

25 ways to make kids safer

to learn more about child safety, visit www.take25.org.



Once kids are able to talk, you can begin teaching them some basic safety essentials.

AT HOME

1. Teach your children their full names, address, and home phone number. Make sure they know your name.
2. Make sure your children know how to reach you at work or on your cell phone.
3. Teach your children how and when to use 911.
4. Make sure your children have a trusted adult to call if they're scared or have an emergency.
5. Instruct children to keep the door locked and not open the door to talk to anyone when they are home alone. Set rules with your children about having visitors over when you're not home and how to answer the telephone.
6. 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 children how the experience with the caregiver was and listen carefully to their responses.

ON THE NET

7. Learn about the Internet. The more you know about how the Web works, the better prepared you are to teach your children about potential risks.
8. Place the family computer in a common area, rather than a child's bedroom. Also, monitor their time spent online and the websites they've visited.
9. Use privacy settings on social networking sites to limit contact with unknown users.
10. Make sure screen names don't reveal too much about your children.

AT SCHOOL

11. Don't display your children's names on clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes, or bicycle license plates. When children's names are visible, it may put them on a first-name basis with someone who means them harm.
12. Remind kids to take a friend whenever they walk or bike to school.
13. 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. If your children ride a bus, visit the bus stop with them to make sure they know which bus to take.

OUT AND ABOUT

14. Take your children on a walking tour of the neighborhood and tell them whose homes they may visit without you.
15. Tell your children to get you if they come across a dangerous object or situation.
16. Teach your children to ask permission before leaving home.
17. Remind your children not to walk or play alone outside.
18. Teach your children not to approach any vehicle, occupied or not, unless they know the owner and are accompanied by a trusted adult.
19. Remind your children it's OK to say NO to anything that makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
20. Explain to your children not to go near pools or other bodies of water without adult supervision. All pools your children attend should have a visible lifeguard on duty. If you have a pool at home, establish appropriate swimming hours and supervision.
21. Set up "what if" situations and ask your children how they would respond. "What if you fell off your bike and you needed help? Whom would you ask?"
22. During family outings, establish a central, easy-to-locate spot to meet for check-ins or should you get separated.
23. Teach your children to check in with you if there is a change of plans.
24. Teach your children how to locate help at theme parks, sports stadiums, shopping malls, and other public places. Also, identify those people who are safe to ask for help, such as law enforcement, security guards and store clerks with nametags.
25. Practice safety skills so that they become second nature to your children. While you don't want to scare your children, it is important to make sure they are aware of potential dangers, so that they can be prepared to avoid them, or confidently deal with them as they happen.