

Leaving Your Child *Home Alone*

Virginia state statutes do not set a specific age after which a child can legally stay home alone. However, you may want to check to see if there are any guidelines in the city or county in which you live.

Ultimately, you must use your judgment, and your knowledge of your child, to determine when he's ready.

Here are important questions to answer:

Δ How mature is your child? Some children are too young to stay home alone, for safety's sake. In general, age alone is not a good indicator of a child's maturity level, because some 10 year olds may be ready for self care while some 15 year olds may not be ready, due to emotional problems or behavioral issues.

Δ Has your child indicated that she feels comfortable enough to stay home alone?

Δ Will your child obey your rules, such as not opening the door to strangers, not telling callers he's home alone, or not having friends over in your absence?

Δ Are there trusted adults nearby that your child can call in an emergency?

Δ Is your neighborhood reasonably safe, so that a child staying home alone wouldn't be an obvious target?

Δ Have you shared with your child emergency escape routes and discussed "what if" scenarios, to prepare them in case something unexpected happens while you're gone? Are you confident that your child could follow through if necessary?

Δ Do you feel good about your decision?



Your Child's "Home Alone" Checklist



Post this page on your refrigerator, or in a place you can easily find when home alone.

Important Phone Numbers (Mom, Dad, grandparents, for example):

Name: _____ Work #: _____ Cell #: _____

Name: _____ Work#: _____ Cell #: _____

Emergency Contacts (neighbors, nearby relatives or friends, for example):

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

House Rules (Do's and Don'ts when you're home alone):

Emergency Escape Route/s from the House: _____

