

When can my child be home alone?



As kids grow older, many parents wonder when they can safely leave their child home alone. There is no one right answer for everyone, as each child has a different personality and maturity level. To help you make the decision, the Child Welfare Information Gateway says parents should ask themselves these questions:

- Do state and local laws say my child is old enough to be left home alone? If you're not sure, check with your local child protective services agency. To find yours, visit childhelp.org.
- Is my child comfortable being left home alone?
- Can my child care for himself while I'm gone? (This may include getting food or drink, staying away from hazards, obeying house rules, and making good decisions.)
- Do I have neighbors or trusted adults nearby who could help if needed?
- Does my child know what to do if someone comes to the door?
- Can my child easily contact me if there's an emergency?
- Does my child know his full name, my full name, his home address, and phone number?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, and you and your child feel ready, try leaving him/her alone for a short time while you're close by. Check in with your child while you're gone and talk about the experience when you get back. If it was a positive experience for you and your child, consider leaving him/her alone for a longer period next time. Together, you and your child can make a smart decision about being home alone.