

Home Alone parent Guide



Parents and Guardians:

You may be considering allowing your child to stay home alone for the first time and wondering if they are ready. To answer that question, you will need to consider things such as your child's age, maturity, behavioral history, how long will they be home alone, do they know how to handle an emergency, and most importantly do they feel ready.

Minnesota does not have a law that specifically tells you when children can stay home by themselves. This packet is a resource that you can use to help make a more informed decision. Once you have determined that your child is ready to stay home alone, the following suggestions may make both you and your child feel more confident and prepared:

Have a trial period. Leave the child home alone for a short time while staying close to home. This is a good way to see how they will manage.

Role-play. Act out possible situations to help your child learn what to do in different scenarios. An example would be how to manage visitors who come to the door or how to answer phone calls in a way that does not reveal that a parent is not home.

Create a schedule. Layout how their time will be scheduled from the time they arrive home from school until you arrive home.

Stock up. Make sure your house has everyday goods and emergency supplies. Stock the kitchen with healthy foods for snacking. Leave a precise dose of any medicine that your child needs to take, but don't leave medicine bottles out (it could lead to an accidental overdose or ingestion, especially by younger siblings).

Childproof your home. No matter how well your child follows rules, secure anything that could be a health or safety risk. Lock them up and put them in a place where kids can't get to them, such as: alcohol, prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines that could cause problems if taken in excess (like sleeping pills, cough medicine, etc.), guns (if you keep one, make sure it is locked up and leave it unloaded and stored away from ammunition), tobacco, car keys, lighters and matches.

Check in. Call your child while you are away to see how it is going, or have a trusted neighbor or friend check in. You may also want your child to call you when they arrive home to let you know they made it inside safely.

Discuss emergencies. What does the child consider an emergency? What do you consider an emergency? Have a code word that you and your child can use in the event of any emergency.

Leave flashlights handy in case of a power outage. Post important phone numbers (yours and those of friends, family members, the doctor, police, and fire department) that your child might need in an emergency.

Talk about it. Encourage your child to share their feeling with you about staying home alone.

IS YOUR CHILD READY TO STAY HOME ALONE? TAKE THE QUIZ TO FIND OUT!



1 Do they know their full name, parents' full name, address and important phone numbers?

2 Do they know how to contact a parent or another responsible adult by phone? Do they have a list of important and emergency numbers near the phone? Do they have access to a phone?

3 Do they know when and how to call 911? Do they know the difference between a problem (you are scared, disagreement with your sibling) vs. an emergency (a fire, break-in, medical emergency)?

4 Do they know what to do if there is a situation like a fire, power outage, a bee sting, a sibling who is choking, a knock at the door, an allergic reaction, a natural disaster?

5 Do they know how to enter your home on their own if the house is locked or do they know what to do if they are locked out?

6 Do they know basic first aid and where first aid supplies are kept in the home?

7 Can they respect and follow the house rules set by you, the parent/guardian?

8 Can they take care of their basic needs, such as snacks, drinks, homework, etc. while still following the house rules? Can they entertain themselves if they don't have homework?

9 Can they and their sister and/or brother get along and resolve disagreements if they are home alone together?

10 Do they feel comfortable staying home alone?

MAYBE YOUR CHILD IS A HOME-ALONE PRO AND ANSWERED YES TO ALL THE QUESTIONS. GREAT! NOW TAKE IT EVEN FARTHER AND MAKE SURE THEY KNOW HOW TO BE SAFE DURING THEIR TIME ALONE. IF THEY ANSWER "NO" TO ANY OF THESE, TALK TO THEM ABOUT SOME SOLUTIONS THAT WILL HELP THEM GET PREPARED. IF THEY HAVE WORRIES ABOUT BEING HOME ALONE, IT IS IMPORTANT THEY KNOW THEY CAN TELL YOU, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY MEAN THEY NEED TO HAVE A SITTER OR YOU HAVE TO REARRANGE YOUR SCHEDULE.

