

A Few Tips to Keep Kids Safer In the Home and In the Community

1. CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER TELL CALLERS THEY ARE HOME ALONE. Arrange to have a neighbor or trusted adult they can call if they are scared or have an emergency. Always keep these numbers by the phone for easy access.
2. SET GROUND RULES FOR COMPUTER USE. Make sure to set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer and Internet use by your children. Computers and online services are great learning tools but bad babysitters. Teach your children to never give out personal information such as the school he or she attends or home address. Keep your computer in an open area of your house where you can see what sights you child is going to. Learn how to check where your child has been on the computer.
3. ALWAYS KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN ARE. Have them check with you before they go anywhere or do anything. Ask for regular check-ins with you or a trusted adult when you're not with them, but remember that nothing can take the place of your attention and supervision of your children.
4. THERE'S SAFETY IN NUMBERS. Teach your child to try and always take a friend when playing or going somewhere. If at all possible, limit the time children are alone in a public restroom or team up with another parent to help with supervision.
5. STAY ON FAMILIAR PATHS. Children should never take shortcuts without their parent's permission.
6. EMPOWER YOUR CHILD TO TRUST THEIR INSTINCTS. Teach your child that they have the power to say NO to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others. Teach them to immediately tell you if this happens and reassure them its okay to talk about.
7. ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION. Take the time to talk to your children and learn how to be an active listener.
8. BE INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES. As an active parent, you'll have better opportunities to observe how adults in charge interact with your children. Speak up if you feel the adults in charge aren't taking your child's well being into account.
9. PUT NON-IDENTIFIABLE CLOTHES ON CHILDREN. Kids should never wear clothes or carry items with their name on the outside. Someone may try to trick them by calling their name.
10. PRACTICE USING SAFETY SKILLS WITH YOUR CHILDREN. Teach them not to panic and to identify the safest place to go. They can also contact a low risk adult to ask for help reuniting them with you. This person could be a uniformed security or law enforcement officer, store clerk with a nametag, a parent with children, or the person in the information/customer service booth. Children should never search for you by themselves, and should never, ever go off alone with anyone who claims to be trying to reunite them with you.

These tips were provided by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to raise awareness about child sexual exploitation and help combat its long term, negative effects. For more information about NCMEC and for free copies of child safety information, call its toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST or order online at www.missingkids.com.