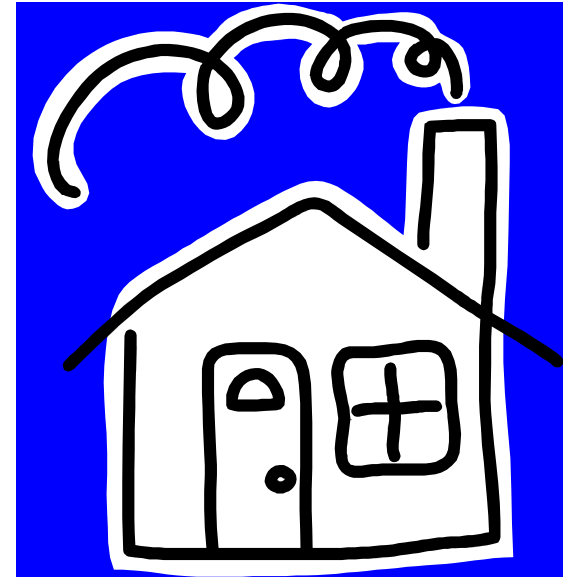


HOME ALONE



Is Your Child Ready?

A Guide for Parents

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Is Your Child Old Enough to Stay Home Alone?

There is no magic age when a child is ready to stay by herself. All children are different. Very young children should never be left alone. To help you make the decision, consider the following:



- ☺ How does he (or she) feel about the situation?
- ☺ Look at his age along with growth, behavior and judgment.
- ☺ What responsibilities will he have?
- ☺ Can he handle those responsibilities?
- ☺ How long will he be left alone? Making the first few times short and gradually increasing the time away will build his confidence.
- ☺ What are the safety risks if he stays home alone? (fire, burglary, accidents, etc.)
- ☺ Can he say no to peer pressure if friends encourage him to break the rules?

How Can I Make Staying Home Alone Safe & Fun?

- ☺ Remove fire hazards & install smoke detectors. Hold fire drills so the kids can practice.
- ☺ Teach the kids basic first aid and have a first aid kit handy.
- ☺ Have the kids practice emergency (911) calls, giving their address and directions if necessary.
- ☺ Review safety rules such as not playing with matches, knives and scissors.
- ☺ Make sure kids have a clear understanding about the use of ovens, stoves and other appliances.
- ☺ Establish clear ground rules. This avoids confusion about what you expect and adds to your child's sense



- ☺ Instruct the kids to not tell callers they are home alone. They should say the parent is busy and offer to take a message. If a call seems suspicious, they should call you or another adult.
- ☺ Instruct your kids to never allow strangers into the house.
- ☺ Encourage your child to discuss feelings about being alone. If your child seems afraid, help him talk about it.
- ☺ Set up an emergency plan with a relative, friend or neighbor who would be willing to be called by the child for advice and reassurance in "small emergencies" when you are unavailable by phone.
- ☺ When you leave, post the house address and important phone numbers near the telephone.
- ☺ Establish a daily routine where your child calls you or a designated person when he arrives home.
- ☺ If your child comes home after school, give him keys and an attractive key chain. The keys should be carried out of sight so your child is not easily identified as on his own.
- ☺ Provide at-home projects and materials as well as juice and nutritious snacks.
- ☺ Arrange some after school activities such as clubs, scouts, sports or the library. If you need help with transportation, make arrangements to trade weekend driving or sitting with other parents.
- ☺ Afterwards, praise your child for doing a good job. You may be pleasantly surprised at how readily and how well he assumes responsibility when prepared and given the opportunity.

