dealing with my own mental health made me realize how insignificant this time period is in the grand scheme of life, and I wasn't going to spend time, money, or energy with shitty friends at an overrated fake party in a convention center with gross food."

**Her advice:** "If you're considering skipping, just do it. The life you have in front of you contains the most special, rewarding and magical experiences and people, and things will just keep getting better and better."

10 OF 13

— “ —

I felt like there was a lot of pressure to date and to have sex, and I wasn't ready to do either of those things.

— ” —

**Isabel Dieppa, 35, Chicago, IL; skipped prom in 2002**

**Why she skipped:** "At the time I was living with a friend whose family was Jehovah's Witness. I was also a Jehovah's Witness, but I was on my way out. I wasn't sure if I wanted to go because I felt like there was a lot of pressure to date and to have sex, and I wasn't ready to do either of those things. My friend who I lived with wanted me to celebrate my achievement in some way. I had just turned 18, and she invited a few of our friends from church to go to a jazz bar in downtown Cleveland."

**Her advice:** "Prom is not about 'prom,' it's about the friends you hang out with. Some of the ritual stuff is fun: get a cute dress if you want, and just hang out with the people you care about. I mean, Ariana Grande looked like she was having a lot of fun hanging out at home in her silver Zac Posen gown on Grammy night. Ultimately, do what you want to do."

11 OF 13



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**Rachel Rossen, 24, Brooklyn, NY; skipped prom in 2012**

**Why she skipped:** "I was so uncomfortable in feminine formal wear — prom dresses just weren't my thing. Prom was never going to be a marker of any type of life event for me, because it's just not something that has to do with any growing up for me. It would have just been me masquerading as some girl in a dress with some random date, and that was not me. I have absolutely no regrets about not going."

**Her advice:** "If I could talk to someone like me, I would say follow your gut, because there's probably a reason why you're not excited. If it's not something you care about, then it won't be something in your life you really regret. It's not a marker of coming-of-age; there will be other opportunities for that."

"Speaking as someone who's queer and feels like they had those experiences later in life — dating and having your first real kiss, your first real date, feeling that smitten feeling about being asked out — I do think that school dances can really ostracize people that way, and I didn't even know that I felt that way at the time. If it's not important to you now, trust me, it won't be important to you in your 20s or 30s."

12 OF 13

— “ —

Looking back on it, I wish I'd asked someone to go instead of waiting around to be asked.

— ” —

**Caitlyn Alario, 24, Brooklyn, NY; skipped prom in 2013**

**Why she skipped:** "Honestly, I skipped prom because nobody asked me. It sounds ridiculous to me now, but even as a fairly strong, independent 18-year-old, going to prom alone sounded like hell. I'd even picked out a dress online months in advance in the hopes that someone would ask me, but I never wore it. Luckily, my younger sister liked it enough to wear it to her junior prom the next year.

"The only thing I truly regret about skipping prom is that I don't have any pictures of myself in that dress that I loved so much. But also that I let myself be so powerless over that decision. Looking back on it, I wish I'd asked someone to go instead of waiting around to be asked — but even as a 'I don't need no man' kind of high school girl, I was too embarrassed to ask a boy myself."

**Her advice:** "I say do whatever you'll actually enjoy. Be honest with yourself about what you want to do, not what your friends want or you think you should do based on the current climate at your school. If there's someone you want to go to prom with, ask them. If you want to stay home and have a movie night, do that. If you want to throw your own little get together, go wild. It might feel like whatever decision you make is going to define you for the rest of your life, but I can guarantee that six years later, you'll have a whole new set of standards and decisions to define yourself by."

13 OF 13

— “ —

I promise there will be plenty of occasions to spend way too much money, wear stiff formal wear, and eat poached salmon when you get older.

— ” —

**Scarlet Meyer, 28, New York, NY; skipped prom in 2009**

**Why she skipped prom:** "I was introverted and had crippling social anxiety. All I could imagine was feeling bad about by myself in formal wear while my friends ditched me to dance

with their significant others. On top of that, I was straightedge and having anxiety about dealing with all the drinking and drugs aspects of prom. I had so much pressure from family and friends who kept telling me I was going to regret skipping it, but I honestly never did."

**Her advice:** "I would say listen to your gut. Anyone who is telling you you're going to 'regret' skipping is projecting. If you genuinely like getting dressed up and dancing with your friends and don't have an icky feelings about it, go for it. But if deep in your soul you really just don't want to go, you don't have to do it. I promise there will be plenty of occasions to spend way too much money, wear stiff formal wear, and eat poached salmon when you get older. They're called weddings, and you're going to be invited to a lot of them."

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WRITTEN BY

ERIKA  
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SMITH

GETTY IMAGES



# A Member of the Law Professor Blogs Network

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

## Sign of the Times - The Post-Prom Waiver

By Nancy Kim

The New York Times had an article in last weekend's Style section about the post-prom waiver. Apparently, in some suburbs, liability conscious parents and schools hosting a post-prom after party are asking teenagers and their parents to sign a waiver. My initial reaction was, *Really? Has it come to this?* But the more I thought about it, I could understand why some schools and parent-hosts might think it was a good idea. I did a quick search of "post prom waivers" and it seems that they serve several purposes.

First, they waive liability. The waiver would probably not be enforceable to stop lawsuits based upon negligence -- none of the ones I found even sought release for negligent acts on the part of the host - and certainly would not be effective to bar suits claiming gross negligence or recklessness on the part of the host. They generally did not overreach by which I mean they did not seek to waive liability for everything under the sun (like this Borat release).

Second, and related to the waiver, was an assumption of the risk clause. This requires the student and the student's parent to knowingly and voluntarily assume the risk of harm relating to the student's participation in post-prom activities. It seems as though post-prom activities have become much more active than when I was in high school - I found parties where there are extreme sports challenges and what looked like sumo wrestling!(?) The waivers also contained a medication release form, which given the laws in this area, is a prudent measure.

