



## America's 10 Best Places to Grow Up

### Low crime, strong schools, green spaces, and fun activities are key ingredients for a happy childhood

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If you could create the ideal community to raise a child in, what ingredients would you include? First off, you'd probably want a low crime rate. A strong school system would also be key. From there, you'd need lots of other children, expansive green spaces to play in, and plenty of nearby family events. Toss in an abundance of artistic and recreational activities, and all of a sudden you've got one heck of a place to grow up. At *U.S. News*, we wanted to find out if any communities like that already existed—and if so, where they were located. So we dug into our database of 2,000 different places all across the country and pinpointed the locales that met these criteria. We then examined these communities more closely to determine which places offered the best combination of safe neighborhoods, fun activities, and top-notch educators.



Our selections appear below, in our list of America's 10 Best Places to Grow Up:

**Madison, Ala.:** Of the roughly 43,000 residents in the friendly, churchgoing town of Madison, Ala., about 12,000 are under 18 years old. And this bedroom community of Huntsville, Ala., offers no shortage of outlets to keep these young folks active. "There is an event almost every weekend—whether it is in Madison,

Huntsville, or Madison County—that families can attend," says Paul Finley, the mayor of Madison. Children can take advantage of the area's expansive outdoor amenities: watching beavers plunge into Bradford Creek or rabbits dart through the 130-acre Rainbow Mountain Trails park. And if they behave well enough, perhaps some lucky children can even persuade their mom and dad to send them to Space Camp at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in nearby Huntsville.