Emergency Contact

FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES: DIAL 911

**POISON
CONTROL**



1-800-222-1222

**RAMSEY
POLICE**



763-427-1212

**RAMSEY
FIRE**



763-427-4452

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO

MY ADDRESS _____

GUARDIAN NAME _____ CELL # _____ Work # _____

GUARDIAN NAME _____ CELL # _____ Work # _____

EMERGENCY CONACT 1 _____

RELATIONSHIP _____

CELL PHONE _____

WORK PHONE _____

EMERGENCY CONACT 2 _____

RELATIONSHIP _____

CELL PHONE _____

WORK PHONE _____

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFO

PEDIATRICIAN _____ PHONE # _____

DENTIST _____ PHONE # _____

SCHOOL _____ PHONE # _____

ALLERGIES AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFO

Handling Emergencies

Emergencies can happen at any time. Your child should understand what is and is not an emergency. They should also know what to do if an emergency or problem arises.

Emergency



Inside of the home: Fire or Gas Leak

Weather: Tornado (Seek Shelter)

Injury: Broken Bone or Unconsciousness

Life-Threatening Illness: Asthma Attack or Allergic Reaction



These are examples of emergencies that may require calling 911 for help

Medium Problem



Inside the home: Toilet Overflowing or Faucet Dripping

Weather: Electricity Goes Out

Minor First Aid: Scrape or Insect Sting



These are examples of problems you can fix or call a trusted adult for help

Little Problem



Spilling Your Glass of Milk

Losing Your Homework

Finding a Pencil

Stubbing Your Toe



These are not emergencies and do not require help

Tips for Your Child if They Need to Call 911

- Remember to call from a safe location. If your house is on fire, get out and then call.
- Know your full name and address.
- Remain calm and speak clearly.
- Stay on the phone with the 911 operator until they tell you to hang up.
- Tell the 911 operator if you dial 911 by mistake and it is not an emergency. If you hang up, emergency crews could be sent to your home.

Dealing with Emotions



Ask your child how they feel about staying home alone. Do they feel nervous or anxious? Do they think they can handle a stressful situation? Does it matter to them where you will be or what time you will get home?

Explain to your child that it is normal to have certain feelings and thoughts when you are home alone. They might feel independent, confident, and mature with new responsibilities. After all, they are in charge and must be responsible for what happens in the house. Other times they may feel anxious, lonely, bored or afraid. All feelings are normal, some are comfortable and some are not. By discussing how your child feels, you may be able to calm their fears.

Have a discussion with your child regarding the following questions to see if they feel ready to stay home alone.

- When I'm by myself, I feel...
- When I'm by myself, I really like to...
- When I'm by myself, I get scared about...
- When I'm by myself, I wish I knew...
- When I'm by myself, I wish I could...
- When I'm by myself, the best thing is...
- When I'm by myself, the worst thing is...



Play the "What if" game...

Ask your child what they would do in each of the below situations. If they do not know, go over possible solutions to help ease their fears.

Situations:

1. You lose the key to get in the house or the key pad does not work
2. Someone calls you on the phone and asks to talk to your parents
3. You are walking home alone and a stranger pulls up and offers you a ride home
4. Someone is at the door
5. A weather alert is on the TV and says there is a tornado watch or warning
6. You hear a strange noise in the house
7. There's a fire
8. You are hungry
9. You are in an argument with your sibling
10. Your phone does not work and you need help

Making Family Rules

Family rules are important especially for a child that is staying home alone. Rules give your child structure and help them understand what behavior is and is not okay.

Tips for Creating Family Rules



- Invite everyone to participate in a family meeting.
- Give each member of the family a chance to speak and share their ideas.
- Identify and clearly define the rules. Make sure everyone understands them.
- Define what the consequences are for not following the rules
- Write down the decisions made
- Post the rules in the house as a reminder to everyone

Things to consider: If your child is home alone, what is their rule for...?

- Having friends inside the home
- Having friends outside
- Playing at the park or a friend's house
- Having a snack
- Kitchen tools and appliances that can and cannot be used
- Doing homework
- Doing chores
- Watching TV
- Playing on their phone, tablet, computer, gaming system
- Calling parents/guardians
- Calling (texting, snapchatting, etc.) friends
- Taking medicine
- First Aid
- Answering the door
- Answering the phone



Schedules and Routines

Establishing routines and schedules are helpful in letting your child know what is expected of them when you are not there. The structure can help them with stress and can teach them responsibilities and self-control.

