

Pediatrician suggests five questions to ask before a playdate

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Playdates are a fun way for children to develop friendships and learn important social skills. Visiting another family's home will also expose

your child to a new environment.

Before the playdate, it's a good idea to talk with the other parent about household habits, rules and expectations. It's also a great opportunity to share any important details about your child— like a food allergy, pet allergy or other health issues.

Here are a few important questions to ask:

1. Who will be watching the children?

Will a parent be home, or will another adult caregiver be home? Will older siblings, other adults or relatives be there?

If it's a sleepover, it's a good idea to understand who will be in the home when your child is there, including other relatives or adults. If you feel uncomfortable with the situation, you can suggest your child have a "lateover" (sometimes also called a "sleepunder"), with fun pajama time, games or a movie, and then come home when it's time to sleep. This is considered perfectly fine playdate etiquette.

2. Do you have a swimming pool or trampoline?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends pools be surrounded by a 4-foot high, four-sided fence with a self-latching gate, so that kids can't easily enter without supervision. If swimming is planned, ask who will supervise.

Whenever children under age 5 are in or around water, an adult— preferably one who knows how to swim and perform CPR— should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision." Older children and teens who know how to swim should also have an adult supervising

them.

Trampolines are popular among children and teens, but cause thousands of injuries every year, especially to children under age 6. Injuries often happen when more than one person is using the [trampoline](#).

Because injuries are so common, the AAP recommends trampolines never be used at home, but if they are used, supervising adults should limit jumpers to one at a time.

3. Do you have any firearms in your house?

Roughly one-third of U.S. homes with children have a gun, and many of these are left unlocked or loaded.

Just talking to a child about the dangers of firearms is not enough. Children are naturally curious. If a gun is accessible in someone's home, there is a good chance a child will find it and play with it. Tragedies have occurred when kids found guns that parents thought were hidden.

If the home your child is visiting does have a gun, ask how it is stored. All guns should be stored unloaded and locked up, with the ammunition locked up separately. If you are uncomfortable with the answer, you can offer to host the kids at your house instead.

4. What are your rules about screen media use?

Families have different rules about what kind of movies or video games are allowed. If you don't want your child to watch movies that are rated higher than PG or PG-13, or to play a [video game](#) rated higher than E (Everyone), let the other parent know. You can explain you don't think your child is ready for more mature content yet.

To research whether a particular movie or game is OK for your child, use a site like Common Sense Media, which offers detailed reviews and ratings on movies, TV shows, apps and video games.

5. What pets are in the house?

If the family has a pet, ask if it's friendly. Let the parent know if your child is nervous or scared around animals. More than any other age group, children are the most frequent victims of animal bites.

Remember that it's OK if the conversation feels a little awkward. The other parent is likely to be glad you asked—and you can volunteer the same information about your home for the next time the kids get together.

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