

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



The Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child were adopted in 1959 and 1989 (respectively) on the same day as Universal Children's Day.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services. In general, the Convention says that children everywhere have the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

Introduction

"Rights" are things every child should have or be able to do. All children have the same rights. These rights are listed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Almost every country has agreed to these rights. All the rights are connected to each other, and all are equally important. As children grow, they have more responsibility to make choices and exercise their rights.

So, what are the Rights of the Child?

Article 1	Definition of the child	The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18.	Everyone under 18 has these rights.
Article 2	Non-discrimination	The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.	All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.
Article 3	Best interests of the child	The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and law makers.	All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.
Article 4	Protection of rights	Governments have a responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. When countries ratify the Convention, they agree to review their laws relating to children. This involves assessing their social services, legal, health and educational systems, as well as levels of funding for these services. Governments are then obliged to take all necessary steps to ensure that the minimum standards set by the Convention in these areas are being met. They must help families protect children's rights and create an environment where they can grow and reach their potential. In some instances, this may involve changing existing laws or creating new ones. Such legislative changes are not imposed, but come about through the same process by which any law is created or reformed within a country. Article 41 of the Convention points out the when a country already has higher legal standards than those seen in the Convention, the higher standards always prevail.	The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.
Article 5	Parental guidance	Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children so that, as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly. Helping children to understand their rights does not mean pushing them to make choices with consequences that they are too young to handle. Article 5 encourages parents to deal with rights issues "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child". The Convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to governments. It does place on governments the responsibility to protect and assist families in fulfilling their essential role as nurturers of children.	Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.

Article 6	Survival and development	Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.	You have the right to be alive.
Article 7	Registration, name, nationality, care	All children have the right to a legally registered name, officially recognised by the government. Children have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country). Children also have the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.	You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).
Article 8	Preservation of identity	Children have the right to an identity - an official record of who they are. Governments should respect children's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.	You have the right to an identity - an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.
Article 9	Separation from parents	Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.	You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.
Article 10	Family reunification	Families whose members live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.	If you live in a different country than your parents do, you have the right to be together in the same place.
Article 11	Kidnapping	Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally. This article is particularly concerned with parental abductions. The Convention's Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography has a provision that concerns abduction for financial gain.	You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.
Article 12	Respect for the views of the child	When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making - not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognizes that the level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers' greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions.	You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.
Article 13	Freedom of expression	Children have the right to get and share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others. In exercising the right to freedom of expression, children have the responsibility to also respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others. The freedom of expression includes the right to share information in any way they choose, including by talking, drawing or writing.	You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 14	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should help guide their children in these matters. The Convention respects the rights and duties of parents in providing religious and moral guidance to their children. Religious groups around the world have expressed support for the Convention, which indicates that it in no way prevents parents from bringing their children up within a religious tradition. At the same time, the Convention recognizes that as children mature and are able to form their own views, some may question certain religious practices or cultural traditions. The Convention supports children's right to examine their beliefs, but it also states that their right to express their beliefs implies respect for the rights and freedoms of others.	You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.
Article 15	Freedom of association	Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others.	You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.
Article 16	Right to privacy	Children have a right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes.	You have the right to privacy.
Article 17	Access to information; mass media	Children have the right to get information that is important to their health and well-being. Governments should encourage mass media - radio, television, newspapers and Internet content sources - to provide information that children can understand and to not promote materials that could harm children. Mass media should particularly be encouraged to supply information in languages that minority and indigenous children can understand. Children should also have access to children's books.	You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.
Article 18	Parental responsibilities; state assistance	Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance to their children - the Convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to governments. It places a responsibility on governments to provide support services to parents, especially if both parents work outside the home.	You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

