

KNOW THE RULES®...

Abduction and Harm Prevention Tips for Parents and Guardians



Many parents and guardians feel they are faced with new and unprecedented challenges when trying to keep their children safer in today's fast-paced society. To help minimize risks to your younger children, they should be supervised by you or another trusted adult, a person you have come to rely on and with whom you and your children feel comfortable. Parents and guardians should teach older children how to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations. You should not expect your children to rely solely on their judgment about people, even if the person is someone known to you or your family. It is also important not to confuse children with the concept of "strangers." They do not have the same understanding of who a stranger is as an adult might. The "stranger-danger" message is not effective, as danger to children is often much greater from someone they or you know. No matter whom the person is, whether known or unknown, the important message to teach children is to get out of potentially dangerous situations as quickly as possible.

The thought of your children being abducted may leave you feeling frightened and unsure about how to best protect them. As a result of the role of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) as the nation's clearinghouse regarding missing and sexually exploited children, NCMEC has learned a great deal about ways in which families can better protect their children. In attempted-abduction incidents analyzed by NCMEC, 43% involved children between the ages of 10 and 14; 68% involved the suspect driving a vehicle; and 84% involved a child who did something proactive to escape the would-be abductor including walking, running, or pulling away; yelling; kicking; attracting attention; and/or otherwise resisting.¹

The analysis also revealed the five most common tricks used by individuals attempting to abduct a child included offering a child a ride, offering the child candy or sweets, showing the child an animal or asking for help finding an animal, offering the child money, and asking the child for directions.

The tips noted below will help families keep children safer.

- 1. Instruct your children to always take a friend when going places and stay with a group while attending school outings and/or standing at the bus stop.** For older children who walk to school, practice walking the route to and from school with them. Have your children become familiar with your neighborhood by pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they are being followed or need help. Always supervise younger children or make sure there is another trusted adult present to supervise them if you cannot. Teach your children to always stay in well-lit areas, never take shortcuts, and never go into isolated areas.
- 2. Teach your children the appropriate steps to take if approached or followed.** If anyone tries to grab your children, tell them to draw attention to themselves and loudly yell "This person is trying to take me," or "This person is not my father/mother." Instruct your child to make every effort to escape by walking, running, or pulling away; yelling; kicking; attracting attention; and/or otherwise resisting. Tell your children if they are ever followed by someone to get away from that person as quickly as possible. They should go in the opposite direction than the one in which the person is traveling and quickly try to get to a spot where a trusted adult can help them. Advise your children to tell you or another trusted adult what happened.
- 3. Teach your children it is more important to get out of a threatening situation than it is to be polite.** Children should be taught just because someone tries to engage them in conversation doesn't mean they should talk to that person or forget their safety rules. Tell them, if anyone bothers them or makes them feel sad, scared, or confused, to trust their feelings and immediately get away from that person. Remind them it is OK to be impolite and say no.

KNOW THE RULES...

For Going To and From School More Safely



Every day millions of children take to the streets and highways to get to and from school.¹ For many children this experience is a new one, and they may not understand or be able to use the safety rules.

Young children do not have the same frame of reference for safety as adults do. They may not look before they leap, which is why it is so important for families to supervise young children and practice safety skills with their older children to make certain they really know and understand them.

In an analysis of attempted nonfamily abductions the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children found approximately 32 percent of attempted abductions happened when a child was going to or from school or a school related activity.² The tips noted below will help prepare for a safer journey.

