

SAFEGUARDING YOUR CHILD

Learn The Basics Of Child Protection

A Family Password

Calling For Help

A Stranger May Mean Danger

Good Touch vs. Bad Touch

About Gang Resistance

Gun Safety

About Staying Home Alone

Prevent Abduction

Build Your Child's: Self-Esteem

Protecting Your Child

A Family Password Every Family Should Have One

What is a family password? It's a word or phrase you choose in your family. Your child should never go with anyone else unless he or she can give the password. Only family members and people you trust are told the word.

Your family password should not be a common word or phrase that someone might guess. Make sure it is unusual and use it only in your family. Change the word from time to time.

Why Have A Password?

Your child will know it is safe to go with people who know the password.

How Does It Work?

Once you choose a family password, tell your child never to go with anyone who does not say the password. This is true even if the child knows the person.

For Example:

- Eric was waiting for his mom to pick him up from soccer practice. Instead, her secretary came. She said that Eric's mom had to work late and asked her to pick him up. She gave the family password, so Eric went with her.
- Angela was walking to a friend's house. Her neighbor drove up and offered her a ride. Angela asked for the family password, but the neighbor didn't know it. Angela did not get into the car.

Here are some examples of passwords:

“orange banana”

“mugglywumps”

“megabyte”

“Model T”

Teach your child: A Stranger May Mean Danger

Children tend to trust people, especially adults. Teach them to balance their trust with caution. Help them recognize threatening situations and react quickly and properly to them.

Teach Your Child Self-Protection

What people look like does not tell you whether they can be trusted, so children should learn to be careful of all strangers, both men and women. Tell your child:

- “Walk confidently and pay attention to what’s going on around you.”
- “If someone you don’t know walks or drives up to you, quickly walk away. Even if the person says your name, don’t stop.”
- “Scream and run if someone tries to grab you.”
- “Tell me or another adult you trust if anyone approaches you.”
- “If you get lost in a public place, don’t walk off to look for me. Stay put and yell for help. If you see a clerk or security guard nearby, tell that person you are lost.”

Teach Your Child: NO-GO-TELL

Children can follow three easy steps if a stranger stops them. The steps are simple to learn, even for young children.

1. **“NO”** The child should say something like “No, I can’t help you” or “No, I’m not allowed.”
2. **“GO”** The child leaves quickly running if necessary.
- **“TELL”** The child tells you or another trusted adult exactly what happened.

Teach your child: GANG RESISTANCE

Most gang members are between the ages of 13 and 21, but some are as young as 9. Teach your child about gangs while he or she is still in elementary school.

Possible Signs of Gang Involvement

- Signs of drug abuse
- Use of hand signs
- Having a new nickname
- Staying out later than usual
- Sudden drop in grades; loss of interest in school
- Suddenly having extra money
- Wanting to be overly private
- Use of words you don't know (gangs have many slang words)
- Showing a bad attitude toward family, school, and police
- Wearing clothing that is all one color or style
- Getting special haircuts, eyebrow markings, tattoos, or other marks
- Writing graffiti on folders, desks, walls, and buildings

If you need help removing your child from a gang's influence, contact: school officials, police gang units, clergy, or counselors



Checklist For Helping Your Child Refuse Gangs

- Show by your example the value of honesty, responsibility, and hard work.
- Build your child's self-esteem.
- Stress that gangs are dangerous. Gang members break the law and hurt innocent people. They damage property, use alcohol and other drugs, steal, and often have weapons.
- Teach your child to resist being bullied into joining a gang.
- Tell your child not to associate with gang members or attend parties where they will be present.
- Stay involved in your child's life; show interest in his or her schoolwork, friends, and activities.
- Provide your child with safe, positive alternatives to gangs. These include healthy family activities and community activities like sports, enrichment programs, and scouts.
- Establish guidelines for your child's personal appearance and places to go, and set a curfew. Enforce these limits.

Report any gang activity you see to school or law enforcement officials, and get involved in community efforts to combat gang activity.

Teach your child: STAYING AT HOME ALONE

Is Your Child Ready to Stay at Home Alone?

Can He or She:

- Be trusted to go straight home after school?
- Use the telephone, locks, and kitchen appliances easily?
- Handle an unexpected event without panicking?
- Follow safety rules and directions well?
- Stay alone without being afraid?