Article 19	Protection from all forms of violence	Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them. In terms of discipline, the Convention does not specify what forms of punishment parents should use. However any form of discipline involving violence is unacceptable. There are ways to discipline children that are effective in helping children learn about family and social expectations for their behaviour - ones that are non-violent, are appropriate to the child's level of development and take the best interests of the child into consideration. In most countries, laws already define what sorts of punishments are considered excessive or abusive. It is up to each government to review these laws in light of the Convention.	You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.
Article 20	Children deprived of family environment	Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.	You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.
Article 21	Adoption	Children have the right to care and protection if they are adopted or in foster care. The first concern must be what is best for them. The same rules should apply whether they are adopted in the country where they were born, or if they are taken to live in another country.	You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.
Article 22	Refugee children	Children have the right to special protection and help if they are refugees (if they have been forced to leave their home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.	You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.
Article 23	Children with disabilities	Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support, as well as all the rights in the Convention, so that they can live full and independent lives.	You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.
Article 24	Health and health services	Children have the right to good quality health care - the best health care possible - to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.	You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.
Article 25	Review of treatment in care	Children who are looked after by their local authorities, rather than their parents, have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate. Their care and treatment should always be based on "the best interests of the child". (see Guiding Principles, Article 3)	If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

Article 26	Social security	Children - either through their guardians or directly - have the right to help from the government if they are poor or in need.	You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.
Article 27	Adequate standard of living	Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.	You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.
Article 28	Right to education	All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Discipline in schools should respect children's dignity. For children to benefit from education, schools must be run in an orderly way - without the use of violence. Any form of school discipline should take into account the child's human dignity. Therefore, governments must ensure that school administrators review their discipline policies and eliminate any discipline practices involving physical or mental violence, abuse or neglect. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.	You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.
Article 29	Goals of education	Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a particular responsibility to respect the rights their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents. The Convention does not address such issues as school uniforms, dress codes, the singing of the national anthem or prayer in schools. It is up to governments and school officials in each country to determine whether, in the context of their society and existing laws, such matters infringe upon other rights protected by the Convention. Article 30 (Children of minorities/indigenous groups): Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. The right to practice one's own culture, language and religion applies to everyone; the Convention here highlights this right in instances where the practices are not shared by the majority of people in the country.	Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.
Article 30	Children of minorities/indigenous groups	Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. The right to practice one's own culture, language and religion applies to everyone; the Convention here highlights this right in instances where the practices are not shared by the majority of people in the country.	You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.
Article 31	Leisure, play and culture	Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.	You have the right to play and rest.

Article 32	Child labour	The government should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or their education. While the Convention protects children from harmful and exploitative work, there is nothing in it that prohibits parents from expecting their children to help out at home in ways that are safe and appropriate to their age. If children help out in a family farm or business, the tasks they do be safe and suited to their level of development and comply with national labour laws. Children's work should not jeopardize any of their other rights, including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play	You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.
Article 33	Drug abuse	Governments should use all means possible to protect children from the use of harmful drugs and from being used in the drug trade.	You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.
Article 34	Sexual exploitation	Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.	You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.
Article 35	Abduction, sale and trafficking	The government should take all measures possible to make sure that children are not abducted, sold or trafficked. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.	No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.
Article 36	Other forms of exploitation	Children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development.	You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).
Article 37	Detention and punishment	No one is allowed to punish children in a cruel or harmful way. Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in prison with adults, should be able to keep in contact with their families, and should not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without possibility of release.	No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.
Article 38	War and armed conflicts	Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. The Convention's Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.	You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.
Article 39	Rehabilitation of child victims	Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.	You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.
Article 40	Juvenile justice	Children who are accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects their rights. Governments are required to set a minimum age below which children cannot be held criminally responsible and to provide minimum guarantees for the fairness and quick resolution of judicial or alternative proceedings.	You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

Article 41	Respect for superior national standards	If the laws of a country provide better protection of children's rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.	If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.
Article 42	Knowledge of rights	Governments should make the Convention known to adults and children. Adults should help children learn about their rights, too. (See also article 4.)	You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.
Article 43 to 54	Implementation measures	These articles discuss how governments and international organizations like UNICEF should work to ensure children are protected in their rights.	These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.

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