



TEACHING KIDS TO BE SAFE

THIS PACKET INCLUDES:

- TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT STRANGERS
- AGE-SPECIFIC SAFETY STRATEGIES
- WAYS TO PROACTIVELY TEACH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SAFETY
- SAFETY RULES AND SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE ON THEIR OWN
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- RESOURCES

Just telling children about safety or just showing children what to do is not enough. When we just talk to children about danger, their raised awareness can actually raise their level of anxiety. Young people learn best by actively participating. Practicing children's personal safety skills increases their confidence and competence. It is important to do this in a way that is not scary, but is fun.

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TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT STRANGERS

Stranger danger" is an idea that can increase anxiety and teaches kids what not to do as opposed to teaching them what they should do when dealing with a potential threat. Instead, we can talk about **stranger safety**. Rather than focusing on the bad things that sometimes happen, **focus on teaching and practicing the skills and behaviors you want your children to use to stay safe with strangers**. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children says that it is much more beneficial to children to help them build the confidence and self-esteem they need to stay as safe as possible in any potentially dangerous situation they encounter, rather than teaching them to be wary of strangers or "on the lookout" for a particular type of person

AGE-SPECIFIC SAFETY STRATEGIES

Conversations should begin at an early age, with information tailored to the age of your child and adjusted over time. Discuss safety issues in a positive, open and reassuring manner, modeling a calm but realistic problem-solving style. A matter-of-fact approach will make your child aware that they are capable of dealing with life's realities. Even the youngest child can be taught simple rules about personal safety, such as their whole name, address, and phone number, the names of their parents, who to call in an emergency, and how to use the phone to call 911. Here are some points to keep in mind:

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Preschoolers (ages 3 to 5) are inquisitive, but they're focused on themselves. Since they're not apt to be tuned in to the possible motivations of others, they may be easily fooled. Teach your young child simple facts such as their name and address. They can learn about expected behavior in different situations through games and dramatic play.

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Elementary school-age children (ages 6 to 9) are concerned with issues of right and wrong and can learn basic safety rules. Since they want to cooperate and to please adults, they may be tricked by a seemingly tempting situation. At this age, children learn best through concrete examples, role-playing, and repetition of rules.

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Tweens and teens (ages 10 and up) become more capable of judging the consequences of a potentially dangerous situation. They are likely to be in unsupervised situations more often and are influenced by their peers, and therefore, they may think they should act "cool." Your child still benefits from ongoing discussions of risks, using real-life situations as examples.



WAYS TO PROACTIVELY TEACH YOU CHILD ABOUT SAFETY

- Help kids come up with specific examples of people they know well and people they don't
- Make sure your child knows your phone number
- Teach your child how to use your cell phone in case of an emergency
- Rather than “don't talk to strangers” teach your child that in emergency situations it is okay to ask strangers for help. Focus on “do not go anywhere with strangers”.
 - instruct your child to never go anywhere, get in a car, answer questions, or accept anything from strangers - even if the person seems friendly. Stress the fact that strangers shouldn't be asking children for help or giving them things. Remind them that it's sometimes okay, however, to ask strangers for help. Children should know that certain people, although strangers, can be sources of help — a police officer, a mall security person, a store salesperson, or a parent with children.
- When you go out, practice identifying safe places and people your child can go to if they ever get lost or find themselves in a potentially dangerous situation.
 - Point out the check out lines, security guards, waiters, customer service areas, families with children, etc. "If you lose me in the grocery store, go to where we pay for things and tell them you're lost, tell them your name, and don't move from that spot until I come to get you."
- Develop a code word that your child asks for when getting picked up by another adult to ensure that this is a valid situation
 - For example, if you ask a friend to pick up your child from school because your car broke down your child will ask this person for the secret word to ensure this is a safe person to leave with

