

Texas Agricultural Extension Service

People Helping People

GOALS OF SELF CARE

Parents' Guide to Responsible After-School Self Care for Children

This series of leaflets is primarily for families in which parents work outside the home. However, responsible self care by children is important to most parents. As children grow toward their teen years, they increasingly gain independence from their parents. The timing and amount of independence a child assumes should be based on the child's abilities for self care and responsible decision making.

Information in these leaflets will prepare children for emerging independence and self-reliance.

The amount of self care assumed by children varies from family to family. Likewise, the capabilities of children for self care vary from child to child (even within the same family). Important steps for parents are to determine the readiness of children for partial self care and areas where children need support and help.

A Self Care Checklist*

Yes	No	
_____	_____	1. Is the child mature enough for partial self care?
_____	_____	2. Is the child willing to try partial self care?
_____	_____	3. Can the child handle problems that could arise?
_____	_____	4. Can the child communicate with adults?
_____	_____	5. Can the child handle common self care tasks?
_____	_____	6. Does the child feel secure about being alone?
_____	_____	7. Is there adult help nearby?
_____	_____	8. Is the neighborhood safe?
_____	_____	9. Is the household safe?
_____	_____	10. Has the child been prepared for self care?

*Checklist adapted with permission from *The Handbook for Latchkey Children and Their Parents* by Lynette and Thomas Long.

A "no" response to any of questions 1 through 10 indicates areas of concern.

Yes	No	
_____	_____	11. Has any of the child's behavior in the past year caused you concern about his or her safety?
_____	_____	12. Does the child lack skills in handling telephone calls?
_____	_____	13. Is the child unable to reach you or another adult by phone?
_____	_____	14. Does the child need any special supervision?
_____	_____	15. Does the child lack information on how to handle persons who may come to the home while you are away?

A "yes" response to any of questions 11 through 15 indicates areas of concern.

16. Is your child . . .

	Points
12 - older	_____ 1
11 - 12	_____ 2
10 - 11	_____ 3
9 - 10	_____ 4
9 - younger	_____ 5

17. What is the daily amount of time the child is responsible for self care?

	Points
1 hour or less	_____ 1
1 - 2 hours	_____ 2
2 - 3 hours	_____ 3
3 - 4 hours	_____ 4
4 or more hours	_____ 5

18. Describe communication between you and the child.

	Points
Talk about most things.	_____ 1
Talk about important things.	_____ 2
Talk about some things.	_____ 3
Talk about few things.	_____ 4
Tend not to talk	_____ 5

19. How many other children are at home for self care?

	Points
0	_____ 0
1	_____ 1
2	_____ 2
3	_____ 3
4	_____ 4
5	_____ 5

20. Describe the relationship between you and your child.

	Points
Very close	_____ 1
Close	_____ 2
Neither close nor distant	_____ 3
Total score	_____

(Add the points for your answers to questions 16 through 20. A score of 10 points or higher indicates a parent should reconsider giving the child responsibility for self care.)

21. Indicate areas of parental concern.

- a. _____ Safety
- b. _____ Mischievous behavior
- c. _____ Homework for school
- d. _____ Television watching
- e. _____ Nutritional habits
- f. _____ Household emergencies
- g. _____ Other _____

Self care should not be taken lightly. The parent and child should prepare together for the experience.

Skills for self care are valuable to all children.

Safety

Every child at home alone needs to be able to handle minor first aid problems. It is better to prepare the child for minor problems than to depend upon a neighbor who may not be at home. Discuss with the child situations that he or she can handle and situations which need adult emergency medical treatment.

A First Aid Kit

Prepare a first aid kit for use with minor problems, and keep it in a convenient place. Assemble the kit with the child, explaining how each item is to be used.

Use a box (plastic, metal or cardboard) clearly marked FIRST AID. Organize contents for quick selection and check periodically to see that supplies are maintained. Contents depend on child's age, maturity level and first aid skills.

Contents

- Assorted sizes of bandages (for small cuts)
- Sterile gauze pads (for large cuts)
- Adhesive tape (for gauze pads)
- Small scissors
- Triangular sling
- Elastic bandage (for sprains)
- Tweezers
- Medication for insect bites
- Peroxide or liquid soap (to clean cuts)
- Small clean washcloth
- Thermometer (to check fever)
- Icepack (for swelling)

(If aspirin or any medicines are placed in kit, limit the amount to a single dose.)

Teaching Your Child First Aid

- Use the accompanying children's leaflet and other sources to teach first aid skills.
- Enroll your child in a first aid course taught by churches, youth groups, Red Cross or other organizations.
- Teach by example.

Emergency Numbers

Post emergency numbers by each phone. Include:

- Combined emergency number _____
(if used in your area), or
- Police _____
- Fire department _____
- Ambulance _____
and
- Family doctor _____
- Parent's office _____
- Nearby adult _____
- Poison control _____

Add your home address and phone number to the list. Teach your child how to make emergency calls. Explain when to call (situations), who to call, nature of emergency and the child's name, address and phone number. In serious situations, have the child call for emergency help before calling a parent.

Emergencies don't happen very often but children who are prepared manage a crisis with more skill and confidence than those who are not prepared. Divide possible crises into two categories -- minor and major. Minor crises could include forgetting a lunch, losing a key or getting a "crazy telephone call." Minor crises are irritating but can be managed particularly if prepared in advance.

