

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Child Care Resource Service
314 Bevier Hall
905 South Goodwin Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801



telephone 217-333-3252
800-325-5516 TTY/244-9666
fax 217-333-2147

SELF-CARE

The decision to leave a child home alone in self-care requires a careful evaluation of your child's readiness and willingness to be alone at home, as well as the demands placed on him/her by the self-care situation. Unfortunately there is no magical age at which you can be sure your child will be safe at home. Some children do well in self-care for short periods at 9 or 10 years of age. Other children aren't ready at age 12.

The following check-list has been reprinted with permission of Lynette and Thomas Long, authors of *The Handbook for Latchkey Children and Their Parents*. The checklist provides a good start in evaluating your child's readiness for self-care.

- | YES | NO | |
|-----|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ___ | ___ | 1) Do you consider your child old enough to assume self-care responsibilities? |
| ___ | ___ | 2) Do you believe your child is mature enough to care for him or herself? |
| ___ | ___ | 3) Has your child indicated that he or she would be willing to try self-care? |
| ___ | ___ | 4) Is your child able to solve problems? |
| ___ | ___ | 5) Is your child able to communicate with adults? |
| ___ | ___ | 6) Is your child able to complete daily tasks? |
| ___ | ___ | 7) Is your child generally unafraid to be alone? |
| ___ | ___ | 8) Is your child unafraid to enter your house alone? |
| ___ | ___ | 9) Can your child unlock and lock the doors to your home unassisted? |
| ___ | ___ | 10) Is there an adult living or working nearby that your child knows and can rely on in case of an emergency? |
| ___ | ___ | 11) Do you have adequate household security? |
| ___ | ___ | 12) Do you consider your neighborhood safe? |

If you answered "NO" to any of the above questions, it is highly recommended that you delay or abandon plans to leave your child in self-care until positive responses can be given for all of the questions.

Child care resource and referral services for parents, child care providers, and employers of
Champaign, Douglas, Iroquois, Macon, Piatt, and Vermilion counties.

YES	NO	
___	___	13) Has your child exhibited behaviors in the past that frightened you, such as:
___	___	-playing unsupervised with fire
___	___	-playing unsupervised with dangerous equipment
___	___	-experimenting with dangerous chemicals
___	___	-having unexplained seizures
___	___	-violent or aggressive behavior
___	___	-manifesting
___	___	14) Is your child without a telephone?
___	___	15) While away from home, are you accessible by telephone?
___	___	16) Is your child unable to use a phone?
___	___	17) Is your child afraid of the dark?
___	___	18) Does your child have a handicap that requires special supervision?
___	___	19) Does your child have recurring nightmares or other serious sleep disturbances?

If you answered "YES" to any question between 13 and 19, there is a strong possibility that you shouldn't leave your child in self-care.

21) Is your child

- 10 or older ___ (one point)
- 9-10 ___ (two points)
- 8-9 ___ (three points)
- 7-8 ___ (four points)
- 7 or younger ___ (five points)

22) How much time each day will your child be in self-care?

- 1 hour or less ___ (one point)
- 1-2 hours ___ (two points)
- 2-3 hours ___ (three points)
- 3-4 hours ___ (four points)
- 4 or more hours ___ (five points)

23) How much does your child spontaneously tell you about the events occurring in his or her life?

- everything ___ (one point)
- most things ___ (two points)
- some things ___ (three points)
- few things ___ (four points)
- nothing ___ (five points)

24) How close is the relationship between you and your child?

- very close ___ (one point)
- close ___ (two points)
- neither close
nor distant ___ (three points)
- distant ___ (four points)
- very distant ___ (five points)

25) Will your child be home with younger siblings?

- 1 other ___ (one point)
- 2 others ___ (two points)
- 3 others ___ (three points)
- 4 others ___ (four points)
- 5 or more others ___ (five points)

Add the number of points corresponding to your answers for questions 21 through 25. The lower your score, the better your child's chance, and yours, of managing self-care. The range of possible points accumulated is from five to twenty-five. A score of ten or higher should cause you to be hesitant about starting your child in self-care.

For further information on evaluating and preparing children for self-care, additional resource are available from the Champaign and Urbana Public Library Children's Departments. These include books for parents considering self-care, activity books for children, fiction books for children focusing on children home alone, and films discussing self-care issues such as safety and constructive use of time.