Checklist For Teaching Your Child to Be Safe When Home Alone

- Teach your child the basic safety rules in this handbook.
- Show your child how to open the window and door locks. Practice how to get out of the house if there is a fire or other emergency.
- Warn your child not to open the door to strangers for any reason.
- Practice what your child should tell people who phone. Your child should never say he or she is at home alone. The safer answer is, "My mom and (dad) can't come to the phone right now."
- Warn your child not to go into the house if a door is open or a window is broken. Instead, your child should go to a neighbor's house or a pay phone and dial 9-1-1.

Before You Leave Your Child at Home Alone

- Post phone numbers securely near the phone.
- Give your child a house key to carry in a safe place, such as in a sock or in an inside pocket. Do not hide a key outside your house or apartment.
- Set rules about what your child may and may not do while alone.
- Have your child call you or another adult to check-in. That way, you will know your child is safely at home.

Build your child's: Self-Esteem

A child's self-esteem is nurtured in a loving, supportive home where he or she feels safe and valued. A child with positive self-esteem will understand the importance of following instructions on how to stay safe and will have the confidence to practice personal safety rules.



Checklist for helping your child develop self-esteem

Your words and actions as a parent or guardian can be the most important factor in building your child's self-esteem. Here are ways you can help:

- Praise your child's efforts, as well as his or her achievements. Acknowledge your child's good deeds and acts of kindness to others.
- Pay attention when your child talks to you, and respond openly and honestly. Your example will teach your child to do the same.
- Keep your promises and expect your child to do the same.
- Be interested and involved in your child's school, friends, hobbies, and activities.
- Set a good example for your child: Do not abuse drugs or alcohol. Work to fight crime in your community. Be conscious of your own safety.
- Encourage your child to accept responsibility for his or her choices and to consider the consequences of any action before taking it.
- Check with your school or community library and local bookstores for resources to build your child's self-esteem. For very young children, there are early readers, coloring books, and activity books.

Teach your child: CALL FOR HELP

Practice these steps with your child so that he or she will have the confidence to make an Emergency Call if necessary.

1. Remember to always **STAY CALM**.
2. Dial or press 9-1-1 (If your area has a different emergency number, have your child learn it.) A dispatcher will answer for you to talk to.
3. Answer each question the dispatcher will ask you:
 - A. What is the emergency?
 - B. What is your name?
 - C. What is the address where you are?
 - D. What is the phone number where you are?
4. Do what the dispatcher tells you to do while you are waiting for emergency help to come?
5. Don't hang up the phone until the dispatcher tells you to.

Post all emergency numbers near each phone in your home.

REMEMBER

Teach your child that Emergency 9-1-1 calls made from a pay phone are **FREE**. They do not need money to make this call. Also, stress that 9-1-1 is **ONLY** for real emergencies.

Teach your child: GOOD TOUCH vs. BAD TOUCH

More children are physically and sexually abused by people they know than by strangers. That means relatives, neighbors, and friends of the family are more likely to hurt your child than a stranger is.

TALK ABOUT GOOD TOUCHES VS BAD TOUCHES

Explain to Your Child:

- "There are good touches and bad touches."
- "You are in charge of your body and who touches it."
- "You can tell the difference between touches that feel safe and good and those that feel unsafe or bad."

Give some Examples:

Examples of good touches:

- hugs
- moms and dads bathing babies and children
- a checkup by a doctor or nurse

Examples of bad touches

- someone touching the child's private parts
- someone asking the child to look at or touch their private part

Signs of Possible Physical or Sexual Abuse

- sadness or withdrawal for no known reason
- being nervous or afraid about seeing a person or being alone with him or her
- pain or soreness in the private parts
- bruises on the body for no known reason

If you notice these signs, talk to your child and try to find out the cause. If you suspect abuse, contact an expert for advice, e.g., your child's doctor, a school counselor, a school nurse, or a child protective services agency.

