

## WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN DO

### at school and at home

#### **School Tips:**

Always TAKE A FRIEND when walking or riding your bike to and from school. Stay with a group while waiting at the bus stop. It's safer and more fun to be with your friends.

If anyone bothers you while going to or from school, get away from that person, and TELL a trusted adult like your parents or teacher.

If an adult approaches you for help or directions, remember grownups needing help should not ask children for help; they should ask other adults.

If someone you don't know or feel comfortable with offers you a ride, say NO.

If someone follows you, get away from him or her as quickly as you can. Always be sure to TELL your parents or a trusted adult what happened.

If someone tries to take you somewhere, quickly get away and yell, "This person is trying to take me away!" or "This person is not my father (mother)!"

If you want to change your plans after school, always CHECK FIRST with your parents. Never play in parks, malls, or video arcades by yourself.

If you go home alone after school, check to see that everything is okay before you go in. Once inside, call your parents to let them know that you are okay. Make sure you follow your "Home Alone" tips.

Trust your feelings. If someone makes you feel scared or uncomfortable, get away as fast as you can and TELL a trusted adult.

---

#### **Home Alone Tips for Teens:**

Check out the house before entering. Go to a safe place to call for help if something doesn't seem right.

Lock the door.

Call your mom or dad when you get home to let them know you're safe.

Never tell callers that your parents aren't home. Instead say that he or she can't come to the phone and offer to take a message.

Don't open the door for or talk to anyone who comes to your home unless that person is a trusted family friend or relative and your mom or dad has said it is okay.

---

It's important to get to school safely and on time. McGruff's tips for K to 8:

Work out a safe route to school with your parents. Choose the quickest way with the fewest street crossings and use intersections with crossing guards. Stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields, and other places where there aren't many people around.

Whenever you can, walk to and from school with a friend, neighbor, brother, or sister. Don't go by yourself.

If you bike or skate to school, wear a helmet. And don't forget to lock up your bike with a sturdy lock wherever you leave it.

Don't talk to strangers, go anywhere with them, or take anything from them.

Know your phone number and address. If you have trouble remembering them, write them down and keep them in a safe place.

---

### **Staying Safe when Going Out:**

- Always make sure you have a safe way home at night whether you get a ride or have somebody meet you;
- Make sure someone always knows where you are going and when you will be back, even if they only have a general idea it is better than nothing;
- Being alone at night is never a good idea when traveling outside. It is always a good idea to go out in a group or at least with one other person;
- Avoid isolated areas at night since that is where you are the most vulnerable. Do not take unnecessary shortcuts at night that are out of the way and could be potentially dangerous;
- If you have a cell phone, it is a good idea to bring it with you so you have easy access in case you need to make a call;
- Carry extra money for a taxi in case you get stuck for a ride;
- Don't travel with people that you don't know well or trust. They may put you in a situation that you don't want to be in;
- If you are walking at night, stay alert to your surroundings. In addition, you should also convey with your body language that you know where you are going and don't want to be bugged (keep your head up, walk purposefully);
- If you live in an apartment building, don't get into an elevator if you don't feel safe;
- If you are taking the bus, sitting near the driver so you are not isolated at the back of the bus can be a good idea;

**If you are traveling in a car, there are still a few precautions you should take:**

- Keep all your windows and doors locked;
- Try and park in a non-isolated, lit area;
- Have your keys ready before you approach your car. Have them in hand before you leave the building you are coming from as having to fish around in your pocket or purse can leave you vulnerable for just enough time for something dangerous to happen while you are not paying attention.
- Although it seems obvious, don't hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker. In either situation, the person is someone you don't know and can be a potential danger;
- Be sure to have a cell phone in case you need to make an emergency phone call from the car.

**FOR STAFF/TEACHERS**

- NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION!

Teaching Kids to Be Safe Without Making Them Scared

Tips for Safety with Strangers and People Children Know

*Written by Irene van der Zande, Kidpower Founder and Executive Director*

---

*Through our years of experience in Kidpower, we know that children's personal safety skills, when supported, can help them stay safe with most people most of the time. This article is from [The Kidpower Book for Caring Adults](#), a comprehensive guide about personal safety, self-protection, confidence, and advocacy for young people.*

***You can teach children to be safe without scaring them – You just need to know how.***

Young people are at risk of assault, abduction, and abuse even in caring families, schools, and communities. Skills and knowledge are the keys to keeping kids safe. The good news is that there are simple and effective ways of teaching children how to protect themselves that will work most of the time.

Parents, teachers, and other caregivers need to know that their children are more likely to be harmed by someone they know than by a stranger. Children need to have clear safety rules both for strangers when they are out on their own and for setting boundaries with people they know.

Anyone can be a child molester—a neighbor, a relative, a family friend, a youth group leader, a teacher, even another child. The best way to protect your children's personal safety is know what is happening with them. Make the time to ask them often, "Is there anything you've been wondering or worrying about that you haven't told me?" and to listen to their answers with patience and respect.

**Children need to understand that there are different safety rules when they are not in the care of their adult and when they are on their own. Children who are only a short distance away from an adult in charge even for a few minutes are on their own. They don't need to worry. They just need to know what to do.**

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. Your child can learn with you, and in programs such as Kidpower.

### **Kidpower Tips for Talking to Your Kids About Strangers**

"Stranger danger" is an idea that can increase anxiety and make it harder for us to figure out ways of helping our children stay safe.

Instead, at Kidpower we talk about stranger safety. Rather than focusing on the bad things that sometimes happen, we encourage parents and caregivers to focus on teaching and practicing the skills and behaviors they want their children to use to stay safe with strangers.

**Be sure that you are calm yourself when you talk to kids about strangers. If you sound anxious, they will pick up on that.** Talking about "stranger danger" or focusing on scary stories can increase fear and anxiety for everyone. Instead, tell kids in a matter-of-fact way that you believe that most people are GOOD, and that this means that most strangers are good, but that a few people have problems that might cause them to hurt kids.

Tell children that they do NOT have to worry about strangers if they **follow the safety rules**. If children are by themselves, the safety rule is to come and check with an adult first before getting close to or talking to anyone they don't know well. Help kids come up with specific examples of people they know well and people they don't.

### **Kidpower Safety Rules for Children when They Are on their Own**

- Most people are good. This means most strangers are good.
- 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.

To Be Able to Follow These Rules, Children Need to Practice These Kidpower 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

In light of suspicious activity in neighboring school districts, please review the following safety tips with your children.

- Don't talk to strangers.
- Don't take anything from strangers.
- Don't go anywhere with someone you don't know.
- Stay more than an arm's reach from strangers. If you are approached by a stranger, seek help immediately.
- Trust your instincts, if you feel you are being followed or something is not right, seek help immediately.
- Use the buddy system, avoid walking anywhere alone.
- Review contact telephone numbers and home safety practices.
- When seeking help, always go to a trusted adult – teacher, coach, police officer, other parent, or older siblings.
- If a stranger grabs you, do everything you can to stop him or her from pulling you away. Drop to the ground, kick, hit, bite, and scream. Do whatever it takes to attract the attention of others who can help you. If someone is dragging you away, scream, "this is not my dad," or "this is not my mom."