CONTINUE



- Encourage your child to trust their intuition and to take action when they sense they are in danger. Tell your child not to worry about being polite and to make a lot of noise.
 - Teach the NO-GO-TELL system. Your child should:
 1. Say NO if someone tries to touch them or makes them feel scared or uncomfortable,
 2. GO quickly way from the situation
 3. TELL a trusted adult.
- Role-play to teach, not to scare. "What if?" questions are an opportunity to practice. Role-playing can be the key to teaching kids, especially younger children, how to handle tricky situations.
 - Act out with your child what to do if they are approached while alone in the park. (For example, they could move close to the nearest parent who's there with kids.)
 - Tell your child, "If you're by yourself or with friends, and you're approached by someone you don't know, stop what you're doing, stand up, and stay at least an arm's reach away from that person. Demonstrate exactly what that means.
 - If a person drives up in a car and asks for directions to the nearest grocery store, tell your child to take a step back and point to where it is. But if the individual gets out of the car, instruct your child to take several steps back, turn around, and go inside the house or school to get an adult.
 - Make it a conversation in the area where there could be a potential threat. For example, when picking your child up from school ask "What if someone you don't know comes to pick you up at school or at a playground? What if they say I sent them?" or when you are at the park you might ask "What if someone came up to you and asked for your help in finding a lost pet? Or ask if you want to do something that sounds fun?" Practice these and other scenarios on a regular basis to reinforce safety concepts.



SAFETY RULES FOR CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE ON THEIR OWN

NO



- A stranger is just someone I don't know and can look like anybody.
- The rules are different when I am with an adult who is taking care of me and when I am on my own. When I am on my own, my job is to check first with the adult in charge before I let a stranger get close to me, talk to me, or give me anything.
- If I am old enough to be out on my own without an adult to ask, it is safer to be where there are other people close by to get help if I need it.
- I do not give personal information to a stranger or to someone who makes me feel uncomfortable.
- It is OK to get help from strangers if an emergency is happening to me, and there is no one close by that I know.
- My job is to check first with the adult in charge before I go anywhere with anyone (a stranger or someone I know). I will tell the adult in charge where I am going, who will be with me, and what I will be doing.
- I will have a safety plan for how to get help anywhere I go.
- I will know what my family's safety rules are for children answering the door, being on the phone, and being on the internet.

NO



TO BE ABLE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES, CHILDREN NEED TO PRACTICE THESE SKILLS:



- How to stand and walk with awareness, calm, and respectful confidence
- How to move away and stay out of reach from someone approaching them
- How to walk away from a stranger without waiting even if that person is being very nice
- How to check first even when someone they know and trust says not to
- How to get help from a busy or insensitive adult if they are lost or scared
- How to make noise, run, and get to safety in case of an emergency
- What to say and do if a stranger approaches them at home

NO



SAFETY RULES WITH PEOPLE KIDS KNOW

- I belong to myself—my body, my time, my spirit—ALL of me. Touch for play, teasing, or affection has to be both people's choice and it has to be safe.
- Except for my doctor, no one should touch me in my private areas (the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit).
- No one should ask me to touch them in their private areas.
- I do not have to let what other people say control how I feel.
- Anything that bothers me should not have to be a secret.
- If I have a problem, I need to tell an adult I trust and keep on telling until I get help.
- It is **never** too late to get help.

TO BE ABLE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES, CHILDREN NEED TO PRACTICE THESE SKILLS:

- Saying "No" to unwanted or inappropriate behavior using polite clear words, eye contact, and assertive body language
- Persisting even when someone uses bribes, hurt feelings, or power to try to pressure them into doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable
- Protecting themselves from hurtful words
- Verbal choices for getting out of potentially dangerous situations
- Getting the attention of busy adults and telling the details about situations that make them confused or uncomfortable





RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- WWW.KIDPOWER.ORG
- WWW.KIDPOWER.ORG/LIBRARY/ARTICLES/
- [HTTPS://SOLDNOMORE.ORG](https://SOLDNOMORE.ORG)
- [HTTPS://WWW.VERYWELLFAMILY.COM/PROTECTING-AGAINST-CHILD-PREDATORS-620502](https://WWW.VERYWELLFAMILY.COM/PROTECTING-AGAINST-CHILD-PREDATORS-620502)

YOU CAN FIND OUT IF ANY REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS ARE LIVING IN YOUR ZIP CODE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE'S NATIONAL SEX OFFENDER PUBLIC WEBSITE: **WWW.NSOPW.GOV**

If you would like to learn more about our programs or support the efforts of Tucson's Rising Phoenix and our 501(c)(3) in helping Tucson's youth, please visit our website

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