



## Child Care Referral Service

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[www.resourcesforchildcare.org](http://www.resourcesforchildcare.org)

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# HOME ALONE!

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## A PARENT'S GUIDE

Your ten-year-old comes home from school at 3:00, but you don't get home from work until 5:00. They are at home alone for those two hours every weekday. What do they do until you arrive? Most likely get a snack and talk on the phone. Maybe they watch television. But because you are not there, you worry. Just like the majority of American parents who work and have to leave their children on their own after school every day, you are anxious about your child's safety. However, if you follow the safeguards listed below, you can help ease some of this worry and take measures that will protect your children even when you're not around.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Make sure your children are old enough and mature enough to care for themselves.
- Teach them basic safety rules.
- Always know the "Three W's:" Where your kids are, What they are doing, and Who they are with.
- Don't forget to check on the state law about the age at which children can be left at home alone.

## ARE THEY READY? CAN YOUR CHILDREN...

- Be trusted to go straight home after school?
- Easily use the telephone, locks, and kitchen appliances?
- Follow rules and instructions well?
- Handle unexpected situations without panicking?
- Stay home alone without being afraid?

## A WORD ABOUT CURIOSITY

Are there things that you do not want your children to get into while they are home alone? Take the time to talk to them about the deadly consequences of guns, medicines, power tools, drugs, alcohol, cleaning products, and inhalants. Make sure you keep all of these items in a secure place out of sight and locked up, if possible.

## TEACH YOUR “HOME ALONE” CHILDREN ...

- To check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home.
- How to call 911, your area’s emergency number, and the operator.
- How to give directions to your home in case of an emergency.
- To never accept gifts or rides from people that they don’t know very well.
- How to use the door and window locks, and the alarm system if you have one.
- To never let anyone into your home without asking your permission.
- To never let a caller at the door or on the phone that they are home alone. Teach them to say, “Mom is busy and can’t come to the phone/door right now.”
- To carry a house key with them in a safe place (inside a shirt pocket or sock); don’t leave the key under a mat or on a ledge outside the house.
- How to escape the house in case of a fire.
- To not go into an empty house if things don’t look right, for example a broken window, ripped screen, or opened door.
- To let you know about anything that frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable.

## TAKE A STAND

Work with schools, religious institutions, libraries, recreational and community centers, and local youth organizations to create programs that give children ages 10 and older a place to go and something to do after school—a “homework haven,” with sports, crafts, classes, and tutoring. Don’t forget that kids of this age can also get involved in their communities. Help them design and carry out an improvement project!

- Ask your workplace to sponsor a Survival Skills class for employees’ children. You can kick it off with a parent breakfast or lunch.
- Ask your community to develop a homework hotline that latchkey kids can call for help or just to talk.
- Join or start a block parent program in your community to offer children help in emergencies or frightening situations.

Information take from: [www.downeypd.org/homealon.htm](http://www.downeypd.org/homealon.htm)

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