

The Fundamentals of Family Fireplace Safety

How should I arrange the room?

1. Do install a carbon monoxide detector
A carbon monoxide detector should be installed in the fireplace room, and unlike a smoke detector, won't cause false alarms.

2. Always supervise a fire
Make sure an adult keeps an eye on the fire from when it's lit until the ashes are cold.

3. Use licensed installers
Licensed professionals will make sure the area is heatproofed, and the fireplace is properly vented.

4. Use a safety gate
If you have children or pets, use a non-toxic, heat resistant safety gate to keep them away from the fireplace.

5. Don't install a smoke detector near the fireplace
If you have a fireplace in the same room as a smoke detector, it will cause false alarms.

6. Don't clutter the area
The area around your fireplace (the 'hearth') should have no decorations, debris or flammable materials.

7. Don't mount your TV
If you mount your TV over your fireplace, it can be damaged by the heat, and the viewing angle is usually too high, which puts strain on a viewer's neck.

Doors open or closed?

Before lighting the fire	While the fire burns	Once the fire is out
<p>Open the damper, which usually means pulling the handle all the way to the right. This will ensure all gases are vented through the chimney.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Tip: Before starting the fire, check the damper is open using a flashlight.</p>	<p>Leave glass doors open when fire is burning - this ensures the fire will have enough air for complete combustion, which keeps your chimney freer of creosote. Keep the mesh screen in front of the open door to prevent embers from entering the room.</p> <p>*creosote is the tar left in your chimney. As it accumulates, it becomes a chimney fire hazard. Regular chimney cleaning will help reduce the risk of chimney fires.</p>	<p>Once the ashes are cool, close the glass doors to prevent air from the chimney getting into the room. Close the damper to keep the cold air out.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Tip: Most damper handles are metal, so they'll heat up as your fire burns. Let it cool before touching it, and use an oven mitt to protect yourself from burns.</p>

What should I burn?

Do Burn	Don't Burn
<p>Dried, cut firewood Softwoods like fir and pine burn more quickly, and are better used when starting a fire.</p> <p>Hardwoods like maple and oak are better used once the fire is established and the chimney is heated.</p> <p>Fallen tree limbs These can be used for kindling, if given time to dry.</p>	<p>Flammable liquids As vapors can explode.</p> <p>Charcoal Which can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.</p> <p>Soft, moist wood This causes creosote buildup in your chimney.</p> <p>Trash Newspaper, wrapping paper and cardboard can release harmful vapors.</p> <p>Painted or pressure treated wood Can emit dangerous chemicals.</p>

What should I do with the ashes?

1. Allow ashes to cool before disposal, at least overnight, but longer if possible.
2. Dispose of ashes in a metal container, moisten them, and keep them outside of your house.
3. Don't store anything else in the container.
4. Have the ashes hauled away with your other garbage.



Sources:

wikidow.com/Avoid-False-Alarms-With-Your-Smoke-Alarm
usta.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_pov/heating/fireplace.shtm
static.npba.org/fileadmin/factsheets/product/F3_FireplaceSafety.pdf
nachi.org/fireplace-fuel.htm
cpsc.gov/en/Newsroom/News-Releases/2004/CPSC-Warns-Of-Hazards-from-Heaters-and-Fireplaces/