

# Family Keys

## Self-Care Resources for Children & Their Families

### What Are the Family Rules?

# 2

KEY

When a child is in self-care, what are the family rules? In an emergency, a self-care child may have to call an adult for advice. But children can handle most situations if they know the rules.

As children become more confident and mature, they will be able to make their own decisions. But when just starting self-care, family rules are especially important. How does a child in self-care know what is OK to do, and what is not?



Parents can help:

▼ Make reasonable rules, and discuss them as a family. Talk about each rule, and come to an agreement about why it is important. Rules made without agreement will not be followed. Unreasonable rules are less likely to work. Where possible, set rules together as a family.

▼ State rules clearly, including the behavior you expect. "Be good" or "Clean the house" are not clear enough. Be more specific, for example: "No playing outside until your room is picked up."

If you define the rule as well as what behavior you expect, children in self-care follow rules better – they know exactly what to do and when.

▼ Explain the reason for the rule.

Good rules have good reasons. Helping children understand a rule helps them see why it's important, and follow it. For example, you need the dishes washed so you can make and serve dinner. Research verifies that giving a reason for a rule makes children more likely to follow the rule.

*continued on back page*



# Family Rules

**G**ather the whole family for this activity. After you have agreed on a rule for each area listed, write in the rules for when children are alone. Discuss the reason for each rule.

1. What to eat and when

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3. Leaving the house or apartment

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2. Cleaning up after eating

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4. Having friends in the house or apartment

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5. Using the phone

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6. Doing homework

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7. Doing chores

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8. Watching:

TV

Videos

Games

9. Getting along with others in the family

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10. Answering the:

Door

Phone

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**Parents can help:** ▶

Explain the reason for the rule,  
*continued from page 1*

Reasons also help children make wise decisions in "new" situations.

▼ **State clearly the consequences for not following a rule.**

A child who understands the penalty is more likely to follow the rule.

▼ **Be consistent in enforcing the rules.**

Exceptions to the rules can be confusing. It's better to have a few important rules than many inconsistent ones.

▼ **Post rules where the child can see them.**

Write the rules on the Family Rules activity sheet on pages 2-3 and post them. Your child can refer to this list as a reminder of things you agreed on. You may only think of a few rules now. But as you get more Keys, you will think of more rules to discuss as a family, and can add those to the list.

▼ **Children may push against rules as they gain skill and maturity.**

Rules may need to be re-negotiated from time to time.

**2**

KEY

**What Are the Family Rules?**

helps children and family

members discuss family rules to improve understanding about what is OK. Put these rules on your refrigerator or bulletin board to help you remember. If a rule does not work, talk again as a family and change the rules as needed.

**Resources**

Your librarian can help you select books on self-care and setting family rules. Books are available for all ages. Some examples are:

Dana, Trudy K., *Safe and Sound* (New York: McGraw Hill), 1988.

Fancher, Vivian K., *Safe Kids* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 1991.

Grollman, Earl A. and Gerri L. Sweder, *Teaching Your Child to Be Home Alone* (New York: Lexington Books), 1992.

Long, Lynette, *On My Own: The Kids' Self-Care Book* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, Ltd.), 1984.

Robinson, Bryan E., Bobbie H. Rowland and Mick Coleman, *Home Alone Kids: The Working Parents Guide to Providing the Best Care for Your Child* (New York: Lexington Books), 1990.

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