

Family Keys

Self-Care Resources for Children & Their Families

Phone Skills

4 KEY

The telephone can be a lifeline to comfort, information and help for children alone. Calls to a parent, family member or friend provide reassurance

and answers to questions. When emergencies arise, the phone provides immediate contact with an adult who can help.

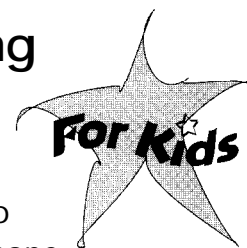
But the phone can also be a source of danger. Children who improperly give out information may be placing themselves at risk for assault or theft.

Children who stay alone must know how to respond

appropriately to callers, find the right emergency phone number and make emergency calls.



Answering the phone



Here's how to answer the phone when you're home alone:

1. When you pick up the phone, say only "Hello."
2. Provide no information to the caller. **Never** tell someone you are alone.
3. Offer to take a message.
4. If your family has a telephone answering machine, your parents may prefer that you don't answer the phone. Talk with them about this.

Parents can help:

1. Discuss general phone use with your child(ren). If you have not already done so, set family rules on using the phone such as:

- ▼ How to answer the phone,
- ▼ When and for how long it's OK to talk to friends,
- ▼ When to call you at work, and

continued on back page



Emergency Phone Numbers

Together, identify and record local emergency numbers – such as fire department, ambulance and police (or 911), doctor and Poison Control Center – on a bright sheet of paper or on page 5 of this Key. You may also wish to add numbers such as parents' work numbers, local power, gas or telephone service numbers. Post these numbers by each phone for easy access in case of an emergency.

Also leave a copy with a trusted neighbor. In some emergencies – such as fire or possible break-in – the child will probably not be calling from home, but from the neighbor's house.

Although it is unlikely that a life-threatening emergency will occur while your child is alone, prepare your child to make emergency calls. Have him or her write out the information needed to make emergency calls – full name, phone number, address, fire number, nearest intersection and/or highway numbers – and keep it handy.

Depending on which system your city, township or county uses, you may need to provide various types of information:

- ▼ If you call 911, most of the location information will be displayed via telephone computer links at the 911 center.
- ▼ But if you call a fire department, you may need to provide information on cross streets, intersections, and in rural areas, fire numbers.

If your household has no telephone, make sure your child in self-care is not cut off from support and help if he or she needs it. Children should have access to a phone for emergencies, whether it is that of a trusted stay-at-home neighbor or a pay phone in a nearby store or service station.

If your child has to use a pay phone, make sure he or she learns how to use it and always keeps emergency change and phone numbers available.



Family Activities

Is this an emergency?

For each situation, ask your child(ren) to tell you the answers, Then discuss what you would like your child to do in each situation and whom to call – if anyone. Enter this information on page 5. Post emergency phone numbers and information by each house phone where your child(ren) can easily find it, and leave a copy with a trusted neighbor who is home after school.

1. You are making toast. The toast gets stuck and catches on fire. The toaster is near the curtains, and they catch on fire, too.

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

From where?

2. Your sister falls down the stairs, She does not move or answer when you talk to her.

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

From where?

3. You fall against a sharp table corner and get a bad cut on your wrist. It is bleeding a lot.

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

From where?

4. You come home after school and see the front door to your house is open,

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

From where?



5. You are putting away the dishes. A glass drops and breaks on the floor.

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

From where?

6. A bad storm starts. Suddenly, the lights go out.

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

From where?

7. The phone rings. When you answer it, someone starts saying bad things.

Is this an emergency? Yes No
What do you do?

Whom do you call?

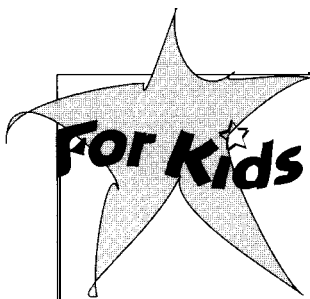
From where?

Recommended answers:

1. **Yes** – Call the fire department or 911 from a neighbor's (specify whom).
2. **Yes** – Call an ambulance or 911 from your home phone (discuss with parents),
3. **Maybe** – Cover with a clean cloth and press firmly. Call a parent or your doctor if the bleeding won't stop. If the cut is gushing blood, call an ambulance or 911 from your home phone (discuss with parents).
4. **Yes** – Call the police or 911 from a neighbor's (specify whom).
5. **No** – Put on your shoes and sweep up all the glass; don't pick it up.
6. **No** – Get a flashlight and tune a portable radio to a station reporting the weather. Move to a safe place if conditions threaten or you hear a tornado siren (discuss with parents). **Do not use the phone during an electrical storm (thunder and lightning).**
7. **No** – Unless calls persist. Hang up immediately. If the person calls again, call a parent from your home phone.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Parent's Work Number: _____ _____ _____	Gas & Electric Co.: _____ _____ _____
Poison Control Center: _____ _____	Telephone Co.: _____ _____
Fire Department: _____ _____	
Police: _____ _____	
Hospital: _____ _____	
Doctor: _____ _____	
Neighbor: _____ _____	



How to Report an Emergency

1. Briefly state the problem.
Example: "There is a fire at my house."
2. Give your full name, address, phone number, fire number and nearest intersection.
3. Wait for questions or instructions, stay on the phone until told to hang up, and follow instructions.



Parents can help: ▶

Discuss general phone use,
continued from page 1

4**KEY**

Phone Skills
teaches how
to answer the
phone when

home alone, and how to
use the phone correctly in
an emergency. Do the
exercises with your
child(ren) to practice
phone skills. Post emer-
gency numbers and infor-
mation by each house
phone.

▼ Which neighbor to call who is home after school.

2. **Discuss phone use if you have an answering machine.** Many families with answering machines prefer that their children **do not** pick up the phone while alone, and let the machine take the call. This prevents messages from getting lost or mixed up, and takes pressure off the child.

If you decide to do this, you may want to teach your child to listen to the message when the phone rings, and be prepared to pick up the phone if a parent or emergency contact person is on the line.

3. **Help your child gain confidence** in his or her ability to handle phone situations alone:

- ▼ Practice how to respond to phone calls.
- ▼ Help your child understand what to do and whom to call in various situations.
- ▼ Identify and post important phone numbers (see page 5).

4. **Teach your child to withhold information politely.** Practice answering strategies such as calling out: "Mom — Phone!... (Pause.) OK!... She can't come to the phone right now. May I take a message?"

If the caller is persistent or obscene, instruct your child to hang up and call a parent or trusted adult.

5. **Practice phone skills** by role playing the following situations:

- ▼ Pretend you are a salesperson and want to check a delivery date.
- ▼ Pretend you are a school counselor and want to verify school records.
- ▼ Pretend you are an old friend of the family in town for only a few hours.



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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension Services of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin Programs and activities of the Cooperative Extension Services are available to all potential clientele without regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion or disability.

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