

Making the Most of the Family Fireplace

During the colder months, a fireplace can be a beautiful and functional part of your home. It provides warmth to the whole house, and can serve as a great background for the whole family to relax, read a book, or simply enjoy a quiet night in. However, anything involving fire comes with some risk. Here are some tips and tricks to help you enjoy it and keep your kids safe.

Tools and tips

Before it gets cold out every year, you should prepare for using your fireplace by giving it a thorough cleaning. Use a shovel and broom to get the big stuff out, and give the floor and walls a quick vacuum with the stiff brush attachment. You may also need to have your chimney cleaned. Check with a chimney sweep to see how often they recommend a chimney cleaning and to schedule an appointment.

Before you're ready to start your fire, you'll need the right tools. Standard fireplace tool sets typically come with a poker to tend the fire, a spade (shovel) and broom for cleanup, and tongs to help you move logs. You may also want a stand to keep your logs organized. Fireplace sets with all these tools are available at home and hardware stores. You can also invest in a bellows, which helps get things going by providing oxygen to the fire.

Safety

To make it easier and safer to start your fire, ensure that your flue is open. That'll keep the room from filling up with smoke and help provide more oxygen for the fire. When you're ready to go, stack kindling (smaller sticks) underneath your logs to provide a good base for the fire. You can also use a small amount of newspaper, but keep it to a minimum. There are starter logs that are another option for getting your fire started.

Once you get it going, make sure you remain a safe distance from the fire. You should feel a pleasant warmth, but the smallest amount of discomfort is a signal to move farther away. It's important to give your children good guidelines for being close to the fire, and set a good example. Practice staying beyond an established distance from the fireplace, unless you're tending to the fire. And if your young children are in the room, make sure you stay with them to help prevent mishaps like touching a hot screen or throwing anything in the fire.

Be sure to keep a clear area in front of the fire to prevent tripping. Plus, keep anything that can melt and flammable items a safe distance from the fireplace.

Just in case the fire gets out of hand, be sure to keep a fire extinguisher and a fireproof blanket in an easy-to-reach spot. Adults should use the fire extinguisher, but as a precaution, it may be helpful to teach your children how to use it as well.

Practicing good fire safety is one way to reduce your worry around the house. To feel even more at ease, protect your home and car with Liberty Mutual Insurance. Get your free, no-obligation quote on Liberty Mutual home and auto insurance by calling 800-809-9778 or visit [LibertyMutual.com/NAR](https://www.libertymutual.com/NAR)