FREE PARENT GUIDE

STORY TO LEARN | PARENT SPARK

Smart, Not Scared

A parent's guide to teaching kids stranger safety with confidence, not fear.

Best for ages 3 to 12

Rules | Words to say | Practice games | Family plan

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Confidence, not fear

How to teach safety without scaring your child

Most children will never face a dangerous situation. But a few simple habits, practiced calmly at home, help every child feel capable and ready to ask for help. The goal is not to make your child afraid of the world. It is to make them **aware, confident and clear about what to do**.

Teach it like a fire drill.

Calm, simple and practiced until it feels natural.

Behavior matters more than looks. A kind-looking person can still ask a child for something an adult should never ask. Teach your child to notice *what a grown-up asks*, not just what they look like.

Strangers are only part of the picture. Most harm to children comes from people they already know. That is why every rule here is about behavior, secrets and checking first.

How to use this guide: Read one chapter a week. Practice with your child in a relaxed moment, never right after a scary news story.

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This guide shares general safety education. Every child and family is different. If you have a concern about a child's safety, contact your local authorities or a child protection professional.

1 What the kids in the reel did right

Three situations, three smart choices

At the train station

What happened: A man asks a girl to walk with him to his car. She offers to wave down a police officer instead.

Why it works: A real emergency needs real help. If someone refuses the helpers, that is a red flag.

In the park

What happened: An adult asks a girl to take something into a restroom for someone else. She suggests asking the park ranger and says no.

Why it works: Grown-ups ask other grown-ups. Children do not go into private places for strangers.

The free treat

What happened: A person offers free homemade cupcakes. The girl asks which bakery they are from, then says no.

Why it works: Never accept food or gifts from someone your family has not approved.

The big idea

Grown-ups ask grown-ups for help. Kids ask grown-ups they trust.

2

The 5 safety rules

Simple enough for a child to remember

1

Check first

Before you go anywhere, take anything or help anyone, check with your parent or trusted adult. Every time.

2

Grown-ups ask grown-ups

An adult who needs help should ask another adult, not a child. You can say: "Ask another grown-up."

3

Not alone, not private

Never go into a car, restroom, house or quiet place with someone your family has not approved.

4

No yucky secrets

Surprises are fun and short. Secrets about touch, gifts or "don't tell your parents" are always okay to tell.

5

Trust your uh-oh feeling

If something feels strange or wrong, you can say no, move away, make noise and tell a safe adult. You will never be in trouble for it.

It is okay to be rude to stay safe.

3 Words kids can use

Short, loud and ready to go

The 3-step plan: NO. GO. TELL.

NO
Say it loudly and clearly.

GO
Move to a safe place or safe adult.

TELL
Tell a trusted adult right away.

If this happens...	Say or do this...
Someone asks you to go with them or help them	**"I need to ask my parent first." or "Ask another grown-up."**
Someone offers food, a gift or a ride	**"No, thank you. I have to check first."**
Someone keeps pushing	**Say a loud "NO!" and walk straight to a shop, guard or officer.**
Someone grabs you or follows you	**Shout: "Stop! You are not my family! I do not know you!" Run to safety.**
Someone says to keep it a secret	**"I do not keep secrets from my parents." Then tell them.**

Tip: A loud voice is a safety tool. Practice shouting "NO!" and "I do not know you!" together, and make it fun.

4 Safe adults, safe places

Who to go to, and where

Strangers who can help

SAFE PEOPLE

- Police officer
- Security guard
- Shop worker or staff member
- Teacher or school staff
- A parent with children

SAFE PLACES

- Shops and malls with staff
- Police station
- School office
- A busy, well-lit place
- A neighbor you know well

Lost or separated? Stay where you are, or go to a shop worker, guard or a parent with children. Say your name and your parent's phone number.

The family code word

Pick a word that only your family knows. If anyone says "Mom sent me" or "Dad asked me to pick you up", your child asks for the code word. **No code word, no going.** Change it if it was ever shared or used.

Our code word: _____

Your child should know by heart:

Their full name | A parent's phone number | Three trusted adults

5 Practice at home

Play it, repeat it, praise it

1 Show it

Say the rule in a calm voice.
Keep it short.

