NO PREP

# Childproofing and Child Safety

**Includes:** Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key

Name: Period: Date:

## Childproofing and Child Safety

**Get Down on the Floor**

The most effective childproofing tool costs nothing. Get on your hands and knees in the middle of a room and look at it from about two feet off the ground, which is the height at which a toddler actually lives. From down there a home reorganizes itself. The cord dangling off the counter is at eye level. The cabinet under the sink is the most interesting door in the house. The coffee table corner is exactly forehead height. Outlets, houseplants, the dog's water bowl, and the loose end of a window blind cord all become visible in a way they never are from standing height. This matters because unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for children between one and four in the United States, and the overwhelming majority of those

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**The Big Four in Every Home**

Four hazard categories account for most serious home injuries to young children, and each one has well-established fixes. Falls are the most common. The standard responses are hardware-mounted gates at the top and bottom of stairs installed before a baby crawls, window guards or stops on any window above the ground floor, and never leaving an infant unattended on a bed, couch, or changing table, because

the first roll always happens on the day nobody expected it. Poisoning is the second. Medications, cleaning products, laundry pods, vitamins, e-cigarette refills, and alcohol all belong in latched cabinets above a child's reach, not simply out of sight, and the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 is free, staffed around the clock, and should be saved in a phone before it is needed rather than searched for during an emergency. Burns and scalds are third, and a scald is a burn caused by hot liquid or steam rather than by direct flame. Setting a home water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit prevents most bathtub scalds, and turning pot handles toward the back of the stove prevents a whole category of kitchen injuries. Tip-overs deserve their own mention here: dressers, bookcases, and televisions must be anchored to the wall with straps, because a climbing toddler can pull furniture down on top of themselves in seconds. The fourth category, drowning, is serious enough that it needs its own section. Two habits cut across all four categories. Keep emergency numbers posted where a babysitter can find them without asking, and walk every new caregiver through the house once, because a hazard nobody points out is a hazard nobody sees.

**Water, and How Little It Takes**

Two facts about childhood drowning surprise almost everyone who learns them. The first is how little water it takes. A young child can drown in one to two inches, which means bathtubs, mop buckets, toilets, pet bowls, and inflatable pools all qualify as hazards. The second is that drowning is nearly silent. There is no thrashing, no yelling, and no splashing to alert anyone, because a small child slips under quickly and quietly. Together those facts explain why the advice is so absolute. Never leave a child under five alone in or near water, not even briefly, and if the phone rings during a bath, take the child out of the tub. Safety experts describe protection in layers, on the principle that any single barrier eventually fails. For a home pool the layers are four-sided isolation fencing at least four feet high with a self-closing and self-latching gate, door alarms, a pool cover, swim lessons once a child is old enough, and an adult designated as the water watcher whose only job during that stretch of time is watching, with no phone in hand. Adults tend to assume that other adults are watching, which is exactly how a child ends up unwatched in a crowded backyard. Naming one person out loud, and handing that role off explicitly when someone takes a break, closes the gap that assumption creates. Bath time deserves the same discipline at home, where a large share of young-child drownings actually happen, and

the rule is short enough to say in one line: the adult stays within arm's reach until the child is out and dry.

**Sleep and Choking in the First Year**

The first year carries two risks that childproofing gates and cabinet latches do nothing about. The first is unsafe sleep. Safe-sleep guidance is summarized as the ABCs: an infant sleeps Alone, on the Back, in a bare Crib. Bare means a firm mattress and a fitted sheet and nothing else, so no blankets, pillows, bumper pads, positioners, or stuffed animals, all of which raise the risk of suffocation and of sudden infant death. Room-sharing without bed-sharing is recommended for at least the first six months, meaning the baby sleeps in their own crib or bassinet in the caregiver's room. A sleep sack replaces a loose blanket if warmth is a concern. The second risk is choking. The practical rule is the toilet paper tube test: anything that fits through a cardboard toilet paper tube is small enough to block a young child's airway and does not belong within reach. That covers coins, marbles, small toy parts, and especially button batteries and high-powered magnets, both of which cause severe internal injury if swallowed and require immediate emergency care rather than a wait-and-see approach. Food is the other half of choking risk. Whole grapes, whole nuts, popcorn, raw carrot coins, hard candy, and hot dogs sliced into circles are the classic offenders, and each has a simple fix in the way it is cut.

