

Many parents must choose between leaving their children home alone during the day while they are at work or busy with other commitments, or finding alternative care. Parents often worry when their children are home alone, but there are precautions they can take to ease their worries and help protect their children when they're not around.

Preparing your child for being home alone:

- Call throughout the day to check in
- Post important numbers by the phone
- Teach children how to dial 911
- Make sure that children know what they can and cannot do
- Have a safe house for children. A safe house is a neighbor's house the children can go to in case of an emergency.
- Make children call before leaving the house to play with friends
- Know their friends and their friends' parents
- Point out safe places they can play and alternative roads and paths they can take if there is danger
- Set limits for where children can go
- Teach children it is ok to say no to adults if they are in a dangerous situation
- Tell children to trust their instincts

Knowing if your child is ready to be home alone:

- Can you trust your child to go straight home?
- Does your child know how to use the phone, locks and kitchen appliances?
- Can your child handle unexpected situations without panicking?
- Are your children afraid of staying home alone?
- Can they say their full name, address and phone number?

There are some states that have an age requirement for children to be able to stay home alone. Please check with your local police department before leaving children home alone.