Scheduling their day can help ensure their homework and chores are completed, give them a feeling of accomplishment, keep them out of trouble, and from feeling bored. Their schedule should include both homework/chores along with fun activities. Deciding what their routine and schedule will look like will depend on the time of day, the day of the week and planned activities/sports scheduled for that day.

Home alone before school?

Are they responsible for showering/getting dressed, eating breakfast, brushing teeth, getting to the bus stop on time. Before they leave the house are the lights turned off, do they have everything they need for school (bag, lunch homework, jacket, etc.), and did they lock the door behind them?

Home alone after school? Do they need to check in with a parent? Do they have homework, chores, and or pets to take care of? Can they make their own snack? Are they allowed to play video games, have friends over or watch TV?

Home alone nights or weekends?

Do they need to make their own dinner/snacks? Are they responsible for a sibling? Can they play outside/inside with friends? Do they need to get their clothes or backpack ready for the next day? Are they putting themselves to bed?

Daily Planner

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun Date: March 18

Hourly Plan

06:00
07:00 Eat Breakfast & Get Ready For School
08:00 Go to Bus Stop
09:00
10:00
11:00
12:00
1:00
2:00
3:00
4:00 Call Mom when get home
5:00 Get Snack Do Homework
6:00 Dad Get home
7:00 Go to brother's hockey practice
8:00 Get ready for bed

To do List

☐ Feed the Dog
☐ Do Homework
☐ Pick-up Bedroom
☐
☐
☐

Notes

Brother has Hockey Practice at 7:00 pm
Mom is staying at work late tonight
Need help with questions 7 on homework

How I Felt

happy lonely angry proud upset mad bored



Daily Planner

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

Date: _____

Hourly Plan

06:00

07:00

08:00

09:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

1:00

2:00

3:00

4:00

5:00

6:00

7:00

8:00

To do List













Notes

How I Felt

happy

lonely

angry

proud

upset

mad

bored



INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS



- **Do** teach your child not to post identifying information on the internet.
- **Do** set a limit for how much time your child can spend online.
- **Do** keep the computer in a public room in the house.
- **Do Not** have the internet connected to a computer in your child's bedroom.
- **Do** utilize parental controls provided by your internet provider and/or blocking software. (contact your internet provider if you have questions)
- **Do** periodically review your child's computer and emails. You should have your child's passwords.
- **Do** spend time with your child online. Have them show you their favorite online destinations. Get to know your child's online friends as you would their real-life friends. Learn to navigate the web.
- **Do** monitor your child's access to the internet outside of the home.
- **Do** talk to your child about the danger of internet predators.
- **Do** watch for unexplained changes in your child's behavior.
- **Do Not** hesitate to seek help from law enforcement if you think a predator may be targeting your child.

For more helpful internet safety information, visit www.netsmarts.org. Netsmart.org has age-appropriate videos, activities, and information for students in elementary school, middle school and high school.



Minnesota Child Supervision Guidelines

Minnesota law does not provide a specific age a child must be before he or she may be left home alone or left under the care of another child. However, there are general laws that require adequate and appropriate supervision of children.

Anoka County Social Services reviews concerns about child supervision and uses MN Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines based on MN Statute 626.556, to determine what unsafe supervision is.

One of the most important ways to keep children safe is for children to be supervised by an adult or other responsible caregiver. Child Protection may become involved with a family if the rules below are not followed.

Children:

- Under the age of 8 are never left alone for any period of time
- Ages 8-10 may be left alone for less than three hours
- Ages 11-13 may be left alone for less than 12 hours
- Ages 14-15 may be left alone for less than 24 hours
- Ages 16-17 may be left alone for longer if there is a plan in place about how to respond to an emergency

Age when children can babysit other children

Children under age 11 should not provide childcare to other children. For children age 11 and older who are providing childcare, the same limits apply to them based on their age as described above. For example, a 12-year-old who is babysitting still cannot be left alone more than 12 hours.

