



Parents Appliance Use & Safety Exchange With Children — P.A.U.S.E. With Children¹

Ohio State University Extension²

P.A.U.S.E. is an appliance safety program that parents can practice in the home with their children. The goal is for parents to exchange information and train children in the proper use and care of appliances. In return, the children can improve their living skills and prevent harm to themselves and the appliances.

WHY PARTICIPATE IN P.A.U.S.E.?

Children are using home appliances alone more and more and at young ages. They are using appliances to do housecleaning jobs assigned by parents and to prepare food during times when there are no adults around.

As the use of appliances by children increases, so does the chance of accidents. Some accidents occurring in homes that might involve appliances are:

- Burns and scalds
- Cuts
- Falls
- Fires

Accidents often occur when children use appliances they are too short to reach or see, or lack the motor skills to operate. Accidents also occur when children have not had training or are inexperienced in the safe use of home appliances.

Children who do chores around the house can help working parents. Parents, however, should "pause" for a few minutes to help their children learn to use appliances safely.

Preparation is the key to a parents success with P.A.U.S.E. First, pause and ask yourself questions like:

- Is my child tall enough to use this appliance safely?
- Can my child read and understand the graphics, knobs or dials to use the appliance?
- Might my child do something unsafe when using the appliance?

P.A.U.S.E WITH CHILDREN

Plan a time to work with your child to provide information on how to use and care for each appliance safely. Make this a "hands-on, show-and-tell activity."

Watch your child go through the steps for using appliances to make sure they are done correctly. Do this several times before they use appliances on their own.

When leaving instructions that require the use of an appliance, remind the user of safety factors. This may mean writing notes in a manner that is easy for your child to understand.

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STRESS SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY

There are some safety measures that parents should take to reduce the chance of appliance-related accidents. The following are general practices all parents need to follow related to major appliances.

1. Read the safety instructions in the appliance use and care manual.
 2. Be sure appliances are properly installed and maintained.
 3. Do an overall appliance safety check. Look for cords children might trip over, etc.
 4. Destroy shipping cartons, plastic bags, metal bands and staples that children might use for play. Cartons covered with rugs, bedspreads or plastic sheets can become airtight chambers. Staples and metal bands can cause severe cuts.
 5. If a major appliance is discarded, abandoned or not in use, remove the door or door latch mechanism to prevent accidental entrapment.
 6. Do not let young children play in or on any major appliance.
- Use only cooking dishes that are safe for the microwave. Show your children some of the dishes they should use and should not use. Metal utensils and utensils with metal trim are not safe to use, unless specifically recommended by the manufacturer.
 - Use potholders to remove cooked foods from the oven.
 - Open covers or plastic wrap away from the user to avoid steam burns.
 - Never heat containers with small openings, like syrup bottles.
 - Pierce nonporous skins or membranes of foods to prevent steam buildup and bursting.
 - Stir liquids before heating them to avoid eruptions when containers are removed from the oven.
 - Do not boil eggs in the shell.; they will explode in the oven.
 - Remove wire twist-ties from paper or plastic packages before placing them in the oven. The metal twists can cause a fire.
 - Do not overcook foods. If materials inside the oven ignite, **KEEP THE OVEN DOOR CLOSED**. Turn off the power immediately by turning the oven off and disconnecting the power cord.
 - Use only thermometers specifically designed for use in a microwave oven.

P.A.U.S.E. — THE ACTIVITY

Now is the time to "pause" and teach your child. Conduct the activity where the appliance is located. Use the following list of appliance use and safety tips as your guide.

Sharing all this information at once may be more than your child can handle. Try doing a few mini-lessons on each appliance.

Place a check beside each tip after you share it with your child. Cover everything on the list that applies.

Microwave Safety Practices

- Do not attempt to operate with the door open or when the oven is empty.
- Show children how to cook their favorite convenience foods. Foods like pizza and popcorn may be prepared, but only in special packages or utensils designed specifically for this purpose. **CAUTION** children about the stored heat that can cause burns.

Range Safety Practices

- Wear proper clothing when using the range. Loose-fitting or baggy sleeves can catch fire when one reaches across a burner.
- Use dry potholders. Wet potholders can cause burns from steam.
- Turn the handles of pans toward the center of the range, but so they do not extend over other surface units. In this position they are less likely to be knocked or pulled off, thus reducing the chance of burns or scalds.
- Do not leave surface units that are set to high or medium high unattended. Also, watch fat and grease

closely so they do not become too hot and catch on fire.

- Heating elements can look cool when they are hot, so caution children to not touch heating elements.
- Do not set bowls, utensils, towels, etc., near electric units or gas burners where they could catch fire.
- Never use the oven door to stand on because the range could tip, resulting in serious burns or other injuries.
- Do not store toys or other items inside the oven.
- Check the oven before preheating to make sure nothing is inside. Also, place an oven rack in the desired location while the oven is cool.
- Do not use the range to heat the room. A person could be burned or injured, or a fire could start.

Dishwasher Safety Practices

- Show children how to load the dishwasher properly. Sharp knives and prongs can cut if they are not loaded facing downward.
- Glasses can break in the dishwasher. Beware of this when loading and unloading to prevent being cut.
- Locate the drying element inside the dishwasher and caution children against touching it because it gets very hot.
- Do not allow children to use the door to step on for reaching upper cabinets.
- Close and latch or lock the dishwasher door when not loading or unloading it.

Refrigerator/Freezer Safety Practices

- Unplug the electric cord of a refrigerator or freezer before cleaning it to prevent electrical shock.
- Caution children not to climb, hang or stand on refrigerator/freezer shelves.

Washer/Dryer Safety Practices

- Show how to clean the lint filter after each load. Lint build-up can cause a fire.
- Do not reach into the washer or dryer when it is operating. Wait until the machine has stopped completely.
- Never wash or dry articles spotted with flammable substances like dry cleaning fluids or gasoline. They could ignite or explode.
- Do not dry foam rubber and plastic coated items in the dryer.
- Teach your child to follow package directions when using laundry products. Incorrect use of chlorine bleach with ammonia can produce poisonous gas.

Compactor Safety Practices

- Do not compact containers or cans containing poisonous or explosive products.
- Do not shove items down into the compactor with hands or feet.

When you have finished, give yourself a pat on the back. Why? Because you deserve it. You paused long enough to help protect the child you love from harm. That's something to be proud of.

THINK ABOUT CHILDREN BEFORE YOU BUY APPLIANCES

Handles and Controls — Handles that allow use of the whole hand are easier for children, whose grips are weak, to use. This is also true for opening doors, drawers, and turning controls on appliances. Front or side controls are easier to use than those at the rear or on the back splash. Controls at the rear or on the

back splash may be hard to reach by short children. To reach the controls the child may try something unsafe like climbing on the appliance.

Easy to Read Controls — Controls that are easy to understand are a good choice. You should be able to see if the appliance is OFF or ON.

Easy to Read Directions — Make sure directions for use are easy to read and follow. If the directions supplied by the manufacturer are hard to understand you might need to "write your own."

Easy to Clean — Easy cleaning is important if children will be using the appliance. They should be taught routine maintenance and cleaning along with proper use of an appliance.

For further information about home safety, contact your local county Extension office.