

# TULSA WORLD

## How young is too young?

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### Parents agree there is no right age to wear makeup

Julie Austin's daughters know that less is more, especially when it comes to makeup.

"Every once in a while, they put it on very lightly to go out," such as when the family goes to restaurants on the weekend, Austin said. "It has to be pretty toned down."

But they do very well with it; they know what looks good and what doesn't, she said. Her girls have been practicing since they were little, probably as young as age 2. Now, her girls are ages 8 and 11.

For many parents, it's a watershed moment. For others, it's no big deal. But what is the right age for girls to start wearing makeup?

"It's something we never put a guard on," said Austin, who has bought her "very girly-girl" daughters play makeup, as well as cosmetics by Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. It's not like they're wearing Lancome or Chanel yet.

"When I was growing up, it wasn't a big issue for me," said Noelle Roso, also a mother of two girls -- one is 15, the other is 18. They started wearing makeup in about sixth or seventh grade.

"Generations of girls have grown up playing with makeup," said Rachel Wagner, founder and director of Rachel Wagner Etiquette and Protocol in Tulsa. She does corporate and dining etiquette training, as well as international protocol briefing and individual coaching.

Wagner remembers playing with her mom's and grandmother's makeup, which is "all fine and good." But today, it seems that girls are wearing makeup sooner, and not just at play time.

"People are questioning if that's good or not," Wagner said. Today, more and more girls are accompanying their mothers to makeup counters.

And more and more options are available for cosmetics, she said, from department store lines and mass-market retailers to stores devoted to all things beauty-enhancing, such as Ulta and the soon-to-open Sephora at Woodland Hills Mall. Plus, girls may emulate characters they see on TV shows, or musicians and celebrities in magazines and videos.

"I don't see anything inherently wrong with any of this," Wagner said. But she's concerned about the marketing message to girls, like it's "they need to wear makeup to be accepted."

From the time they're about 5 or 6 years old, most girls are usually interested in wearing makeup, Lynda King said. A beauty consultant at the Lancome counter in Dillard's Promenade, King has definitely noticed an increase in young girls coming in with their mothers or friends to the store's cosmetics counters.

They usually start out wearing nail polish and lip gloss, she said. By the time they reach the tween years, girls start experimenting with mascara and eye shadow.

But back to that question we asked earlier: What age is most appropriate? That, according to everyone we talked to here, is up to the parents.

"It's a leap into part of the teenage years, a rite of passage," Wagner said. And the time a girl is ready to take that leap is up to her guardians.

"As a parent, it's all about the approach," said Austin, who monitors her girls' makeup times. "If you make a big deal out of something . . . they're going to want to know why."

The key is to have "teachable moments with your kids vs. a lecture," said Wagner, a mother of two young adult daughters.

Let's say your daughter brings home a fashion maga zine and is curious about the makeup, Wagner said. You can sit down with her, flip through the magazine and point out various products, explaining each item's purpose and how it should be applied.

During these teachable moments, you can also talk about getting to know people for their inner beauty, not just what's on the outside, Wagner said. Through these kind of talks, you may find your daughter is more open to your opinion -- that you're with her, not against her.

You can also schedule a makeover at a cosmetics counter, Wagner and King both recommended. This way, your daughter can learn how to apply makeup from a professional. An added bonus is that it's potential bonding time between you and child.

Just don't rush your kids into wearing it, Roso said.

"Sometimes we're guilty of pushing our kids to grow up too fast," Roso said of parents in general. "It's important to let kids take their time -- let kids be kids."

In addition to allowing them to play and practice with makeup, Austin also bought her daughters books from American Girl, which offer how-to tips, she said.

If it ever happened that Austin's daughters were wearing makeup to stick out in a crowd or attract a boy, though, then she'd have her guard up.

But for now, her daughters are having fun with makeup, throwing pretend fashion shows and fixing their hair -- you know, being girly girls.

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