



Create a Step-By-Step Fire Drill

Step 1. Make a home fire escape plan.

- First, working together as a family, draw a map of your home. On your map, find two ways out of every room, especially the bedrooms.
- Mark where all the doors are in your home. Mark where all the windows are. Mark where all your smoke alarms are.
- Mark the place outside where everyone will meet.
- Next, post emergency numbers next to every phone. Help your children memorize 2 things:
- 9-1-1 or the emergency number for your fire department.
- The street name and number for your home.

Step 2. Test your smoke alarms.

- Go through your home and test all the smoke alarms. If a fire happens at night, the alarms will wake you up in time to get to safety.
- Be sure you have at least one alarm on every level of your home and inside every bedroom.
- There are different types of alarms. It's best to have both ionization AND photoelectric alarms in your home.
- Smoke alarms don't last forever. If yours are 10 years old or older...or if you're not sure how old they are, replace them with new alarms.
- The Home Safety Council recommends having interconnected smoke alarms. These alarms are linked together so that if one alarm operates, they all go off at once.
- Why is this important? If a fire starts far from where you're sleeping, the alarm nearest you will sound at the same time the one nearest the fire goes off. This gives you precious extra time to get your family members and help them to safety.
- Make sure to put new batteries in your alarms at least once a year, or when the alarm "chirps," signaling the power is low. Keep extra batteries on hand at all times so your alarms are always working. Choose a brand you can trust.

Step 3: Clear the way

- If there is a fire, you may have as little as 2 to 3 minutes to get your family to safety. You have to snap into action and get out fast! Keep your exit routes clear at all times.
- Move everything off the stairs and out of the way. Make sure all doors and windows open easily.

Step 4: Walk through the plan with every member of your family.

- Show your children exactly what to do when the smoke alarm goes off.
- Roll out of bed and crawl over to the door. Using the back of the hand, feel the doorknob and the cracks around the door for heat.
- Tell your children if it feels cool, it's safe to open the door a little and peek out. If you don't see any smoke, go out the door to your meeting place outside.
- If the space around the door feels warm it may mean fire is near the door. You'll need to use your second way out...most likely a window.
- To exit from an upper story window it helps to have an escape ladder. Choose a model that fits your window. But don't practice actually going out from an upper floor as the risk of falling is great. Use your ladder only in a real emergency.

- Remember, smoke rises. Teach your kids to “get low and go” if they see smoke. Bend down or crawl on your hands and knees to the nearest exit. The air will be clearer and easier to breathe near the floor.
- Because children and older adults often sleep through the sound of the smoke alarm, they'll need help getting to safety in a real fire emergency. Assign an adult to help every member of the family who needs it. Make this part of your plan.

Step 5: Do the Drill.

- Push the button on your smoke alarm so everyone knows the sound it makes if there is a fire. This will start your fire drill.
- Take your cell phone or portable phone with you.
- Have the assigned grown-ups go to each child's room. Watch them roll out of bed and crawl over to the door. Make sure they feel around the door before opening. Tell them it's cool.
- Watch them open the door a crack and peek out. Follow them as they crouch or crawl quickly using their primary escape route out the door to the meeting place.
- Close all the doors behind you.
- Once you get to the meeting place, pretend to call the fire department. Ask the kids if they know what the number is. Ask them to tell you the address of your home.
- Stress how important it is to get out and STAY OUT. Once you escape, no one should ever go back inside for any reason. The fire department has the training and equipment to go inside a burning building.

Step 6: Talk about the Drill.

- Tell your kids what a great job they did. Reassure them that in a real fire, you will be there to help them get to safety. But it's always good for everyone in the family to know the plan.
- If possible, run the drill again. This time, pretend the door feels warm or they see smoke in the hallway when they peek through the crack.
- This means you'll use your second way out. Tell your kids to keep it closed. Turn on the light in the bedroom. Grab a white tee shirt or towel and kneel by the window. Wave the shirt so people can see you from outside.
- Tell your children you will come to the room to help them out. (If you have a fire escape ladder, explain how you will use it.)
- Keep practicing until you can be sure that everyone in your home can get to the meeting place fast -- try to get there within 3 minutes.
- Put your escape plan on the refrigerator where everyone can see it. When guests come to visit overnight, ask your kids to talk them through the plan. Practice a home fire drill at least twice a year.