

ANY EXTENDED PERIOD OF UNSTRUCTURED TIME CAN CAUSE FRICTION BETWEEN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THOSE WHO CARE FOR THEM. **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO LISTEN TO WHAT IS GOING ON AND HOW THEY ARE FEELING.**

IF YOU ARE EXPECTING CHILDREN TO DO SOME THINGS ON THEIR OWN, IT'S IMPORTANT TO **MAKE SURE THEY FEEL READY AND ARE PROPERLY PREPARED.** ON THE OTHER HAND, DON'T FEEL PUSHED INTO GIVING YOUR CHILDREN TOO MUCH FREEDOM TOO EARLY. HERE ARE A FEW **BASIC TIPS TO WORK WITH CHILDREN TO AGREE STRATEGIES AND KEEP THEM AS SAFE AS POSSIBLE.**



IN THE HOME

ONLINE:

Make sure you have installed parental controls on all your internet devices. Talk to a child about what is ok to share on social media and what is not ok to share. Check their internet use regularly, including looking at any new apps they install.



OFFLINE:

If you are intending to leave children alone at home, discuss a plan with them beforehand. This could involve discussing issues like whether it's acceptable to invite other people into the house, use electrical equipment or cook on their own. Put clear rules and boundaries in place.

Make sure they have contact numbers for adults who can help if they need support. Check in with them regularly to reassure them and to make sure they are safe.



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OUT AND ABOUT

Build their confidence gradually: Allow them a short time at first and build it up bit by bit. Familiarise children with the area and safe places to cross roads before allowing them to go out alone. Let them know what they can and can't do and where they can and can't go before allowing them to go out.

Negotiate a fixed time for the child's return. Make sure they have the time with them on a watch or mobile phone.

Stay in the know: Ask your child to tell you where they are going before they go. If there is a change of plan, make sure they let you know- explain why this is important. If a child is going out with friends, make sure you know who they are with.

Keep contact details to hand: It is good to have the phone numbers and addresses of friends' parents so you can liaise with them about the arrangements and check where a child is if you lose track of them.

Ensure that children know their own home address and have memorised one or two key phone numbers. It may also be helpful to have these recorded somewhere such as in a purse or wallet.

Rehearse and plan for difficult situations: Run through scenarios with a child in advance and discuss with them what they should do in different circumstances e.g. if they lose their phone.

Give children a small amount of extra money in case they need bus fare unexpectedly. Make it clear that it must be saved for emergencies only.

Make the most of mobiles: Mobile phones can give a false sense of security. They're really helpful provided you have taken a few basic precautions:

- Make sure the phone is fully charged before the child goes out.
- Make sure you have stored several phone numbers of family and other adults who can help in an emergency.
- Make sure there is enough credit on the phone and the child knows where to access free wifi if they have a smartphone with a limited contract.

Keep your cool: If plans do go wrong, try to wait until you have calmed down before explaining to your child the dangers they could have faced. Make sure they understand why you are unhappy or worried.

