

Grade 10 Writing Prompt

Write an essay for a teen advice website arguing how old adolescents should be before they start dating. Your essay must be based on ideas, concepts, and information from the “Teens and Dating” passage set.

Manage your time carefully so you can

- plan your essay;
- write your essay; and
- revise and edit your essay.

Be sure to

- include a claim;
- address counterclaims;
- use evidence from multiple sources.

Do not over rely on one source. Type your answer in the space provided.

Teens and Dating

Teens face strong pressures to date. In fact, over half of teens in the United States report dating regularly, whereas a third claim to have a steady dating partner. As children reach 14-15 years, they start having relationships with peers of the opposite sex. In the early teen years dating is for fun and recreation and status among peers. In the older teen years youth are looking for companionship, affection, and social support.

A New Jersey study shows that the number of U.S. teens dating steadily. When asked, "In the last 18 months, have you had a special romantic relationship with anyone?" 26% of 12-year-olds reported that they had, while 53% of 15-year-olds reported that they had.

Desiring a romantic partner is a natural, expected part of adolescence. However, involvement in a serious romantic relationship in the early teen years can create problems. Some believe a teen first needs to form an identity and know who she or he is before developing a healthy close relationship. Other experts feel that romantic relationships are a way for teens to learn more about themselves.

As long as dating doesn't start too early in the adolescent years, dating can be a way to learn many desirable skills. These include socially appropriate behavior, compromise, empathy, and how to develop a meaningful relationship.

The dark side of dating in the teen years is that it can put youth at risk. Frequent dating in early adolescence is connected with poor school performance, drug use, and delinquency. Other problems include poor social skills that last years, depression, or sexual activity.

Dating during adolescence poses both promise and problems.

Fogarty, Kate. "Teens and Dating." *Education.com*. Education.com, 11 March 2008. Web. 14 October 2014.

The Data on Teen Dating

Entering into intimate relationships too early can cause problems for teenagers. York University in Toronto conducted a study from 1996 to 2003. The researchers followed 698 students from 12 local schools who were given yearly surveys to report their dating activities and personality traits.

At the end of the study, researchers divided the students into three groups, depending on when they started dating. The early-starting group began dating at the age of 11.6 years, on average, compared with 12.9 years for on-time teens and 14.9 years for late bloomers.

The early starters reported twice as many acts of risky behavior as the middle group. These behaviors included unsafe sexual activity, alcohol use and delinquent behavior. In addition, they reported twice as many incidents of lying, cheating, picking fights, truancy, disobedience, and running away.

The late starters, once they began dating, followed a faster path through the casual and group-dating stages before moving to exclusive relationships. They showed no apparent negative effects. Students with high academic goals were more likely to be late bloomers.

Lukits, Ann. "The Data on Teen Dating." *The Wall Street Journal*. 30 Sept. 2013. Web. 14 Oct. 2015.

When to Let Your Teenager Start Dating

The recent trend among early adolescents is for boys and girls to socialize as part of a group. While there may be the occasional couple among the members, most are unattached. If anything, they spend as much time interacting with their same-sex friends as they do with members of the opposite sex.

Dr. Ron Eagar at Denver Health Medical Center views group dating as a healthy way for adolescents to socialize. "The number-one benefit is safety," says the father of two grown children. Going out in mixed groups also lets teens enjoy one another's company, without the awkwardness of a one-to-one date.

As a general guideline, Dr. Eagar advises not allowing single dating before age sixteen. "There's an enormous difference between a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old and a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old in terms of life experience," he says. You might add or subtract a year depending on how responsible your youngster is. Community standards might be a consideration. Are other parents letting their teens date yet?

When "going out" becomes "going steady," it is natural to worry that things are getting too serious too soon. If schoolwork starts to suffer and friendships fall by the wayside, it is reasonable to restrict the number of times a young couple spends together in a week.

"When to Let Your Teenager Start Dating." *HealthyChildren*. American Academy of Pediatrics, 20 August 2015. Web. 14 October 2015.

STAGES OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Stage with Age Range (approx.)	Early Adolescence (ages 10-14 years)	Middle Adolescence (ages 15-17 years)	Late Adolescence (ages 18-21 years)
Physical Growth	Puberty: rapid body changes	Majority of changes associated with puberty have taken place 95% of adult height reached	Physical maturity is leveling off and generally complete Greater emotional stability
Intellectual Growth	Concrete thought dominates, “here and now” Cause-effect relationships underdeveloped Stronger “self” than “social” awareness	Growth in abstract thought, but reverts to concrete thought under stress Very self-absorbed Some difficulty linking behavior to consequences	Abstract thought established Able to understand, plan, and pursue long-range goals Philosophical and idealistic
Autonomy	Challenge authority Loneliness Wide mood swings Things of childhood rejected	Conflict with family predominates due to ambivalence about emerging independence	Focus: --vocational/college and/or work --adult lifestyle
Body Image	Preoccupation with physical changes Critical of appearance Need for privacy	Concerned with physical appearance and believe others are also concerned Invest time in grooming, exercising	Less concerned about their bodies Usually comfortable with body image
Peer Group	Rather be with friends than family Important to fit in; conformity Friendships become more important with increased sharing	Strong emphasis on peer approval Experience most conflict with parents Increased concerns about sexual attractiveness	Decisions/values less influenced by peers Start to listen to parents’ advice again Relates to individuals more than peer group as a whole
Identity Development	“Am I normal?” “No one understands” Feel like nothing bad will happen to them Rigid concepts of right and wrong	Experimentation with sex, drugs, friends, jobs, risk-taking behavior Still feel invincible Special athletic, artistic, academic, or musical talents may help develop good self-esteem Increased ability to control impulses	Begin to worry about the future Pursue realistic vocational goals Relate to family as adult Realization of own limitations Establishment of moral value system More capable of intimate relationships

“Stages of Healthy Adolescent Development.” *Oregon Health Authority*. Oregon.gov, n.d. Web. 20 October 2015.

“Stages of Adolescent Development.” *KidsGrowth*. KidsGrowth, n.d. Web. 20 October 2015.