



When are children too old to trick-or-treat?

FAMILY/KIDS, BIZARRE, NAKEDLAW

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A [Today show poll](#) found that most people believe kids should stop trick-or-treating between the ages of 12 and 17. Is your teen outstaying their welcome in your neighborhood?

Truths and troubles with Halloween age limits

Over the legal limit

Several municipalities across the United States have enacted laws capping the age for trick-or-treating. [Belleville, Illinois](#), for example, does not allow anyone over age 12 to don a costume and ring doorbells. The mayor said the city stepped in because parents are not telling their kids they're too old. Teens who violate the law can be fined up to \$100 and, theoretically, even face

they're too old. Teens who violate the law can be fined up to \$100 and, theoretically, even face jail time. Meridian, Mississippi; Bishopville, South Carolina; and Boonsboro, Maryland also have passed [laws](#) to limit trick-or-treating to those under 13, as have many towns in Virginia.

Undoing a Halloween tradition

One reason why trick-or-treating first became popular is that it gives kids a purpose on what is otherwise a night marked by [vandalism](#). Instead of hitting the streets with misbehavior in mind, youngsters are encouraged to collect candy. Barring older kids from trick-or-treating puts the onus on parents to find another activity to keep their teens off the streets and out of mischief on this traditional night of trouble.

Enforcement unmasked

The problem with laws of these kind is enforcement. Teens of any age rarely carry around any sort of ID while making their neighborhood rounds for candy. Moreover, assessing a kid's age is hard enough in normal circumstances, let alone when they're masked in the dark of night. So, it's not as if police can stand on the corners and just question the taller youths that pass by. In general, these trick-or-treat laws have been created as a political token to appease residents who've complained about older kids begging for candy.

Police departments have few plans to enforce age-limit Halloween laws, but why take chances? If your teen intends to head out for tricks and treats, find out about the ordinances in your town and discuss basic [safety measures](#) with your youngster.

Tagged [children](#), [halloween](#), [Kids](#), [teenagers](#)