

Dos and Don'ts of Parenting in Germany

Leaving Children Home Alone

Parents have the legal obligation to supervise their children ("Aufsichtspflicht"). This includes protecting the children from harm as well as making sure they don't cause any harm to others. This doesn't mean however, that parents have to watch their children constantly. They are allowed to let them play independently. Parents basically have to decide for themselves how much supervision their children need based on their level of maturity, personality, character and the environment. It also depends on how long the child is required to stay alone and where they could go for help if need be.

It is very tricky to ask older siblings to watch out for younger ones unless there's a big age gap between them. Between the ages of 10-15 children finally reach a level of logical reasoning, perception and concentration that is comparable to an adult and are therefore able to judge potential dangers. However, once in puberty, many teenagers tend to be wrapped up in their own business and/or are more willing to take risks.

Children any younger are not able to truly perceive danger and lack therefore the skills and resources to take responsibility for a younger sibling.

Going Out

Cinema: In general, age restrictions to films apply from 6, 12, 16 or 18 regardless of an adult accompanying a child or not. Exception: Children from 6 years are allowed to see a movie rated 12 if a parent/ guardian is present. Children under 14 have to have adult supervision if the film ends after 8 pm or if they are under 16 and the film ends after 10 pm or if they are under 18 and the film ends after midnight.

Pubs, Nightclubs and arcades: Under 16 year-old children are only allowed to go to a nightclub (disco) when accompanied by a parent or guardian. From 16-18 year-old teenagers are allowed to go to a nightclub until midnight, longer if they have adult supervision (signed paper). There are exceptions for school and other public events for teenagers. You have to be over 18 to enter an arcade (Spielhalle).

Children and teenagers are allowed to enter a pub between 5 am and 11pm. if they want to purchase a drink or food. Exceptions: Pubs that have many gambling machines or also run as a night club.

Concerts: No age/time restrictions yet parental permission is necessary to go to a concert.

Outside: Parents decide when their children need to come back home. There are no laws and regulations other than the obligation to supervise (see leaving children home alone).

Drugs and Alcohol

Smoking is not allowed until the age of 18. Teenagers over 16 may legally buy/consume beer, wine and champagne. You need to be over 18 to buy/consume any spirits (e.g. vodka or whiskey).

Piercings and Tattoos

According to German law tattoos, piercings or brand characters are actually assaults but are not prosecuted as they are done voluntarily. Children and teenagers under 16 are not allowed to have a tattoo done, even with parental permission. From 16 – 18 teenagers need parental permission (either in writing or better parents accompanying their child).

Spanking

Physical violence including spanking on any part of the body is illegal in Germany.

Sex

The legal age of consent in Germany is 14 if both partners are under 18.

Jobs

Children over 13 are allowed to earn some pocket money by doing “easy” jobs, like giving private tuition or doing paper rounds between the hours of 8.00 and 18.00 and only with parental permission. Teenagers aged 15 and over are allowed to work between 35-40 hours a week for up to 4 weeks during the holidays.

Business

Children aged 7 and over are allowed to purchase items within their pocket money. They are even allowed to save money and buy more expensive things. However, items costing large sums and contracts (e.g. for mobile phones) are forbidden unless they have parent permission.

Criminal Responsibility

Limited criminal responsibility starts at the age of 14. Crimes committed by young people (aged 16 – 18) will always be tried in juvenile court. This also applies to adolescents aged 18-21 who, at the time of the crime, were the equivalent of a juvenile based on their moral and mental development.

Sources:

www.wiki.familieninsel.de

www.deine-rechte.de

www.kindersicherheit.de

<http://eltern.t-online.de>

Emergency Numbers:

Fire/Ambulance 112

Poison 0551 - 1 92 40

Police 110

Cancel Bank Cards 116 116