10 ways to keep children safe

1. In most situations, children under about eight years old shouldn't be out alone, especially in busy areas. Even when out playing with other children, they need to be kept in the care and sight of an adult or a much older child who is mature and trustworthy.

2. Never leave young children in unsupervised play areas in shops or parks. And don’t leave them alone in the car or outside a shop, not even for a few minutes.

3. If you’re in a crowded place, keep children in a pram or buggy, hold hands tightly, or use reins. Don’t walk for ahead of small children who may get out of sight.

4. Remember, it only takes a moment for toddlers to wander off.

5. As soon as children are able to understand, teach them their full name, address and telephone number. Practice these with them until you’re sure they can remember.

6. You can start teaching children simple rules about personal safety as young as two or three. Tell them clearly that they must never go off with anyone, not even someone they know, without asking you or the adult who is looking after them. Turn it into a game you can play when you pick them up from nursery.

7. Teach older children safe ways of crossing roads, going shopping and asking adults for directions. And let them practice these with you until you are sure that they have understood when. Where they are mature enough to be out alone, make sure they tell you where they are going and whom they are going with. Be back.

When to take action

Keeping children safe is everybody’s business. It can be difficult to know when to act and what to do, especially when another adult is involved. You may feel embarrassed or afraid of the adult’s reaction. And you certainly don’t want to make things worse for the child. The important thing is to try and stop children being hurt. It’s better to look like a busybody than to ignore a child who may be in danger.

✓ If you see a distressed child that you think is being bullied, stop and ask why the child is upset. Get help from other adults passing by if you need to. If you’re still concerned, get a good description of those involved and phone the police. Don’t give up until you’re sure the child is safe.

✓ It can be even harder to take action if you see a child being ill-treated by an adult. Sadly, many people are afraid to think that it isn’t their business. Unless we are brave enough to act, attitudes will never change and children will continue to be hurt. Offer to help. If you feel it is in need and positive, you will be doing the right thing. If your offer of help is refused but you are really worried about the child’s safety, get a good description and ring the police.

✓ If you aren’t able to help a family you know who may be in trouble, or if you know of a child who may be in danger, please ring the local police, social services or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline at once. (Call 0800 800 505 or Textphone 0800 536 0536.) The NSPCC takes action to protect children. We will listen, advise and respond to what you say.

For more information

Child Accident Prevention Trust
18-20 Ealing Broadway London W5 1AL Tel: 0181 260 3268

Kiswadee 2 Coronation Gardens London SW1Y 0DD Tel: 0171 730 3106

Kids’ Clubs Network
Bellevue House 3 Market Crescent London E14 9L2 Tel: 0171 621 0712

Parricles 3rd Floor, Chapel House 5 Hanover Mews London EC1N 8RQ Tel: 0171 935 6222

NSPCC
National Centre 43 Coppermound Place London EC2A 3H9 Tel: 0171 823 2500

Keeping children safe when out with or out alone

Out alone

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU TEACH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SAFETY, REMEMBER THE LIMITS OF THEIR AGE AND MATURITY.

Children’s Charities

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free, 24-hour service which provides information to parents and others concerned about a child at risk of abuse. If you are concerned about a child and do not know who to talk to for help, or if family or other pressures are putting a child in danger, or

Greedily to children must stop. FULL STOP

(Ref: 34/11/99)

NSPCC, 43 Coppermound
London EC2A 3H9
Tel: 0171 823 2500

Registered Charity: 218110

Please call us on 0800 800 505 or Textphone 0800 536 0536.

Greedily to children must stop. FULL STOP

From April 2000, 0171 telephone code will change to 020 7.

Do not keep it to yourself

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Are your children safe?

This leaflet gives practical advice on keeping children safe outside the home. It also encourages you to think about ways of making the world a safer place for children. Acting to stop them being hurt, or complaining about unsafe roads or playgrounds may not always be easy, but unless we are prepared to, things will never change.

Most high streets weren’t designed for families with young children. Many things can make it difficult to keep them safe - feeling stressed, too many cars, crowded buses, and shops that don’t welcome children or pushchairs.

It is difficult to set an exact age when it’s safe for children to be out alone. Around the age of eight or nine they may want to be more independent and be out with friends, but you must first make absolutely sure they can cope and have developed road sense. Children who are less mature, or those with a disability, may not be safe out alone until they’re much older.

With older children, the problems are just as worrying. How can you protect them from harm, yet allow them enough freedom to become confident and independent?

Getting the balance right isn’t always easy, but there is a lot parents can do to prepare children for being out on their own.

How can you stop toddlers from wandering off in a shopping centre? What should you tell children to do if they get lost? When are they old enough to go out on their own? And what should you do if you see a distressed child?

Read on for some practical tips and advice...

Now let’s look at it from the children’s point of view...

It is never safe to leave a young child alone in a public place. The risk may be small, but it would only take a minute for him to be abducted. And never ask people you don’t know to ‘keep an eye’ on him. However, well-meaning they may seem, you can’t know that they can be trusted. Remember too that children don’t understand adult pressures or timing. Slapping or shouting will only make your child more upset and his behaviour worse. Why not include him as much as you can in the shopping, by letting him put things in the basket, for example? Rain or a safety harness could give him a safe break from the buggy, if he suddenly seems to want to walk. Think about shopping later in the evening when a partner or friend may be able to babysit.

Children need freedom, exercise and the chance to be independent, but in most situations it is not safe to allow children this young to be completely out of sight, or to be sent shopping alone. What if they were hurt at the playground and unable to call for help, or they tried to cross a busy road and got run over? Some children may get worried or have arguments that they can’t sort out on their own. There is also the small possibility that they might be bullied by older children or approached by an adult who could harm them. If possible, let them play where you can see them from the window, or try to go to the park with them.

Remember, try to be aware of children’s needs and their understanding of time, and don’t always expect them to fit in with yours.