



# How to talk with other parents about guns in the home

As a parent, you do your best to keep your kids safe. You “childproof” the house when they’re young and set rules and boundaries as they get older. But when your kids visit other people’s homes, you have less control. Other parents may not have the same rules, and your child may face different risks.

One of those risks may be an unlocked gun. In the U.S., 4.6 million children live in homes with unlocked and loaded guns. (Source: [National Firearm Survey, 2021](#)) Young kids are curious and may handle guns without their parents’ knowledge. Older kids may want to show off for their friends. Secure gun storage, whether at your home or other places where your children play, is a proven way to prevent unintentional gun injuries.

To help keep your kids safe, ask other parents if they have unlocked guns in their home. Secure gun storage can save lives. If you’re talking with someone who’s not a parent, you may also find our conversation guide on gun safety in the home helpful.

## When to start the conversation

Kids often have opportunities to spend time in other families’ homes, starting with playdates when they’re very young. Older kids may go to parties, hang out at a friend’s place, or work as a babysitter or tutor for another family. To keep your kids safe, talk with other parents about secure gun storage before your child visits their home.

## How to start the conversation

Other parents may feel differently about gun ownership than you do, and that's ok. When it comes to gun violence, we agree on more than we think, and we all share a common goal: keeping kids safe. Talking with other parents about gun violence can help prevent it.

Approach the conversation calmly and from a place of understanding. Listen to their thoughts and concerns, and share your own. Use the prompts below to get started.

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## Ask about unlocked guns in the home

Think of this as a conversation about kids' safety, which we can all agree is important. It's common for parents to share information about kids' allergies, and talking about secure gun storage is just as normal. Some people feel more comfortable asking direct questions, while others prefer a more subtle approach.

**"I always ask other parents: Do you have any unsecured guns in your home?"**

**"As parents, we both want to keep our kids safe. I'm wondering, do you have any unsecured guns in your home? And if you do, what precautions do you take to prevent unintended access?"**

**"I have a few safety questions I like to ask before my child goes anywhere new. Who will be supervising? Do you have any pets? Are there any unsecured guns around?"**

### Why this works

When you build it into your safety routine to ask other parents if they have unlocked guns in the home, you help to normalize these conversations—and that can save lives.

## Find common ground

If the conversation starts to feel emotional, stay calm. Find something you can both agree on. Every parent wants to keep their kids safe and healthy, so that can be a good focus area.

**"I know this is something we haven't talked about before, and I appreciate your patience."**

**"Every family has their own way of handling things, and I want to make sure I understand the environment my kids will be in."**

**"It worries me that guns are the leading cause of death for kids and teens. I want our kids to be able to spend time together safely."**

### Why this works

Focusing on what you have in common will help you both feel more at ease, so you can really listen to and understand each other.

# Talk about how to store guns securely

Whether or not you own a gun, you may have concerns about whether guns are stored securely in places your kids want to visit. Here are some ways to address this in a casual, friendly way.

**"Kids can be curious, especially in a new place, so I'm wondering: Do you have any unlocked guns in your home?"**

**"It's important to me that guns are kept locked. If you have guns in your home, are they stored securely?"**

**"What steps do you take to prevent your child or their friends from accessing a gun?"**

## Why this works

Responsible gun ownership includes always practicing secure storage. Talking about secure storage options may encourage other parents to store guns in their home more securely.

## How to store guns securely

Storing guns securely is a proven way to prevent unintentional shootings, gun suicides, and some intentional shootings. A shooting that results from someone misusing an unsecured gun from the home is known as "family fire." [Learn more about how to make your home safer at EndFamilyFire.org.](https://www.endfamilyfire.org)

# Talk about unlocked guns and youth suicide

Unsecured guns are especially dangerous in the hands of someone in crisis. 36% of gun-related deaths among kids ages 10 to 19 are suicides.<sup>1</sup>

Access to a gun triples the risk of death by suicide.<sup>2</sup>

Suicide is often an impulsive act, and we can all agree that someone in crisis shouldn't have access to a gun. You can help by sharing the signs that someone may intend to harm themselves or others, and letting others know that it's critical to take action right away.

**"I noticed that [name]'s behavior has changed lately. Young people sometimes act this way when they're in crisis, so I wanted to let you know."**

**"I'm worried about [name] and I want to make sure they don't have access to a gun."**

**"If you're ever really struggling and you need someone to talk to, you can call or text 988 for free support, 24/7."**

## Why this works

Kids who are struggling need time, space, and support to process what they're going through. You can help provide these.

<sup>1</sup> Source: [Boston Children's Hospital](https://www.bostonchildrenshospital.org)

<sup>2</sup> Source: [Annals of Internal Medicine](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2707000/)

## Prevent gun violence by knowing the signs

Ten potential warning signs that someone may be in crisis and intend to harm themselves or others. [Learn the critical warning signs by visiting SandyHookPromise.org/Blog/Gun-Violence/Know-The-Signs-Of-Gun-Violence/](https://SandyHookPromise.org/Blog/Gun-Violence/Know-The-Signs-Of-Gun-Violence/).

## After the chat

- If the other parent asks questions you aren't sure how to answer, let them know you will try to find answers and get back to them. For example, they may want more details about secure gun storage options or statistics about gun violence and young people. Check [our resources page at AgreeToAgree.org/resources](https://AgreeToAgree.org/resources) to learn more.
- Reconnect with the other parent to follow up on the conversation. The right time to do this will depend on what you discussed.
- If they agreed to take additional steps for secure gun storage, you may want to check in with them again soon to follow up or share resources.
- Unsure you want your child to spend time in someone else's home? Suggest getting together in a public space, such as a park or library, instead.
- Revisit the topic of secure gun storage regularly to check if anything has changed regarding whether they own a gun or how guns are stored in the home.

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## Tips for having productive conversations

- Remember that everyone's thoughts, feelings, and experiences matter. No matter how someone feels about gun ownership, trust that they are trying to make the best choices for their child.
- Stay calm. Emotions can escalate the conversation and make it harder for you to understand each other.
- Try to understand the other person's perspective.

# Tips for having productive conversations

## (Continued)

- If the conversation starts to feel more like a debate or an argument, mention something that you agree on. "We clearly both want our kids to be safe."
- Be prepared to share a few safe gun storage options.
- Express gratitude. "I know this can be an awkward conversation, and I appreciate that you were willing to have it."
- If the conversation doesn't go as planned, think about how you might approach it differently in the future.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis,  
call or text 988 to be connected with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

**Learn how to have the conversation at [AgreeToAgree.org](https://www.agreetoagree.org)**