A major crisis requires immediate clear-headed action. Topics including fires, prowlers and injuries are unpleasant to think about; however, most parents would want their children to know what to do in the event such a crisis occurs.

When the minor and major crisis list is prepared, locate books and other resources for teaching children management skills. Check the public library, local book stores, the police and fire departments and the local Red Cross for useful information.

The related leaflet prepared for youth and the remaining leaflets for parents and youth in this series also contain helpful information.

Go through the leaflets together (parents and children), fill in the blanks where appropriate and develop your own family plan for responsible self care.

Teaching Your Child Bicycle Safety

Selecting a Bike

Many bicycle accidents might be avoided if "safety" were a major priority in buying a bike. A few simple considerations can be significant in preventing mishaps that could be serious. These suggestions come from the Product Safety Program of the Texas Department of Health.

Avoid buying a bicycle that cannot be adjusted to fit the rider. The rider should be able to straddle the bike with both feet flat on the ground leaving no less than 1 inch between the crotch and the bike frame's top tube.

To prevent a toe from getting caught between the frame and the front wheel, there should be at least 3½ inches of clearance between the pedal and the front fender or tire.

Pedals should not touch the ground when the bike is tilted at least 25 degrees on a turn. This is to prevent the pedal from striking the ground and causing a spill.

Chain guards on bicycles having single front and rear sprockets (a federal regulation) are to

prevent shoe laces and clothing from catching between the chain and the sprocket.

The bicycle should be visible from every angle at night. It should have a front reflector, rear reflector and pedal and spoke reflectors. Other safety features are a headlight and taillight.

The rider should always road test a bike before buying it. The brakes should give smooth, easy stops, and if the bike has handbrakes, the levers should move easily.

Helping Youngsters Become Cautious Bikers

- Obey traffic signs and signals.
- Ride as near the right side of the road as possible and in the same direction at motor vehicles.
- Ride single file.
- Do not ride double unless the bike is built for two.
- Ride on the bike's seat.
- Do not "hitch" to other vehicles.
- Keep hands on the handle bars.
- Be alert for traffic from all directions.
- Before crossing or entering a road, look both ways and wait for vehicles to pass.
- Get off the street and stop for emergency vehicles to pass.
- Avoid races and games on public streets.
- Always keep the bike in good condition.

Caring for a Bicycle

SADDLE: Adjust height so leg bends only slightly with ball of foot on pedal at bottom of stroke. Tighten securely.

SPOKES: Replace broken ones promptly. Keep them tight.

PEDALS: Tighten pedal spindles. Replace worn-out pedals.

REFLECTOR: Must be visible for 300 feet, for night driving.

COASTER BRAKE, HAND BRAKES: Keep properly adjusted and in good condition.

CHAIN: Check for damaged links and a snug (but not too tight) fit. Clean frequently and lubricate with light oil.

WHEELS: Tighten wheel nuts. Lubricate and adjust bearings.

FENDERS: Keep fenders and all nuts and bolts tight.

HANDLEBARS: Adjust for your comfort. Keep stem well down in fork. Tighten securely.

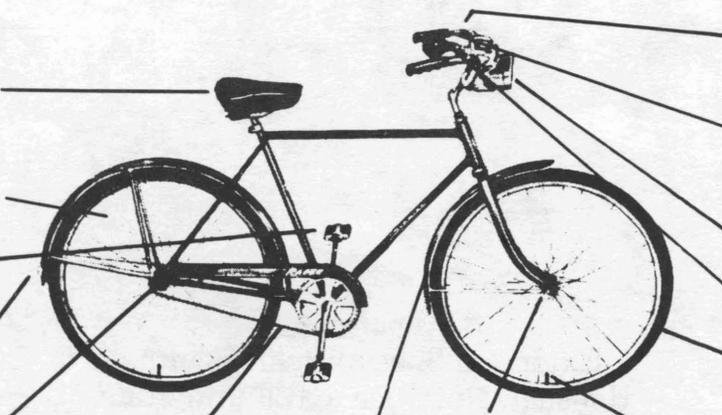
HANDLEBAR GRIPS: Replace worn grips. Make sure they fit snugly.

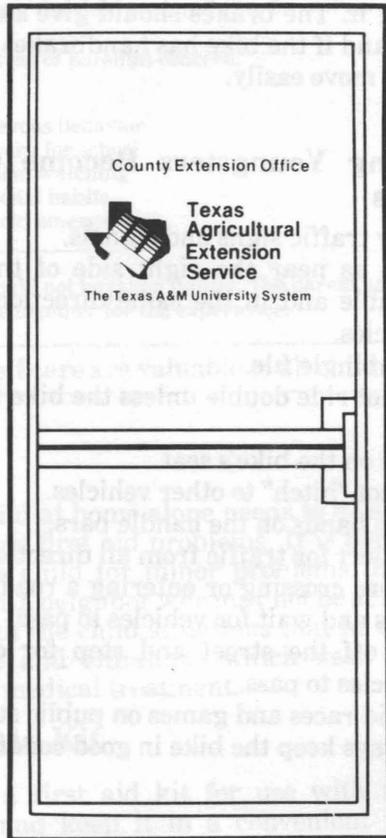
LIGHT: Must be visible for 500 feet, for night driving.

BELL OR HORN: Be sure it works properly.

TIRES: Inflate to correct pressure. Check tires frequently. Remove imbedded glass, cinders, etc. Don't ride on worn-out tires.

TIRE VALVES: Inspect for leaks and straightness.





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