**Supervision Is Not a Device**

Two areas of child safety are governed by rules specific enough that guessing is not good enough. Car seats come first. Children ride rear-facing until at least age two, and under the American Academy of Pediatrics' 2018 guidance until they outgrow the height or weight limit printed on the seat itself, because a rear-facing seat spreads crash forces across the whole back rather than concentrating them on a young neck. After that comes a forward-facing seat with a harness, then a booster until the vehicle's seat belt fits correctly across the shoulder and lower hips, which for most children happens somewhere between eight and twelve years old. Children stay in the back seat until at least thirteen. Many fire departments and hospitals will check an installation for free, which is worth doing, because a large share of car seats are installed incorrectly. The second area is supervision itself, and it deserves the last word. A baby monitor is a convenience, not a supervisor. A cabinet latch buys a delay, not immunity. A pool fence fails the moment a gate is propped open.

Every device described in this reading is designed to buy an adult time and to reduce the number of things that require constant vigilance, not to replace the adult. The safest home is one where the environment has been adjusted thoughtfully and a paying-attention adult is still in it. That is also the honest answer to how much childproofing is enough. Enough is the point where the hazards that remain are ones an attentive adult can actually track, rather than a list too long for anyone to hold in their head.

**Key Information: Childproofing and Child Safety**

| Detail | Information |
|---|---|
| Poison Help Line | 1-800-222-1222, free and staffed 24 hours a day |
| Water Heater Setting | 120 degrees Fahrenheit prevents most bathtub scalds |
| Drowning Depth | A young child can drown in one to two inches of water |
| Safe Sleep ABCs | Alone, on the Back, in a bare Crib with only a fitted sheet |
| Choking Test | If it fits through a toilet paper tube, it is a hazard |
| Furniture | Dressers, bookcases, and televisions must be anchored to the wall |
| Car Seat Direction | Rear-facing until at least age 2 and until the seat's height or weight limit |
| Stair Gates | Hardware-mounted at the top and bottom before a baby crawls |

**Case Study: Jordan's Walk-Through**

**Jordan is sixteen and has babysat the Okafor twins since they were infants. Now the twins are fourteen months old and walking, and Jordan's child development teacher has assigned a childproofing survey for extra credit. Jordan arrives early and does the whole thing on hands and knees, which the twins find hilarious. The list fills up fast. A dresser in the bedroom is not strapped to the wall, and there are drawer handles on it that look exactly like a ladder. A bottle of dish soap sits under the sink behind a door with no latch. The bathroom door does not latch either, and the toilet lid is up. Jordan texts a photo of the dresser to Mrs. Okafor, who writes back, we anchored the one in the living room and completely forgot that one. On the way home Jordan realizes the twins had been safe at nine months and unsafe at fourteen, and nothing in the house had changed but the twins.**

1. Jordan noticed the house had become unsafe without anything in it changing. Use the reading to explain how that is possible.

2. Rank the three hazards Jordan found by how quickly they could cause serious harm, and justify your ranking using the reading.

**Multiple Choice**

1. How much water is enough for a young child to drown in?

    a) Only water deeper than the child is tall

    b) One to two inches

    c) At least one foot

    d) At least six inches

2. What water heater setting does the reading recommend to prevent scald burns?

a) 120 degrees Fahrenheit

b) 160 degrees Fahrenheit

c) 100 degrees Fahrenheit

d) 140 degrees Fahrenheit

3. According to safe sleep guidance, what belongs in the crib with a sleeping infant?

a) One small stuffed animal for comfort

b) A soft bumper pad around the rails

c) A thin blanket tucked in at the sides

d) Nothing except a fitted sheet

**Matching**

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| 1. ___ childproofing | A) Strapping heavy furniture and televisions to a wall so they cannot tip over |
| 2. ___ scald | B) Alone, on the back, in a bare crib with only a firm mattress and fitted sheet |
| 3. ___ safe sleep ABCs | C) A burn caused by hot liquid or steam rather than by direct flame |
| 4. ___ anchoring | D) One named adult whose only job for a set stretch of time is watching the water |
| 5. ___ water watcher | E) Adjusting a home so ordinary childhood curiosity cannot cause serious injury |

**Fill-in-the-Blank**

1. The free Poison Help line is 1-800-_____, staffed all day.

2. A burn from hot liquid or steam is called a _____.

3. Safe sleep means alone, on the _____, in a bare crib.

**Short Answer**

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. Explain why a childproofing plan has to be redone every few months during the first two years.

_____

_____

_____

2. Why does the reading insist that a baby monitor is not a form of supervision?

_____

_____

_____

3. Describe the toilet paper tube test and explain what it tells a caregiver.

_____

_____

_____