Teach your child how to protect himself or herself from sexual abuse. Here are some useful responses to teach children:

Teach
Your Child

WHAT TO SAY

<u>SITUATION</u>	<u>Your Child's Response Should Be</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Someone wants to touch your private parts in a way that makes you feel nervous or upset.	<p><u>"NO!"</u>*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some one asks you to take off your clothes or asks to touch your private parts.	<p><u>"NO! I WON'T DO THAT!"</u>*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Someone asks you to look at or touch their private parts.	<p><u>"NO! I DON'T WANT TO!"</u>*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Someone tells you that you will be a bad child if you don't let them touch your private parts. Or someone says you are bad if you don't look at their private parts.	<p><u>"NO! I DON'T BELIEVE THAT!"</u>*</p>

***In each instance, teach your child to give the response and then to tell you what happened right away.**

Teach Your Child: Secrets Are a No-No

- Sexual abusers often tell their victims, "What we do together is **our little secret.**" They may threaten to hurt the child if he or she tells anyone.
- Teach your child that it's OK to have secrets **with** you, but not to have secrets **from** you.
- **Say:** "tell me at once if someone touches you in a private part of your body. I love you, and I'll never punish you for telling me the truth."

Teach your child: GUN SAFETY

Think long and hard about keeping weapons in your home. A gun in the home is 40 times more likely to hurt or kill a family member than to stop a crime. Still, there are guns in about half the homes in our country. Even if you don't have a gun at home, your child may visit a friend who does. So you must teach your child about gun safety.



Checklist for Talking About Gun Safety

- Talk about guns with your child so that he or she won't play with them out of curiosity.
- Explain that the guns are dangerous weapons, not toys. Tell your child that the guns used in movies and TV shows are not real and do not really hurt anyone.
- Insist that your child follow safety rules and avoid touching or handling guns.
- Tell your child that playing with guns is forbidden. Your child should leave immediately if he or she sees someone else playing with a gun.
- Make sure that all weapons, not only guns, are stored securely where children can't get at them. Guns should be stored unloaded. Keep the bullets in a separate place. Lock them up as well.

Teach Your Child What to Do if He or She Sees a Gun

1. **Stop**
2. **Don't touch the gun**
3. **Leave the area**
4. **Tell you or another trusted adult about the gun**

How to: Prevent Abduction

The Common Lures

It is easy for strangers to trick children into helping them or going with them. This is especially true if a stranger seems nice and has a believable story. Help your child be on guard by role-playing the situations below so that your child learns to respond to them.

Remember: Most victims of child abduction are 12 and over, so do not let your guard down as children get older. Keep reinforcing safety rules and precautions.

Teach Your Child to Recognize the Common Lures

TYPE	DESCRIPTION/EXAMPLE
Bribery	Offering candy, money, toys, trading cards, or other gifts. "If you come with me, I'll give you baseball cards."
Request for Help	Asking for directions. Asking for help finding a lost puppy. "Will you show me the way to the park?" "Can you help me find my puppy in that lot over there?"
Fake Emergency	Pretending that someone in the child's family is sick or hurt to convince the child to go with the stranger. "Your mom is hurt and she sent me to get you."

Authority Figure	Pretending to be a teacher, doctor, or police officer. (This may be used together with the "Request for help" or "Fake Emergency" lure). "I'm a new teacher and I need you to show me where the school is."
Promises	Assuring the child that he or she will be famous or make money for being in a photograph or show. "If you let me take your picture in my studio, you can be in a TV commercial."

The Basics of Protecting Your Child

Teach your child simple personal safety rules as soon as he or she can talk and understand the basic concepts. Communicate openly and often with your child. Encourage him or her to talk about feelings, fears, and any unusual, scary, or uncomfortable things that occur. Assure your child of your love.



Checklist for protecting your child

- Teach your child to use the telephone in case of an emergency. Be sure he or she can dial **9-1-1**. Tell your child that this call is free from a pay phone.
- Have your child memorize these things: (1) his or her full name, (2) address with city and state, (3) area code and phone number, (4) your work number or the number of a nearby trusted adult.
- Know the three "**W**"s: **w**here your child is, **w**hat he or she is doing, and **w**ho he or she is with.
- When you are in public or unfamiliar places, keep your child in sight at all times.
- If your city has a child identification program, register your child with it.
- Always know what your child is wearing and carry a recent photo of him or her.
- Join your neighborhood's crime watch program or start one.
- Never leave a child home alone unless he or she is mature enough to handle any problems that may arise.
- Before allowing your child to walk to school or the bus, walk the safest route together. Identify possible dangers and point out grocery stores or other "**safe havens**" where help is available.
- Give the names of adults authorized to pick up your child to your child's school and/or day car center.
- Establish safety rules and procedures, and make sure your child obeys them.