Third, and most useful, all the post-prom waivers I found established guidelines or rules of conduct. These clearly outline the school's (or host's) expectations for student behavior as well as parental responsibilities. They establish, for example, whether the event is a "lock-in" (meaning the students can't leave the premises) and the rules regarding pick-up times and who may attend the event. Given this *is* prom night, they also set out very clearly the expectations regarding drugs and alcohol - i.e. there will be NONE of that. Students and parents know that drugs and alcohol are not allowed, but putting this in the waiver allows the conversation to happen. More importantly, I think, it communicates to them that the school is not messing around. The language tends to be very express that illegal activity will not be tolerated and *police will be called*. Some people may think these types of reminders (and other disclosures) are not useful. I think it depends upon the disclosure. In a post-prom waiver, where the students and parents will be reading it for useful information, such as what to bring, etc, it reinforces expectations and allows parents to set up their own rules in the event the student breaks the school rules (i.e. no leaving the house all summer if I have to bail you out of jail at 3am...) All the waivers I read were also short and, for the most part, clearly written.

Finally, there are the indemnity type clauses. Unlike exculpatory clauses (which free the school/host from liability), an indemnity clause makes the student responsible for harm caused to others. Most of the ones I saw seemed fine - they required the students/parents to assume responsibility for any damages they caused. Again, I don't think this gives the host any more rights than they would otherwise have since you are generally liable for any property damage that you cause. It is useful, however, for setting expectations for conduct. Sure, you might have to check some of your wild physical activity - no whirling dervish dancing around the Ming vases - but from the host's point of view, understandable. It's also useful for setting expectations *after* you break the vase. You can't pretend it's unfair that you have to pay for it because you knew in advance. Kind of like those "You break it, you buy it," signs in stores.

I'm still not convinced that these waivers are a good idea although I don't think they are necessarily a bad idea as long as they are clearly written, short and, most of all, reasonable and limited in scope. It's unclear whether they will be enforceable, and again, I think it depends upon how reasonable they are in terms of scope and process (they are signed well in advance of the event and both the student and a parent/guardian must sign it). Given our litigious and form contracting society, I don't think they are going away.

[https://lawprofessors.typepad.com/contractsprof\\_blog/2015/06/sign-of-the-times-the-post-prom-waiver.html](https://lawprofessors.typepad.com/contractsprof_blog/2015/06/sign-of-the-times-the-post-prom-waiver.html)

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# Teens are breaking old rules about gender. Now they want to change old rules about prom.



**Alia E. Dastagir**

USA TODAY

Published 5:44 p.m. ET April 19, 2018

If you want to know how teens today feel about gender and sexuality, look no further than the spectacle of prom coronations. In Mississippi, a lesbian couple lobbied to become prom king and queen. In Georgia, the class president, who is gay, started a petition to change prom court titles to the more inclusive “Prom Royalty.” Some transgender students are pushing schools to re-imagine what teen nobility looks like.

Prom has historically been a bastion of stereotypical gender roles. The girl in a beautiful gown, the boy in a tux. Prom king is a guy, prom queen is a girl. But in 2018, more and more students are pushing for gender neutral prom courts, signaling how millennials are treating fundamental questions about identity and inclusion.

“Prom has reflected American adolescence, and it usually contains and magnifies the features of whatever is going on with that age cohort at the time. As the millennium changed over, and we're in a different generation now, there's just much more acceptance of gender fluidity,” said Ann Anderson, author of *High School Prom: Marketing, Morals and the American Teen*.

Carter Hebert, a senior at Chattahoochee High School in Johns Creek, Ga., was nominated for prom king along with his former boyfriend. The school's current voting process permits one male and one female to win, but Hebert said the two wanted to be able to win together, as a couple.



Hebert, who is class president, said the school has a track record of inclusivity, so when they brought their request to administration, they were stunned it wasn't granted. Hebert said the school cited "tradition" as well as time constraints. He said he was "confused" and "upset" by the response.

A statement from the school district said "because nominations have been made and the process is underway, the school administration is not in a position to make changes at this time." To formally change the process, it said, student leaders should submit a proposal.

Hebert, who started a petition on Change.org (with now nearly 5,000 signatures) to change court titles from "prom king and queen" to "prom royalty," said he is now shifting his efforts away from changing this year's prom — taking place next week — and toward making prom court more inclusive for future classes.

"What we were hoping for was to make a change not just for our school, but for schools across the nation," he said.

Hebert's school is one of many working to adapt to changing attitudes about gender. But some students wish their schools would evolve more quickly.

When Al Martinez, a transgender teen at Brooke Point High in Stafford, Va., was nominated for this year's prom king, he said the school called his parents to make sure they were OK with it. He said he found the call troubling because he imagined what could happen to a student who was not "out" at home. He also didn't think it was necessary for his parents to "approve" his gender identity or expression.

"It's not their decision ultimately," he said, "and it shouldn't be."

USA TODAY reached out to Brooke Point High for comment, but they did not respond by the time of publication.

There are still areas of the country where ideas about prom are firmly entrenched. Parts of the country where girls are forbidden to wear suits, where gay proms are unheard of and where same-sex dates are out of the question. But as more and more teens embrace gender fluidity and are open about their sexual orientation, more and more schools will be forced to look at how some prom traditions may need updating.

If prom is a rehearsal for life, as Anderson said some would suggest, than many teens are sending clear signals as to what kind of world they'd like to live in as adults.

"We just want the same opportunities," Hebert said. "We want equality. We understand that you may not have the same views as us, you may not understand what we're going through but we just want you to be open, and give us the opportunities that y'all have."

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