

Teach your child how to talk to strangers

AGE: For younger children, particularly those from speaking age to age ten.

OVERVIEW: Have your young children practice talking to strangers in a safe environment. Allow them to discuss how they feel about the situation. Help them think of strategies for future interactions.

OBJECTIVE:: Give children the ability to talk to the right strangers if they ever are in a situation where they are lost, alone, or in danger.

RESOURCES / MATERIALS: Look for situations where you can easily observe your child and be nearby. Find a place afterward where you can talk about what happened.

ACTIVITIES / PROCEDURES: Start with easier situations for your child and then make them more challenging (you may need her to do each more than once for practice):

1. Have her approach a stranger and ask for the time.
2. Have her approach a stranger to ask directions (i.e., to the nearest ice cream place).
3. Have her enter a store with you nearby to buy gum or candy.
4. Have her enter a store by herself to buy some gum or candy.
5. Think of your own relevant situations.

DISCUSSION: After each situation, ask your child:

1. Why she chose who she chose.
2. How the exchange went.
3. If she felt comfortable with the person she spoke with.
4. If that person was comfortable with her approach.
5. What if anything, she could have done differently.

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU:

Teach your child to pick a woman. Women are more likely than men to become emotionally invested in your child and are statistically almost never sexual predators. Moreover, women are almost always around and easy to find.

Teaching children to choose someone rather than wait for someone to choose them will be a useful lesson their whole lives.

These suggestions are based on [Gavin de Becker's](#) best-selling book [Protecting the Gift](#).

University Place Police



Personal Safety Tips For Children

University Place Police
Public Safety
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Family Rules



Establishing a system of “family rules” about personal safety can be good way to teach children to distinguish between safe and non-safe situations. Many families already have rules about bedtime, TV watching, chores, etc. By adopting rules about personal safety, parents can teach good habits through reinforcement and repetition without generating excessive fear. The following are suggestions for personal safety rules that can be incorporated into a family routine.

Inside Rules

-Kids should know their complete home address, telephone number including area code and parents’ first and last names.

-If kids are old enough to answer the phone they should know how to call police 9-1-1. Practice with receiver button taped down.

-Kids should be taught never to reveal any personal name (their name, school, age, etc.) or family information over the phone unless permission has been given by parent.

-If kids are home alone and answer a phone call for the absent parent, they should say “she can’t come to the phone right now,” and take a message or tell the caller to try later—don’t make excuses, they sound phony.

-It’s OK not to answer the phone, or to work out a code (ring twice, hang up and call again) so a parent can check on a child that is home alone.

-Kids are old enough to answer the door when they are old enough to check the identity of the person at the door WITHOUT opening it.

-Kids should help their parents make sure doors that should be locked are locked.

Outside Rules

-Establish a system of accountability. Learn the full names of your kids’ friends, their parents’ names, addresses and phone numbers. Check to verify the accuracy if you get the information from your kids. When your child is at a friend’s home, who else is present? Parents? Older kids? Other neighbors? No one?

-Know your child’s routes to and from school, play and errands. Insist they stick to the same route—no shortcuts! If you have to look for them, you will know where to begin.

-Kids should be taught never to go anywhere without parental permission. This includes getting permission a second time if plans change and calling to check before going from one friend’s home to another location.

-Teach kids alternatives; if they are bothered or followed on the playground, walking to friends’ home, school or store, where do they go? Walk these common routes with your child and look for choices.

-Kids’ best defenses are their voices and their legs. Teach them to run away from someone who is bothering them while yelling to attract as much attention as possible.

-Teach kids not to approach cars that stop to ask for help. Most legitimate adults would not ask a young child for directions. If the car follows them or the driver gets out they should run away and yell.