

How to Talk to Your Child

Tips for discussing child safety

Who?

You. A parent is the best person to teach a child about personal safety

What?

Effective personal safety skills

- Smart thinking
- Strong character
- Sticking together

When?

Now. Age and maturity matter

- There is no perfect age when parents should begin teaching children about personal safety
- A child's ability to comprehend and practice safety skills is affected by age, educational, and developmental levels.

How?

Listen to your children

- Know your children's daily activities and habits
- Listen to what they like and what they don't like
- Encourage open communication. Let your children know they can talk to you about any situation.
- Reassure your children that their safety is your #1 concern.

Teach your children.

- Set boundaries about places they may go, people they may see, and things they may do.
- Reinforce the importance of the "buddy system."
- It's OK to say NO—tell your children to trust their instincts.

Get involved.

- Know where your children are at all times.
- Your children should check in with you if there is a change in plans.
- There is no substitute for your attention and supervision.

Practice safety skills with your child.

- Rehearse safety skills so that they become second nature.

What You Can Do To Help Your Child

Tips for parents to help their children stay safe

Safety at Home

- Children should know their full name, home phone number and how to use the telephone. Post your contact information where your children will see it: office phone number, cell phone, pager, etc.
- Children should have a trusted adult to call if they're scared or have an emergency.
- Choose babysitters with care. Obtain references from family, friends, and neighbors. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was, and listen carefully to their responses.

Safety in the Neighborhood

- Make a list with your children of their neighborhood boundaries, choosing significant landmarks.
- Interact regularly with your neighbors. Tell your children whose homes they are allowed to visit.
- Don't drop your children off alone at malls, movie theatres, video arcades, or parks.
- Teach your children that adults should not approach children for help or directions. Tell your children that if they are approached by an adult, they should stay alert because this may be a "trick."
- Never leave children unattended in an automobile. Children should never hitchhike or approach a car when they don't know and trust the driver.
- Children should never go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.

Safety at School

- Be careful when you put your child's name on clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes or bicycle license plates. If a child's name is visible, it may put them on a "first name" basis with an abductor.
- Walk the route to and from school with your children, pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they're being followed or need help. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes to school, using main roads and avoiding shortcuts or isolated areas. If your children take a bus, visit the bus stop with them and make sure they know which bus to take.