the CINCINNATI ETHICS center

CincyDialogue

WHEN SHOULD KIDS BE ALLOWED TO PLAY OUTSIDE UNSUPERVISED?

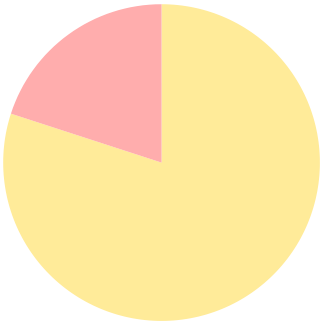
Playing outside can be a lot of fun. It's also super important for kids: it can help build independence, maturity, and physical health. But parents want to keep their kids safe, and playing outside also comes with some risks. Each year, over 20,000 kids are injured by cars in the United States. And an estimated 4,000 kids are victims of stranger abductions each year. Do these risks mean that parents should never let their kids out of their sight? There is a lot to think about and a lot of questions to ask!

Age

Young children may not recognize risks such as busy streets or unsafe areas, so supervision is important to keep kids safe. But, as they grow, freedom allows kids to practice judgment, confidence, and responsibility.

Maturity

Kids who play safely, are careful around strangers, and show self-control may handle freedom well. Children that don't stop to think might get themselves into trouble if left unsupervised.



80% of Parents Track Their Children's Locations

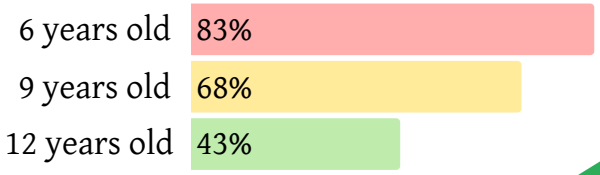
Environment

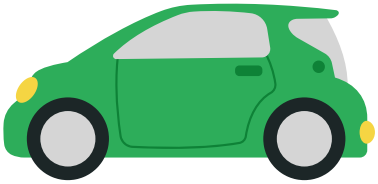
In urban areas, cars and strangers create risk, but nearby adults can sometimes offer help. Suburbs provide yards and parks, though traffic is still a danger. Rural areas allow kids to explore out in nature, but that includes hazards like animals, uneven ground, and slower access to emergency assistance.

What do you think?

- What rules would you make for kids playing outside alone?
- Should there be a minimum age for being out unsupervised?
- How might rules be different in a city vs. a small town?
- What would you say to a parent who disagrees with you?

Parents were asked:
What ages should be supervised?





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