Tips for Parents or Guardians



1. Instruct your children to always **TAKE A FRIEND**, always stay in well-lit areas, never take shortcuts and never go into isolated areas. Teach them to stay aware of their surroundings and observe all traffic rules in place to more safely share the roads and sidewalks with others.
2. 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. Make the walk to and from school a "teachable moment" and chance to put their skills to the test. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes to and from school. If your children wait for a bus, wait with them or make arrangements for supervision at the bus stop.
3. If anyone bothers your children or makes them feel scared, uncomfortable or confused, while going to or from school, teach your children to trust their feelings, immediately get away from that person and **TELL** you or another trusted adult. If an adult approaches your children for help or directions, remember grownups needing help should not ask children; they should ask other adults. Instruct your children to never approach a vehicle or accept money or gifts from anyone unless you have told them it is **OK** to accept in each instance.
4. Even though there may be safety in numbers it is still not safe for young children to walk to and from school, especially if they must take isolated routes anytime during the day or in darkness. Always provide supervision for your young children to help ensure their safe arrival to and from school.
5. Instruct your children to leave items and clothing with their name on them at home. If anyone calls out their name, teach them to not be fooled or confused. Teach your children about the tricks someone may try to use to confuse them or engage them in conversation. Children should also be taught that they do not need to be polite if approached and to get out of the situation as quickly and safely as possible.
6. Ensure current and accurate emergency contact information is on file for your children at their school. If you, or another trusted family member or friend, need to pick up your children, make sure to follow the school's departure procedures. These procedures need to include the school's confirmation of your children's departure with only those you authorize to pick them up.

Knowing My Rules for Safety

- 1. I CHECK FIRST** with my parents, guardians, or other trusted adults before going anywhere, helping anyone, accepting anything, or getting into a car.
- 2. I TAKE A FRIEND** with me when going places or playing outside.
- 3. I TELL** people "NO" if they try to touch me or hurt me. It's OK for me to stand up for myself.
- 4. I TELL** my trusted adult if anything makes me feel sad, scared, or confused.

Sometimes there are people who trick or hurt others. No one has the right to do that to you. So use these rules, and remember you are **STRONG**, are **SMART**, and have the right to be **SAFE**. Always

- **CHECK FIRST**
- **TAKE A FRIEND**
- **TELL PEOPLE "NO" IF THEY TRY TO TOUCH YOU OR HURT YOU**
- **TELL AN ADULT YOU TRUST IF ANYTHING HAPPENS**



1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)
www.missingkids.com



This project was supported by Grant No. 2009-MC-CX-K002 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® and 1-800-THE-LOST® are registered service marks of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. This document was previously published as *My 8 Rules for Safety* and *Knowing My 8 Rules for Safety*. NCMC Order #28.

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Detach and share the bookmark below with your kids!

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KNOW THE RULES®...

For Children Who Are Home Alone



In today's busy society many children are caring for themselves before or after school and at other times during the day and throughout the year.¹ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children may be left home alone for brief periods of time without adult supervision beginning in 4th or 5th grade as long as the child is comfortable being home alone.² Many families, however, face situations in which they must leave their children unsupervised for longer periods of time or at even younger ages. According to the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, most states do not have regulations or laws specifying the age at which a child is considered old enough to stay at home alone. Guidelines or recommendations, in states having them, are most often issued by Child Protective Services (CPS) and administered at the county level. For more specific information about your areas' laws or guidelines, please contact your local CPS agency. If you need help contacting your local CPS agency, call Childhelp® at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453).³

There are a number of important points families should consider prior to allowing their children to be self-supervised. Parents and guardians need to assess each child. Does he or she have the personality, self-confidence, and judgment skills to accept this responsibility? Will the experience be positive and help build and enhance the child's self-image, or will the experience promote additional anxiety in the child who may be afraid to stay alone? Having a family conference to discuss the arrangement is a good place to start. House rules, expectations of each family member, and a daily routine should be defined. At the end of the day, parents and guardians may also use the experience to have regular family meetings to help ensure the arrangement is still working and identify any needed changes. Here are some steps your family may take to help ensure children have a positive experience when home alone.

Before allowing your child to stay home alone, you should...

