

When can I leave home or move out?

ACT, NSW, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, VIC WA

The law does not set a minimum age for leaving home. This means that if you have your parents' permission and a safe place to go, you can leave home.

The law does say that your parents have a responsibility to look after your needs including making sure you have a home, food and water until you are 18. If you are under the age of 18 years, and do not have your parents permission to leave home, there can be problems. Whether your parents will allow it, or whether it is okay for you to leave despite them, depends entirely on your personal situation. We have explained some common situations below.

For free and confidential legal advice about this topic, please contact us at <https://www.lawmail.org.au/verification>

Leaving home when you're under 18

If you are under 18 and you want to move out of home, generally it will depend on your personal circumstances. It's not illegal to move out of home before you are 18, but since your parents have a responsibility to look after you, they might make you come home. If the police are involved, they will look at where you have moved out to, and whether or not you are safe there. They will also look at whether or not you would be safe at home.

If there's violence going on at home, that's not something you have to put up with and you should tell someone about it. Remember, if it's not safe for you at home, you don't have to stay there. If someone has hurt you or you think they are about to, please call 000 and try go to a safe place, like your local medical centre, hospital or police station.

Leaving home when you're over 18

Moving out of home is a big decision and it's important that you make clear plans before you move out. This includes making sure you have a safe place to live, that you have enough money, and thinking about how moving out will affect other parts of your life, such as your schooling.

Before you make the decision to move out, it's a good idea to work out a plan with a trusted adult, or a youth counsellor, so you don't end up in a bad situation.

Moving out – important things to consider

No matter your age, before you make the decision to move out, it's a good idea to work out a plan with a trusted adult, or a youth counsellor, so you don't end up in a bad situation. These are a couple of the things you'll have to think about:

- What will I need to pay?
- What about going to school?
- What identification documents do I need?



What will I need to pay?

Moving out and renting a house or apartment can be expensive and it's important to work out whether you'll have enough money to survive.

You'll have to think about the ongoing costs of living on your own which include:

- rent,
- bills (electricity, gas, water, internet, etc),
- food,
- household items (furniture, cookware, etc.),
- transport to school or work,
- school fees and school uniform (if you are still at school),
- clothes, and
- other activities (like going to the movies with friends or playing on a sports team).

Living in a share house is a good way to reduce costs, by splitting them with housemates. However, you'll have to make sure you have a very clear agreement in place about:

- how much everyone pays,
- when they pay,
- who's in charge of collecting the money,
- how you will pay for shared household goods like cleaning products, and
- who's in charge of paying the bills.

If you want to move out of home, it's a good idea to wait until you have a job and to save as much money as possible before you start looking for a place. It would also be a good idea to sit down with a trusted adult and put together a budget before you move out and into your own place. A budget is a plan for spending for the year – you will have to think about how much money you make at your job, how much set things are for example rent, bills and transport and then how much you will have left over for other things such as grocery items, clothing, other activities and to put away into your savings.

You might also want to check to see if you are eligible to receive financial assistance from Centrelink: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/youth-allowance>

What about going to school?

Usually, until you turn 18 your parents have to sign all your important school documents, like forms about enrolment and excursions.

If you are thinking of living independently from your parents it's a good idea to ask your school how this will affect your school documents. Your school might decide that you are mature enough to sign forms for yourself or they might decide that your parents, or another trusted adult, still have to sign these forms for you.

It's important to know that different states have different rules about what age you can leave school. If you're thinking about leaving school when you move out you need to make sure that this is okay.



What identification documents do I need?

If you leave home in a hurry, your parents might still have your identification documents (like your birth certificate or passport). This might be a problem in the future if you want to go overseas (and need your passport) or you need ID for a particular reason (like to get a driver's licence or when you apply for a job).

If you're thinking of leaving home it would be a good idea to talk to your parents about who will look after your ID documents and what ID documents you currently own, if you feel safe and comfortable to do so.

What can I do if I need to leave home suddenly?

If you need to leave home immediately because it is not safe but you don't have anywhere to go you can call a crisis support centre to help you find some accommodation. Crisis accommodation is short term housing for people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Helpful contacts

Remember, whatever is going on, there are always people you can talk to. If you'd like to chat about what's going on, you can talk to a counsellor at Kids Helpline anonymously on 1800 55 1800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you're anxious, depressed or scared about anything, you can also call Headspace on 1800 650 890 for free and anonymous counselling advice between 9am-1am 7 days a week.

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This resource was developed by Youth Law Australia. For more information please visit <https://yla.org.au/>

