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*Listening, learning,  
and living together:  
it's the science of life.*

## **Establishing Rules for Children In Self-Care<sup>1</sup>**

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I always thought that once my kids were teenagers, it would be easier to leave them home alone in the afternoons, evenings, and on the weekends. However, while I've been fortunate to have great kids, I still can't help but worry about them when they're on their own (my husband says it's a "mom thing.") Still, I have to let them go. One thing experts tell us is important in making that leap is to establish rules with your children.

When allowing your children to be on their own at home, you should work together to create reasonable rules for when they're alone. Having your children help develop the rules will give them greater ownership of them. They'll be more likely to remember and follow the rules. As you make the rules, consider the following.

Decide if friends will be allowed to come to your home, and if so, which friends and how many at a time. Decide where your child is allowed to go, such as a friend's house, the library, a park or a recreation center. Establish rules for telephone, television and Internet use.

Another hurdle they'll have to make on their own is dealing with their siblings. Each child needs to understand and follow the rules. Make it clear if an older sibling is to be in charge of a younger brother or sister, or if the children are to be responsible for them-

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selves. They need to understand how you expect them to resolve conflicts or report problems. Give special attention to this situation to ensure power struggles don't emerge.

Certainly I'm sure my kids never had that issue...sure.

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