



# Parenting Tips

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## WHEN CAN CHILDREN BE LEFT HOME ALONE?

Age alone is not an accurate predictor of maturity, common sense or good judgment in deciding if a child can be safely left alone. A few children may be able to manage on their own around age 10, while many others need supervision well into their teens. The following questions help parents make sensible decisions about their children's welfare and whereabouts when school is not in session.

1. Do the children want to be left alone and are they capable of caring for themselves?
2. Do you live in a safe, friendly neighborhood and is there an adult (neighbor, friend or relative) available in case of an emergency?
3. Have you checked your home for hazards and made necessary household repairs?
4. Have you and the children discussed and practiced what to do if...
  - ~~///~~ a smoke detector goes off or they suspect fire
  - ~~///~~ someone comes to the door
  - ~~///~~ the phone rings
  - ~~///~~ there is a power outage
  - ~~///~~ the furnace goes off
  - ~~///~~ there is a plumbing leak
  - ~~///~~ they get hurt or become ill
5. Will the children know how to use a telephone in an emergency? Do they know how to contact you when you are not at home?
6. Have you established clear rules about safety, television use, chores, homework, snacks, and visits by friends and visits to friends? Do you feel confident that children will abide by these rules even when you are not there to enforce them?
7. Are you sure siblings will not tease, frighten or hurt each other?
8. Will children be able to play safely outside around the house?
9. Have you researched community programs like school-age child care programs?

If you have answered "yes" to these questions, then your children may be ready to be home alone. If you are uneasy or have doubts, try to arrange for supervision in your home, in an established after-school program, or start one.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

423 Griffing Avenue, Suite 100

Riverhead, NY 11901

Phone: (631) 727-7850 Fax: (631) 727-7130

[www.cce.cornell.edu/suffolk](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/suffolk)

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