Other factors impact when children can be left alone

Age matters, but your child may need to be older depending on abilities, activities and environment. Child Protection may assign a social worker if a child still seems unsafe alone based on these factors:

- A child's age, mental ability and maturity level
- Accessibility of the parent, guardian or designated caretaker to a child by phone and/or in person
- The presence of intellectual deficits, psychological issues, mental health concerns, and/or physical problems like illness or disabilities
- Behavioral history of a child, including suicidal thoughts or actions, fire setting, delinquency, vandalism, or assault
- A child's age if using the kitchen stove, an iron or other appliance
- Fire safety, including a well-understood escape plan created by the parent/guardian, a fire drill rehearsed with a child, a working fire/smoke detector in the home
- Any unusual hazards in the home that reasonably cause extra risk, including unsecured/accessible firearms and ammunition
- If the child feels confident and safe when left alone

For more information, visit Anoka County Child Protection: www.anokacounty.us/3099/Child-Protection-Child-Abuse

Kitchen Safety

The kitchen is an invaluable room in our house, but can also be one of the most dangerous. Every year, hundreds and thousands of people visit the emergency room due to injuries sustained in the kitchen. Common injuries are cuts, burns and falls. According to the NFPA, cooking is the number one cause of fire and fire related deaths and injuries in the United States. It's important to take time to teach your child the basics of cooking and kitchen safety. It's a good idea to start by showing them how to cook and use appliances while you are using them. They can first start by helping with mixing and slowly expanding into cutting and heat elements. While they are learning to cook, an adult should be around to supervise. This will help both you and your child feel more comfortable and have more confidence when the times comes for your child to stay home alone.

What are the rules are in your kitchen..?

- Is your child allowed to use the microwave, toaster, or blender?
- How about the oven and stove?
- What type of foods/snacks are they allowed to make?
- Does the kitchen need to be cleaned-up after they are done?



Once you have decided what the rules are for your kitchen make sure your child understands some of the dangers in the kitchen.

Knives are useful tools but can be dangerous. Teach your child to always cut away from your body, use a cutting board, never place knives in a sink full of water (accidents occur when knives are placed in soapy water where they can't be seen), and never try to catch a falling knife (let it land, then pick it up even if it will damage the floor).

Toasters: Keep the toaster away from curtain, paper towels or anything that could catch fire. Food can be stuck in a toaster. Never use a fork or knife to dislodge bread in a toaster. Always unplug a toaster before trying to remove stuck food (adults should be the only one that removed the food).

Microwaves: Always use microwaves safe cookware when using the microwave. It doesn't get hot or melt like some dishware. Food coming out of the microwave can be very hot even if it does not look like it. Microwaves cook unevenly so certain area of the food may be hotter than other areas. Always stir foods or mix foods well before serving.

Kitchen Safety Tips

- Never leave cooking foods unattended even for a minute.
- Wipe up all spills immediately. A wet floor is dangerous.
- Keep the floor clear of toys and other items.
- Use a step stool to reach high places.
- Keep younger siblings out of the kitchen when you are cooking.
- Bleach, cleaners, and other chemicals should be in a safe place.
- Always use oven mitts or hot pads when picking up hot items.
- Keep pot handles pointed to the back of the stove.
- Never wear loose sleeves or clothes when cooking-they may catch fire.
- If appliance cords are frayed, tied in knots, melted, or damaged in other ways, do not use them-they can cause fires!
- Never immerse appliances in water or use near water.
- Never plug in or unplug appliances with wet hands.
- Always insert and remove plugs by holding the plug itself. Never pull the cord.
- Be sure that your fingers never come into contact with the metal prongs of a plug. This can cause severe shock.
- Never use appliances that overheat, send off sparks, or have an unusual odor while in use.



