

Home Alone...Tips for Leaving Kids Safely

- The Child and Family Services Act states that any child under 10 years left alone is automatically considered to be at risk. The onus is on the parent to prove reasonable provision for supervision and care was provided. Under the act a fine of up to \$1000 and/or up to one year in jail can be imposed.
- By law, the Children's Aid is required to investigate any reports of children under 10 being left alone.
- When preparing a child to stay at home, the child's maturity level should be taken into account. The younger the child, the shorter time they should be home alone. The minimum recommended age for babysitting is 12, though not every kid will be ready at this age.
- Consider also the child's comfort level. A child who is afraid or uncomfortable should not be left alone.
- Children should not be left alone for long periods of time, nor overnight.
- Young children should not have to care for other children. Kids should not be expected to care for a baby until they are into their teens and have had some training or experience with babies.
- A babysitting course is advisable. Home alone courses are also available.

What a Child Home Alone Should Know

- ◆ Where the parent/caregiver is going, when they will be back, and how to reach them if needed
- ◆ Their own full name, age, address and phone number and when it is appropriate to give out that information to others
- ◆ What to do in an emergency - includes understanding what an emergency is (use examples)
- ◆ Rules of the house (include having friends over, playing outside, etc)
- ◆ Location of emergency exits, fire extinguishers and first aid kit
- ◆ How to use keys in deadlocks and how to unbolt them



Children Home Alone Should Have

- ◆ A list of emergency contacts (including someone close by) in plain view of the telephone.
- ◆ Snacks or prepared food available
- ◆ Small amount of money (for taxis, emergencies or meals such as pizza)

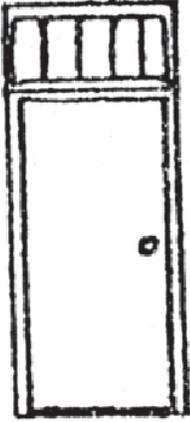
Prepare Your Child

- ◆ Sit down with your child and create a list of house rules. Include rules about guests, answering the phone and door.
- ◆ Decide which appliances children can use and teach them how to operate them safely. (For example, they may be restricted from using the stove but permitted to use the microwave or toaster.)
- ◆ Explain what an emergency is and practice what to do in different scenarios.
- ◆ Do regular check-ins or designate a neighbour or family member who can call to check on your child. Not only is this a good safety practice, it is easy for a child home alone to become lonely or frightened.



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Answering the Door



- ◆ Keep the door closed and locked at all times.
- ◆ If someone knocks, look through the peephole or window to see who is there.
- ◆ Never tell a visitor you are home alone.
- ◆ If you choose to talk to someone at the door, talk through the closed door. Don't open the door. Keep it locked. Keep the conversation short even if the visitor tries to talk to you.
- ◆ If you're not sure what to do or say, don't say anything.
- ◆ Don't let anyone in the house, even if you know them, unless your parents said it was okay for this person to come in.
- ◆ If the person will not go away or tries to get in the house, call 911 immediately.

Answering the Phone

- ◆ When answering the phone, children should not give their name. Just say, "Hello".
- ◆ If a caller asks a child their name, just ask the caller whom they wish to speak to.
- ◆ Never give your address over the phone, unless calling 911 in an emergency or a taxi.
- ◆ Do not answer questions asked by a stranger over the phone. If a stranger asks, "What number is this?" do not tell them.
- ◆ Never tell a caller anything about yourself, including who is home. Instead, say your parents are busy and can't come to the phone. Take a message.
- ◆ If someone on the phone says something mean or scary, continues to ask questions, or bother you in any way, hang up the phone immediately. If they continue to call back, call for help.

Practice with your Child



- Try using the 'broken record' technique for persistent callers.
- I'm not allowed to give that information over the phone.
 - My mom/dad can't come to the phone right now. May I take a message?
 - I'm not supposed to give my name over the phone.
 - I'm sorry I can't answer any questions. I can only take a message.
 - I can't stay on the phone any longer. I am going to hang up now.

Additional Safety Tips

- ◆ Be careful with house keys. Children shouldn't wear a key in a way that someone can see it.
- ◆ Children should not wear their names on their clothing. When kids hear someone use their name, they often believe it's a signal for safety.
- ◆ Do not enter the house if anything seems different than usual when you arrive home (e.g. if the door is unlocked or a window is open). Go to a designated neighbour's house for help.