

A Cheat Sheet for Sending Your Kid to College

College marks a great milestone in a child's life. It may be the first time he or she will live away from home. Dropping off your child at college may be an experience loaded with emotions, so here are a few tips for a smoother transition.

Accept that the Parent-Child Dynamic Has Changed

Your child is always your child, and will need you as much as ever. However, parents need to understand that their role has transitioned from “supervisor” to “mentor.”

Make the Move Simple

Do not bring the moving van. Not only will it embarrass your child, but dorm rooms just aren't that large. Bring only what's appropriate.

Consider pre-ordering essentials (soap, bedding, shower caddy, etc.) for pick-up at a location by the school. This will save space whether your trip is by car or plane.

Don't Leave “The Talk” to the Drop-off

While college represents a gateway to many wonderful experiences, parents will want to have a serious conversation about safety, responsible behavior, finances, and expectations about staying in touch.

Do not leave it for the drop-off. It is sure to sour the moment and may rush a conversation that deserves more time and mutual dialogue.

Time to Learn Financial Responsibility

Your child will need spending money. You may want to provide a debit card attached to an account that has a set sum for the full semester, or one that's refreshed with monthly deposits. College is a perfect time to learn budgeting.

Take the Lead from Your Child

Let your child have the discretion to make decisions about what to bring. However important you think a dust skirt for the bed is, try to avoid fights. Let your child make a mistake. It's the best way to learn.

Your child will likely send signals when it's time for you to go. Listen to them. It's time for him or her to begin connecting with new roommates. Expect that final “good-bye dinner” to be canceled since your child may prefer an impromptu introductory dinner with the new roommate.

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