How to make a Home Fire Escape Plan



FIRE PREVENTION WEEK™

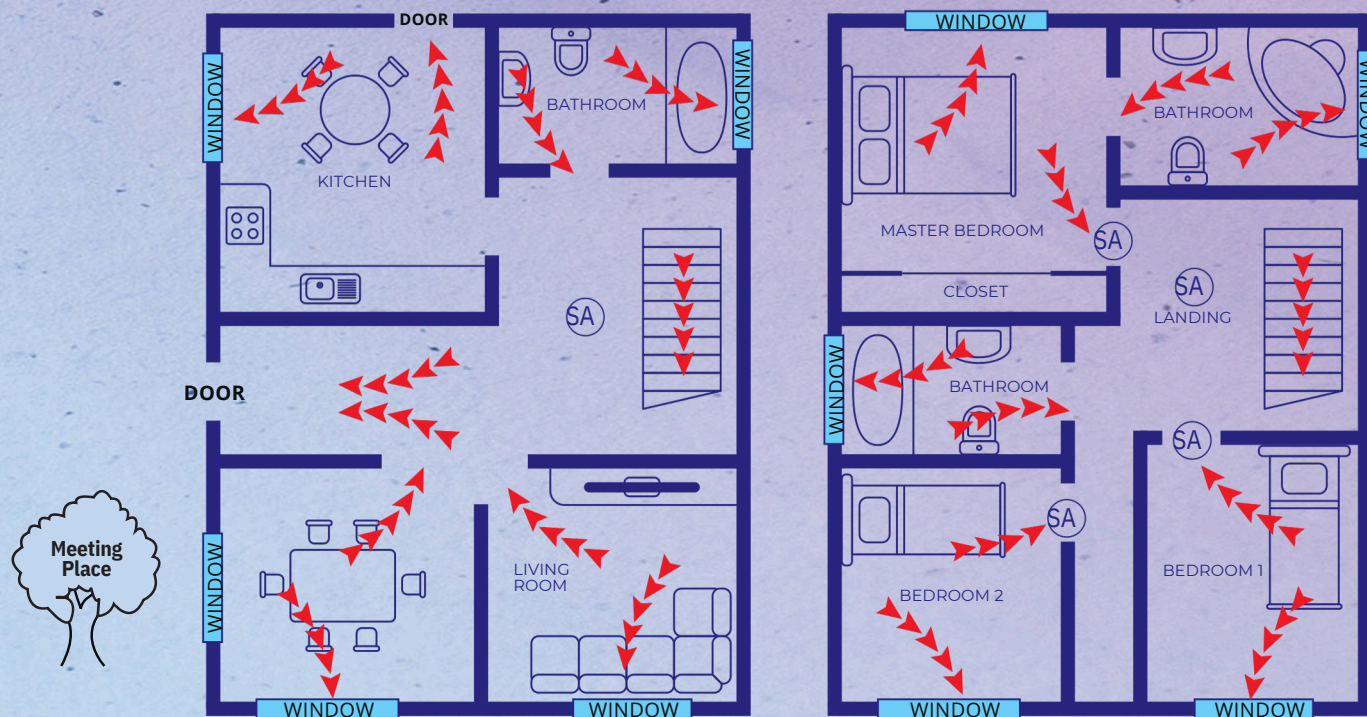
NFPA® — The Official Sponsor of Fire Prevention Week Since 1922



Visit Sparky.org for more activities!

- ☐ Draw a map of your home. Show all doors and windows.
- ☐ Visit each room. Find two ways out.
- ☐ All windows and doors should open easily. You should be able to use them to get outside.
- ☐ Make sure your home has smoke alarms. Push the test button to make sure each alarm is working.
- ☐ Pick a meeting place outside. It should be in front of your home. Everyone will meet at the meeting place.
- ☐ Make sure your house or building number can be seen from the street.
- ☐ Talk about your plan with everyone in your home.
- ☐ Learn the emergency phone number for your fire department.
- ☐ Practice your home fire drill!
- ☐ Make your own home fire escape plan using the grid provided on page 2.

Sample Escape Plan



1st FLOOR

2nd FLOOR



Kids

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How to make a **Home Fire Escape Plan**



Visit **Sparky.org**
for more activities!

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PLAN 19