



1. One of the keys to keeping your child safe is to make sure the lines of communication are open and working. Your child must always feel that he or she can come to you with any concerns or problems, and you'll help them through it. Realize that predators certainly know how to talk with kids, and if a child is starved for that important communication, or if they feel they can't talk to a parent, it provides a predator an opportunity to exploit the situation.
 - Parents need to understand and convey the message to your child that you are their biggest advocate, that his or her safety is your number one concern. Raise your child with a strong sense of self-respect. A lonely child that is hungry for attention is just the type of child that a predator seeks.
 - As appropriate, talk to your child about sex and sexuality as a naïve child is much more vulnerable to predators. It's natural for children to be inquisitive sexually as they get older, and you should be their source for the correct answers. (*if you don't know, find out*☺)
 - Get to know your child's friends and make contact with their parents. Make sure you have phone numbers, etc. to get in touch with the parents of your child's friends.
 - Secrets are sometimes fun for kids, but secrets are also tools used by predators to force your child into keeping things from you. This is a tough issue to separate as some secrets, such as your child's friend likes someone at school or what daddy got mommy for her birthday are harmless secrets or surprises. But, as a rule, if an adult encourages your child to keep secrets from you, this is a danger sign, and your child should know to tell you immediately. A predator will often use secrets to build up trust with a child to see how much they might tell you. It may start off small like candy before dinner. Not a big deal, right? Wrong... If your child doesn't tell you about this "little secret", now a predator will continue and can end up blackmailing him or her into keeping other much more dangerous secrets. Over time this allows a predator to control their victim, and the abuse can go on for years!
 - Know where your child is going, with whom, when they will return, and how to contact them. As the parent, you can help set a good example by providing this information to your child as well, and notifying him or her if your plans change.

Communication is critical!!! It's not always easy, but work at it, and you'll be amazed at what it can do for a family.

2. At as early an age as possible, children should know and be able to repeat their address and phone number. They should also know your first name, as this will help tremendously if they ever become separated from you. As you can imagine, a page for “mommy” over the intercom isn’t very effective. You should teach your child how to use a phone to dial 911 if they ever need help.

Explain to your child that they should never tell anyone that they are home alone. If a caller asks for mom or dad, the child should simply say they are not available, and the person should call back later or if able the child can take a message. Teach your child that their safety is the most important thing, and this is one of those situations when it’s okay to “fib”. Your child should not be afraid to lie when his or her safety is at stake. This needn’t send any mixed messages to your child as they should never lie to you, but when someone else requests information or actions that could pose a danger to your child, they shouldn’t hesitate to say whatever is necessary to help protect themselves.

On a similar note: When your child may be home alone they should know to never open the door for anyone. Again this is a time when your child should know that “fibbing” is okay to help keep them safe. “Dad is in the shower, you’ll have to come back later” or other such messages are certainly appropriate. When your child is home alone, you may even decide to have him or her totally ignore someone that comes to the door or when the phone rings.

3. If you and your child become separated at the mall or at a busy fair or festival a set plan of action can prevent your child from making the wrong decision. The plan is simple: The FREEZE GAME: As soon as your child realizes they’ve become separated he or she should simply stop, stay put, and **never, ever go anywhere with anybody!** A predator looks for opportunities and a child wandering around lost, looking for a parent is a prime target. The predator simply asks the child if he or she is lost and offers to help them find mommy and daddy. The predator may even pretend to be the police and have a fake badge, but if your child knows to stay put and not go anywhere with anybody the opportunity for the potential abductor is greatly lessened. Your child should tell anyone offering to help to go find a policeman to help find you. This plan also prevents you and your child from walking in different directions looking for one another. You, as the parent, simply retrace your steps and your child should be nearby! (Parents should always carry a safety ID card of your child or simply an up to date head & shoulders picture of your child)
4. Create a “Family Code Word”! First teach your child that he or she should NEVER get in a vehicle or go with anyone without a parent’s permission. However, sometimes you may actually need to send someone to pick up your child (after school or at the park, or in an emergency). All your child has to do in this situation is ask for the person to say the Code Word. Even if your child knows the person you send, the

individual must know the Code Word or your child should run away immediately.

When possible danger warrants action, teach your child to flee in the opposite direction that the vehicle is headed. Even if the person has a gun or knife, teach your child to run. NEVER, ever get into a vehicle without your permission. If someone physically grabs your child, teach him or her to fight, kick, punch, scream, bite... do whatever is necessary to escape, this includes kicking or hitting in the groin. Teach your child to yell "This is not my daddy... help" to get people's attention. Understand that if it gets to this point your child is, literally, fighting for his or her life. If a predator does force your child into a vehicle educate your child on how to attract attention, to continue fighting, pulling wires either under the dashboard or if in the trunk, the wires connecting brake and tail lights, again whatever it takes to get out of the situation.

5. Develop "Safe Houses" in your neighborhood where your child can go in an emergency when you're not around. Neighborhood stores, firehouse, etc are usually excellent places for a child to go for help. When picking a neighbor, choose someone that you trust and that is home most of the time, such as a retired couple or stay at home mom or dad. Discuss the plan with the person(s) you choose and make sure they have all of your contact information.
6. A general rule to teach your child is that whenever an adult asks your child for help, your child should be on guard. The reality is that adults don't need a child's help, however as most kids love to help others, predators use this tactic to lure a child into circumstances that can be deadly. Tricks predators use include:
 - Can you give me directions?
 - Can you help me find my lost puppy (or kitten)?
 - Can you help me with something in my car?

You should establish a trusted adult list made up of 4 to 6 people and if anyone other than mom or dad or some on that list asks your child to do something, there should be only one answer... he or she should simply reply that they need to check with you first. It doesn't matter if they know the person or are even related to the person... "I have to check first" is the only answer to this scenario.

Other lures include:

- Can I take your picture?
- Want to play a video game? I've got (the current popular titles).

Also note: Make sure your child doesn't wear clothing or a backpack that displays the child's name. This includes the stickers for your vehicle that promote your child's activities. Understand that personalized bike license plates and such items can be used by predators to gain a child's confidence and catch them off guard.

7. Other tips to teach your children:
- Always use the “buddy system” and never go places alone.
 - Check with you first before going somewhere.
 - It’s okay to be rude to an adult that makes you suspicious or uncomfortable.
 - If threatened by someone, yell “NO”. Screaming and attracting attention by yelling “This is not my daddy” is the last thing a predator desires.
 - Be aware of your surroundings to avoid potentially dangerous situations.
 - Don’t take shortcuts off the regular path, like through alleys or woods.
 - For younger children you can explain that the parts covered by a bathing suit are private and not appropriate areas for an adult to touch.
8. Immediately stop using the adage, “Don’t talk to strangers”. This sends a confusing and incorrect message to children. For one: **93% of children sexually victimized know their abuser.** Most often it is someone the child knows or is at least familiar with that abducts or victimizes them. Secondly: They may someday need a “strangers” help. Such as in the situation that they are being forced into a car... it may very well be a stranger that saves the child’s life!

Instead of Stranger Danger, as a parent you should teach your child about what are potentially dangerous situations, how to avoid those situations, and how to react if such a situation arises. These safety rules are part of the solution, go over them thoroughly and practice different scenarios with your child, so that he or she instinctively knows how to react. Reinforce the messages at every opportunity. Fear is simply not knowing what to do, educate your children so that they don’t have to fear the world around them.