

When Kids are Home Alone

School has resumed and for many kids that means being home alone after school. How do you know when it's safe to leave your child home alone? First, investigate the laws in your state or county as they vary. For example, in Illinois, the youngest a child can be left home alone is 14 years old while in Kansas, the age is 6 years old.

Rules to cover with your child before they stay home alone:

- Review emergency contact numbers and address.
- How to lock/unlock doors and windows.
- If you have an alarm system: how to turn off/on, how to use panic buttons, as well as any passwords and codes.
- Safety and emergency evacuation plans. Write the plan down and put it in a place where your child can access it.
- Kitchen rules. Are they allowed to cook on a stove or just use the microwave? What kitchen appliances can they use?
- Never leave the house without permission.
- Which neighbor would your child turn to if there was an immediate need (and make sure the neighbor is aware of the plan too).
- Are they allowed to have friends over?
- Never open the door to delivery people or service representatives as packages can be left at doors and service appointments scheduled when an adult is home.
- Do not talk about being home alone on social media websites. Children shouldn't be sharing information about their location when on social media.



Questions to consider:

- How long will your child be alone?
- Does your child tend to obey rules and make good decisions?
- How does your child respond to unfamiliar or stressful situations?
- Will there be one or more children at home together?
- Does your child feel comfortable or fearful about being home alone?

Suggested age appropriate guidelines:

7 & under: children this age should not be left alone for any period of time. This includes in unattended cars, playgrounds, and backyards.

8 to 10 years: children this age should not be left alone for more than 1 1/2 hours and only during daylight and early evening hours.

11 to 12 years: children this age may be left alone for up to 3 hours but not late at night or in circumstances requiring inappropriate responsibility.

13 to 15 years: teens this age may be left unsupervised, but not overnight.

16 to 17 years: teens this age may be left unsupervised (in some cases, for up to two consecutive overnight periods).

Having discussions with your child and asking “what if” questions will help develop problem solving skills and give you insight as to whether your child is able to “think on their feet” in an emergency situation. Role playing is another great tool for parents. Not only will this help your child think through scenarios, but also serve as a resource for kids to fall back on if they ever faced the same situation.

<https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/news/Red-Cross-Offers-Safety-Tips-For-When-the-Kids-Are-Home-Along.html>

<https://selfsufficientkids.com/guidelines-leaving-child-home-alone/>

<https://www.workingmother.com/when-can-you-leave-your-kids-home-alone>

<https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;>

