

10 ways to keep children safe

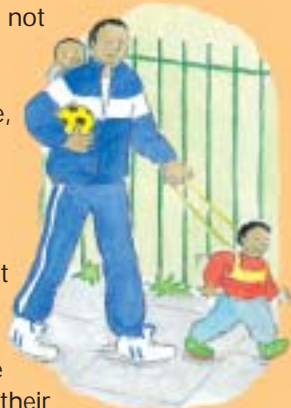
1 In most situations, children under about eight years old shouldn't be out alone, especially in busy towns. Even when out playing with other children, they need to be kept in the care and sight of an adult or a much older child who is mature and trustworthy.

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 far ahead of small children who can't keep up. Remember, it only takes a moment for toddlers to wander off.

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

5 You can start teaching children simple rules about personal safety from as young as two or three. Tell them clearly that they must **never** go off with **anyone**, not even someone they know, without first 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.



6 Teach older children safe ways of crossing roads, going shopping and asking adults for directions, and let them practise these with you until you are sure that they have understood. When they are mature enough to be out alone, make sure they tell you:

Who they're going out with. **Where** they're going (if possible get a phone number where you can reach them) **When** they will be back.

7 In busy public places, arrange somewhere safe to meet in case you get separated, like an information desk or cash point. Make sure that children know what to do if they ever get lost, and who is safest to ask for help - a police officer, shop assistant or someone with a young child.

8 Help to build your child's self-esteem with lots of love, praise and attention. Bullies and dangerous adults may tend to pick out less confident children or these who are neglected and often left alone.

9 Let children know that they never have to do anything they don't like with an adult or older child - even if it's someone they know. Practise this at home by never making them kiss or hug an adult if they don't want to.

10 Listen to your children, especially when they are trying to tell you about things that worry them. Is there a bully at school or a babysitter they don't like? Let children know that you will *always* take them seriously and do whatever you can to keep them safe.



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 seem 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 accept this or 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 try to be kind 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 0808 800 5000 or Textphone 0800 056 0566) 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 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3HA
Tel: 020 7608 3828

Provide training and information on accident prevention for childcare workers and parents. Please send a stamped addressed envelope for details of publications.

Kidscape
2 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH
Tel: 020 7730 3300
Website: www.kidscape.org.uk

Provides information for parents on bullying and keeping children safe. (Send a large stamped addressed envelope). They also operate a bullying helpline for parents, Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm.

Kids' Club Network
Bellerville House
3 Muirfield Crescent
London E14 9SZ
Tel: 020 7512 2112
Website: www.kidsclubs.com

Promotes before-school, after-school and holiday kids' club for 5-12 year olds throughout the UK, and provides free advice on how to set them up.

Parentline Plus
Unit 520 Highgate Studios
53-79 Highgate Rd
Kensington
London NW5 1TL
Helpline: 0808 800 2222
Textphone: 0800 783 6783
Website: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Parentline is the free confidential helpline run by Parentline Plus for anyone in a parenting role, including step-parents and those experiencing family change.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust
Training & Resources
14 East Sheen Avenue
London SW14 8AS
Tel: 020 8392 1839
Website: www.suzylamplugh.org

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the leading authority on personal safety. Its mission is to create a safer society and enable everyone to live safer lives.

NSPCC
Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
Tel: 020 7825 2500
Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

The NSPCC offers a wide range of resources including parenting publications. For more information please send an A4 SAE (with three 1st class stamps) to the Publications and Information Unit (see left).

Don't keep it to yourself

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free, 24-hour service which provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse.



- If you are concerned about a child and do not know what to do for the best, or
- If family or other pressures are putting a child in danger, or
- If you are a concerned child or young person yourself

Please call us on **0808 800 5000** or Textphone **0800 056 0566**

Registered Charity
Number: 216401.

NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

Out alone

Keeping children safe when out with you or out alone



NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

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

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

REMEMBER, IT IS ADULTS WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN.



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 ...



Three families tell us their stories. When you've read each one, tick the box to say whether *you* think the parents' actions were OK or Not OK. Then compare your answers with the advise opposite.

What's your verdict?

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

“ I pick up Joe from nursery after work, and then do the shopping on my way home. It's a rush to fetch my daughter from school by half three. Jo always whines to get out of the buggy, but it slows me down too much. I leave him in the buggy outside the shop - there's usually someone around to keep an eye on him. Otherwise I often end up smacking him to make him sit still. **”**

OK Not OK

“ Maria is seven and Paul is five. It's not much fun for them stuck indoors, so I sometimes let them go to the shops for me on their own, or to the playground until dinner is ready. It stops them getting under my feet, and it's probably good for them. **”**

OK Not OK

“ Now that Lizzy is eight we let her walk to school and back on her own. It's only about 10 minutes away and she knows to be careful crossing the main road. We both work full time, so we don't have much choice. **”**

OK Not OK

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? Reins or a safety harness could give him a safe break from the buggy. If nothing seems to work, think about shopping later in the evening when a partner or friend may be able to babysit.

All children need fresh air, 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 sometimes. They will enjoy having you there and you will know that they are safe.

Children this young are rarely able to judge the speed of cars, so it is not safe for them to be alone near busy roads. Apart from this and many other safety risks, you child may feel 'different' from friends who aren't left alone in the playground and who are picked up by someone they can talk to about the day's events. Is there another parent who could share the school trips with you, or who might do it in return for some babysitting? The school may know of someone. Or get together with other parents and ask the school to organise an 'after school club' or 'early bird' scheme, where parents can drop children off before they go to work.

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.