

# A Parents' Guide to Leaving Children at Home Alone

You know your children and young adults better than anyone. It can still be difficult to know just when they are ready to take on an important new responsibility like staying home alone. As you consider this decision remember to use the age information and questionnaire provided here as a guide only. It is important to consider these alongside what you know about your child and what your child tells you about his/her comfort level with staying home alone.

Please note, school age child care programs which enroll children and youth up to 12 years old may be available in your community. For more information, contact your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency. Please also check your local community education calendars to find home alone classes and additional services and activities for school age children and youth.

## In general children...

- Age 7 and younger should not be left alone for any period of time.
- Age 8-10 should not be left alone for more than two or three hours.

## In general youth...

- Age 11-13 should not be left alone for more than 12 hours.
- Age 14-15 should not be left alone for more than 15 hours.
- Younger than 11 should not provide child care for younger children.



Please use the checklist below as you consider whether your child is ready to stay home alone. Questions which you are unsure how to answer or which you answer with “no” can highlight areas for discussion or planning within your family.

Circle One:

Does your child know when and how to call 9-1-1?  
Can your child say and dial your home phone number and does she or he know your home address?

Yes                      No

Does your child know basic first aid and where first aid supplies are kept in the home?

Yes                      No

Can your child show you how they would carefully identify someone coming to the door when they are home alone?

Yes No

Does your child know how to reach you or other responsible adults by phone? Do you have a list of important and emergency phone numbers near the phone and within your child's reach?

Yes No



Can your child name five household safety rules for your home? (ex. Use of stove or microwave, handling a delivery, or a gas smell in the house.)

Yes No

Has your child shown an interest in staying home alone? Would your child feel safe if home alone? Test this out by "practicing" with the children while you are still at home. Act out or talk through a few challenging situations that may arise while children are on their own.

Yes No

Will your child tell you if something happened while they were at home alone that made them feel uncomfortable in any way?

Yes No

Have you created a plan for your child's day or time at home? For example, does your child have a few chores or homework tasks to tackle while at home? Could your child set out a goal of reading a few chapters in a favorite book or working on finishing a creative project? As you create a plan for the day, remember to make time for fun.

Yes No

Minnesota Child Care Resource & Referral Network  
(888) 291-9811  
[www.mnchildcare.org](http://www.mnchildcare.org)

