

Leaving the Nest: Achieving Independence

In my years as a parent and considerably more years as a high school counselor, I have compiled a variety of competencies from many sources that teens should have before successfully leaving home. A checklist of specific responsibilities may be helpful. This list is by no means comprehensive and is presented in no particular order. Generally, teens should be able to:

- ✓ Get themselves up in the morning, determine a reasonable bedtime
- ✓ Do their own laundry
- ✓ Go grocery shopping
- ✓ Plan and cook healthy meals for themselves
- ✓ Be able to clean house independently
- ✓ Hold a job
- ✓ Maintain the vehicle they drive
- ✓ Budget academic responsibilities against a social life
- ✓ Ask for help when they are overwhelmed
- ✓ Develop financial responsibility by earning all or part of spending money or manage a clothing budget
- ✓ Manage a savings account, checking account or debit card, phone card
- ✓ Keep track of important papers and belongings
- ✓ Refill their own prescriptions
- ✓ Make their own medical or dental appointments
- ✓ Set their own curfews (with parental consent) by their senior year
- ✓ Pack their own suitcases for trips
- ✓ Travel by themselves by plane, car or train to visit friends or relatives
- ✓ Meet a variety of different people
- ✓ Know how to request information and make inquiries or complaints in person, phone and internet
- ✓ Understand the etiquette of thank you notes and responding to invitations
- ✓ Know how to stand up for themselves if misinformed or taken advantage of by a sales clerk, mechanic, school official or someone else
- ✓ Budget time reasonably well, keeping a calendar or planner to track classes, appointments and deadlines
- ✓ Complete their own college applications, organizing by deadlines etc.
- ✓ Pick the college they want to attend and perhaps have an idea of what they hope to do with their lives
- ✓ Take primary responsibility for packing and getting ready for college

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