- Determine if there are community resources or organizations providing care or support for children who are home alone.
- Ask your child how he or she feels about being alone. Is your child afraid to be left alone, or does he or she have the maturity and initiative to want to assume that responsibility?
- Decide if you feel your child is able to follow directions and solve problems on his or her own.
- Determine how long your child will be alone, how accessible you or another trusted adult will be in case of an emergency, and the level of safety in your neighborhood. A trusted adult is a person parents/guardians have come to rely on and with whom they and their children feel comfortable. Your local law-enforcement agency may be able to provide information through crime reports including the types and incidence rates of crimes committed in your neighborhood.
- Set specific rules for your child to follow while he or she is alone, and give him or her specific instructions about how to reach you at all times. This should also include information about what to do if your child needs assistance and can't reach you right away.
 - Create practice situations for your child showing what he or she may face when home alone including what to do if the telephone rings or the electricity goes out. Make sure your child is able to explain to you the steps he or she would take to safely handle each scenario.
 - Remember you're in charge, even if it is from a distance.

If you've decided to allow your child to stay home alone, make sure he or she knows...

- His or her full name, address, and telephone number.
- Your full name, the exact name of the places where you are when not at home, and all contact information that may be used to reach you when you are not at home.
- Appropriate ways to request help in an emergency using 911 or other emergency number(s) used in your area.



KNOW THE RULES...

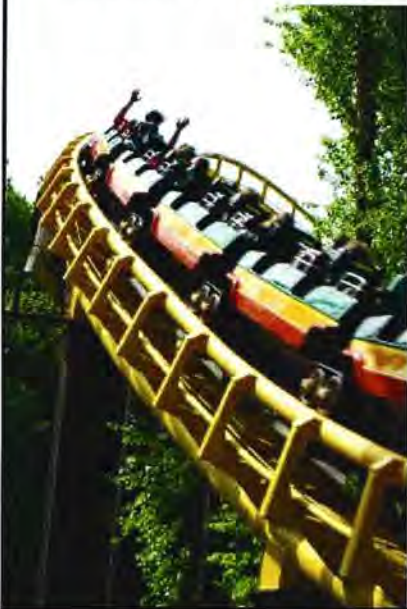
For Child Safety in AMUSEMENT OR THEME PARKS

Family outings to amusement and theme parks may be wonderful opportunities for family members to bond and spend quality time together. Visits to amusement parks often provide children with lifelong memories of "meeting" their favorite cartoon character or having their own "real-life" action adventure.

For a parent or guardian these outings may also be sources of stress and concern. Both adults and children may become distracted by the excitement of the rides and attractions. Taking the time to plan your trip with your children may help make your outing to the amusement or theme park safer and more enjoyable. Here are a few steps your family may take to help ensure happy memories.

Before going to the park, tell your children to...

- **PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION** to who they are with and where they are located in the park.
- **STAY** with others and never be alone in the park or become isolated with anyone, even characters in costume. Tell your children not to accept any prizes, offers, or gifts from anyone until they have **CHECKED FIRST** with you. Caution your children not to engage in conversation with or offer assistance to anyone until they have checked first with you.
- **TELL** you if anyone approaches them or makes them feel sad, scared, or confused. Teach your children if anyone tries to grab them to loudly yell, "This person is trying to take me" or "This person is not my father/mother."
- **TEACH** your children to **GO** to the closest "Help/Information Center" if they become lost or separated while in the park and ask the park staff members to "find my parents/guardians, and have them meet me." In the case of older children, make the "Help/Information Center" the designated meeting place. Make sure your children understand they should never search for you on their own or look for you outside the park, especially in the parking lot.



You can apply these same rules when your children are taking part in a field trip with their school or youth group. If you are not joining your children for the trip, instruct them to tell the responsible adult in charge or designated chaperone if anything makes them feel sad, scared, or confused.

As a parent or guardian you should...

- Get information about the park prior to your trip and review the park guidelines, particularly those regarding lost children. Discuss the information as a family, including what to do if lost or separated. Ask your children what they would do in certain situations and practice appropriate actions and responses with your children.