2 Practice it

Play "What if?" like a game.
Take turns being the child.

3 Praise it

Cheer every good answer.
Fix mistakes gently.

Six "What if?" questions

1. **What if a grown-up you do not know asks for your help?**
2. **What if someone offers you a treat or a gift?**
3. **What if someone says, "Your mom sent me"?**
4. **What if someone asks you to keep a secret?**
5. **What if you get separated from me in a crowd?**
6. **What if something gives you an uh-oh feeling?**

Keep it light. Five minutes, once a month, in a relaxed moment. Stop if your child seems worried, and end on a happy note.

Good answer? Praise the choice: "You asked me first. That was smart!"

6 Age-by-age guide

Match the lesson to your child

Ages 3 to 5

Two simple rules

- Teach two rules: check first, and never go with anyone without asking
- Practice their full name and a parent's phone number
- Use songs, puppets and short games
- Teach the names of safe helpers: officer, guard, shop worker

Ages 6 to 8

Add secrets and code words

- Introduce the no-yucky-secrets rule and the family code word
- Make a trusted adults list together
- Role-play NO. GO. TELL. a few times
- Practice what to do if you are lost

Ages 9 to 12

Independence with a plan

- Talk about online strangers and private chats
- Agree on check-ins when they go out, and always go with a friend
- Teach them to trust their instincts and leave, even if it feels rude
- Make sure they know they can tell you anything without trouble

7 Online strangers too

The same rules work on screens

A stranger online is still a stranger. The five rules do not change: check first, grown-ups ask grown-ups, no yucky secrets, and trust the uh-oh feeling.

Keep details private

Do not share your full name, school, address, location or photos with people you do not know.

Stay in the open

For younger kids, use devices in shared spaces. Be wary when anyone wants to move to a private chat.

Say no to gifts and requests

Do not accept gifts or answer requests for photos or personal details. Show a parent instead.

Tell, no trouble

Promise your child that telling you will never get them in trouble or lose their device.

Say it to your child

"If anyone online ever makes you feel weird, asks for a secret or asks for a photo, come to me. You will never be in trouble for telling me."

8 If your child tells you

How to respond in the moment

Your reaction teaches your child whether it is safe to tell you. **Calm, kind and believing** is the goal.

1 Stay calm

Take a breath. Get down to their level. Keep your voice soft.

2 Thank them

"I am so glad you told me. You did the right thing."

3 Believe them

Listen without interrupting. Do not blame or question their choices.

4 Ask gently

"Can you tell me more?" Open questions only. Do not push.

5 Write it down

Note who, where, when and what they said or looked like, while it is fresh.

6 Report it

Contact your local police or a child protection service, and tell the school if relevant.

Reassure: "You are not in trouble. We will keep you safe." Check in again over the next few days.

Our family safety plan

Print it, fill it in, keep it handy

CHILD'S FULL NAME

PARENT PHONE NUMBER 1

PARENT PHONE NUMBER 2

SAFE ADULT 1 (NAME AND PHONE)

SAFE ADULT 2 (NAME AND PHONE)

SAFE ADULT 3 (NAME AND PHONE)

OUR FAMILY CODE WORD

IF WE GET SEPARATED, I WILL GO TO

Monthly practice checklist

- [ ] We practiced "What if?" questions
- [ ] We practiced shouting NO and I do not know you
- [ ] We reviewed the code word
- [ ] We named our safe adults and safe places
- [ ] We talked about online strangers

9 Trusted resources

Keep learning, with credible sources

- **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC): safety resources for families**
  https://www.missingkids.org
- **Kidpower: child safety skills and practice ideas**
  https://www.kidpower.org
- **HealthyChildren.org (American Academy of Pediatrics): parenting and safety advice**
  https://www.healthychildren.org
- **Child Mind Institute: talking with kids about hard topics**
  https://childmind.org
- **Sahil: child protection organization in Pakistan**
  https://sahil.org

In an emergency, call your local emergency number or police right away. Add your local child helpline numbers to the family plan.

Smart, not scared.

Keep teaching. Keep practicing. Confident kids who know what to do are safer kids. Follow Story To Learn for more parenting guides.

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