

NSPCC

..... NEED-TO-KNOW GUIDES

Is my child ready to go out alone?



EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

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As your child gets older it's likely they'll want a bit more independence. Going out without you is a natural step for them to take when the time is right.

We can help you work out when your child is ready and, most importantly, help you to keep them safe.

EVERY FAMILY IS DIFFERENT, SO MAKE THIS GUIDE YOUR OWN
You can make notes on it, customise it and tear out the section at the back – whatever works for you.

Can my child go out without me?

Just like staying home alone, there is no legal age limit for a child going out alone. A lot of the advice that goes with being home alone – like making sure your child can cope – applies to going out.

Can your child deal with risks? Will they behave responsibly? Is it safe to be out late, for example? These are all things you need to consider when you make a decision.

What are they planning to do?

There's a big difference between walking to the corner shop and going into town.

So think about:

- where your child wants to go
- what they want to do
- who they'll be with
- how far they would have to travel.



You might find our *Is my child ready to be left alone?* guide helpful too.



Ready or not?

Our top tips to help prepare your child for going out alone.

Talk about the risks

Talk to your child early on about staying safe. How would they cross the road safely? What would your child do if they were approached by a stranger? Or if they were being bullied?

Make sure they're happy

Take the time to talk to your child, listen to them and check that they're happy to do things on their own. Don't make your child do something they're not happy with.

Set the boundaries

Be clear about any places you don't want your child to go. Be willing to explain your decision so that your child understands your concerns.

Do a trial run

Let your child take the lead when you're out together. Only correct them if they do something that puts them at risk.

Give them a chance to shine

Let your child show you they can be trusted. If they keep to the curfew and rules you set, you'll feel more confident about letting them do other things independently.

Not ready? Don't feel pressured.

Your child might insist that they'll be OK when they're out alone. But if you're still unsure, don't feel pressured. You need to be satisfied your child can make wise decisions on their own – even if they're with a sibling. It's easy to become separated or lost if they have an argument.

Safe and sound checklist ✓

- As soon as your child is able to understand, teach them their full name, address and two family phone numbers (including their home number).
- Teach your child never to go off with anyone, not even someone they know, unless they're able to contact you to check it's OK.
- Teach older children how to cross roads safely. Explain how to stop, look, listen, and find the safest places to cross.
- Listen to your child. It's really important to listen and believe what your child is trying to tell you, so they know they can talk to you about anything that's worrying them.

Keeping your child safe when you're out together

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Stop young children from wandering off by holding hands or using reins or a buggy, and never leave them playing unsupervised in shops, parks or other public open spaces.

Try to avoid leaving your child alone in a car when you're getting petrol. But if you have to, make sure they stay strapped in and always keep them in sight.

Never leave young children alone in a car parked on the street or in a car park. You can never be sure how long you'll be away, even if you think it will be just a few minutes.

For further advice on how to keep your child safe when they're away from home visit nspcc.org.uk/parenting



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“When Tariq wanted to join the local football club, I met the coaches first to check it out.”

Mariam

Mum to Tariq, 12

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Is my child safe at their local clubs?

Clubs and sport in your local area can give your child a chance to try new things and make friends. But if you don't know much about the club or their safety procedures, you might end up feeling worried.

You may want to talk to other parents about if they're happy with the club, and work out if the club seems welcoming to you as a parent. You can also make a few checks to find out how your local clubs keep children safe. Use the pull out page opposite to keep track of important information.



Who can I talk to?

We're here for you 24/7. If you have any questions or worries, feel free to get in touch with us, or find out more from these organisations.



Our trained experts at the NSPCC helpline can listen to any worries you have about your child going out alone, or any tough decisions you're facing.

Reading this guide may have also made you think about other children who you have seen out alone. Contact us if you're worried about any aspect of their safety, and we can help.

Call **0808 800 5000**

Email **help@nspcc.org.uk**

Or talk to us online at **nspcc.org.uk/help**



Family Lives provides help and support on all aspects of parenting and family life, and runs Parentline.

0808 800 2222

familylives.org.uk

Parentline Scotland (Children 1st)

0800 028 2233

children1st.org.uk

Parenting Across Scotland

parentingacrossscotland.org

**Parenting NI Helpline
(Northern Ireland)**

0808 8010 722

parentingni.org

Family Information Services in Wales

provides information, support and guidance on all aspects of childcare, and children and young people's services.

familyinformation.org.uk

Safe Network works with community clubs and groups to keep children safe.

safenetwork.org.uk

The Child Protection in Sport Unit has useful information on keeping children safe in sport.

thecpsu.org.uk

The Child Accident Prevention Trust has lots of guidance on preventing accidents.

capt.org.uk

My child's club



MY POINT OF CONTACT:

Someone you can talk to at your child's club if you have any concerns.

WHERE I CAN FIND PARENT INFO:

You should have access to things like the club's child protection policy, staff code of conduct and recruitment procedures.


TRIPS AWAY:

How many adults do they have supervising organised trips or 'away' matches? How will they travel between locations? What about overnight stays?

A question every parent has to face

Sooner or later, your child will start to become more independent – whether they're going to school by themselves, going to clubs and activities or going out to play with friends. It's all part of growing up.

When they start to spread their wings, how do you make sure your child is safe?



Packed with tips and advice, this guide can help you make decisions that are right for your child.