

Sleepovers

-A Checklist

Sue Atkins

The Parenting Expert



SLEEPOVERS – A CHECKLIST

“Should I let my child go on a sleepover?”

I get asked this a lot. And frankly, it depends. I know some parents who simply make it their policy — “No sleepovers ever.” That’s ok because it’s your right to make the rules that you are comfortable with for YOUR family.

If you decide that you are going to allow an occasional sleepover, do your “due-diligence” first. For example, I wasn’t keen on letting my daughter sleep at a house where there were much older kids. Especially if I knew that household would be rather lax in the supervision. My personal policy was that I really limited the sleepovers to about 2 or 3 places that I was truly comfortable and had very specific conversations not only with the parents at that house but also with my daughter first. Sleepovers can be fun, but they can also be a slippery slope in some instances. Would your child be able to say “no or stop” when things get uncomfortable or weird?

Some households have much different rules about what is allowed, (games, tv shows, computer use?!) Who else is going to be sleeping there because if I have an “uh-oh feeling” about anyone (an adult or another child), I would have to say “no.”

If you’re not comfortable, just smile and tell that other parent “It’s nothing personal, I’m just not comfortable when my child’s on a sleepover so right now, I’m saying “no” to these.” It’s about YOUR comfort level, you’re not being accusatory, you’re simply being honest...and no one should try to blame you or talk you out of YOUR feelings. It’s our job as the parent to evaluate each situation specifically to make sure it really is a safe place for our child. The more you know about the host family, the better equipped you will be to make a decision. Before agreeing to any sleepover, check out some of the questions below.

At whose home will the sleepover be?

Do you know everyone who is living there or staying there at the moment and how do you feel about them?

Has anyone there ever made you feel uncomfortable?

How long have you known the host family?

Can you communicate your questions comfortably with the other parents without them making you feel guilty for asking, or do they trivialize your concerns or questions?

Does your child know they can call you anytime, even in the middle of the night, to come pick them up if they need you and you won't get mad?

Does your child have a cell phone or will they have to ask the host to use their home phone? Can your child do that for themselves?

Is your child going to have to bathe there? Can you skip the bath till tomorrow when they get home to limit their vulnerability?

What activities are planned? Are the adults also having a party or get-together with their friends that night?

Will there be a lot of other adults there, possibly drinking alcohol, while kids are around?

Have you discussed "thumbs up/thumbs down touches" with your child and given them some scripted responses to help them get out of any weird situation?

How ready is your child for this kind of independence?

Sleepovers aren't necessarily bad. Kids like being part of another family for a night, it can be fun to wake up with your best friend and run downstairs for breakfast together. But use good judgment. It YOUR family, and YOU get to decide.

