

# TIPS FOR PARENTS: SETTING PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES



Helping children understand that they have the right to “Tell people ‘NO!’” if anyone tries to hurt them or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable is an important, though sometimes difficult, task.

But establishing boundaries around touch is integral to keeping kids safe. Use the tips below to help guide children and other adults when setting the norms and boundaries.

## KNOW THE NUMBERS

Children can be hurt by both adults and other children in many ways, though most often it is by someone they know and often trust. For example:

More than



of sexual offenses against children are committed by other minors.<sup>1</sup>

In reports to NCMEC between 2012-2016, over



of children were abducted by family, friends, or other known acquaintances.<sup>2</sup>

Almost



of all AMBER Alerts issued in the U.S. between 2011 and 2016 involved children abducted by non-family members.<sup>3</sup>

In cases reported to NCMEC in 2016, more than



of those who exploit children were known to the child, such as a family member, friend, or other authority figure (e.g. babysitter, coach, etc.).<sup>4</sup>

## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Having regular, open conversations about safety is one of the best ways to help keep kids safe. **Review the KidSmartz rules together.** Make sure children understand the basic rules of safety. Let them know that you support these rules.



Check first before going anywhere.



Take a friend when going somewhere.



Tell people "NO" if they try to touch or hurt you.



Tell a trusted adult if *anyone* makes you feel sad, scared, or confused.

<sup>1</sup> Hunter, JA, Figueredo, A., Malamuth, NM, & Becker, JV, 2003  
<sup>2</sup> NCMEC, 2017

<sup>3</sup> NCMEC, 2011-2016  
<sup>4</sup> NCMEC, 2017



## TIPS FOR PARENTS: SETTING PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES



### Remind children that their bodies are their own.

It's never too early to start talking about consent. If your children don't feel comfortable giving hugs, sitting on laps, or are uncomfortable with another type of touch, encourage them to speak up and *tell people "no"*.



### Let children know you will listen.

Encourage children to talk about their concerns and listen respectfully. If your child discloses something troubling, try to respond calmly, and reassure children that telling you was the right thing to do.



### Keep the adults in your child's life in the loop.

Many friends or family members may not think twice before picking up your children, giving them hugs, or otherwise showing their affection. Let adults in your child's life know that you are working on these skills and strategies. Suggest alternative options for showing affection if your child expresses discomfort, such as "How about a high five instead of a hug?"



### Be a good role model.

Demonstrate what consent and boundaries look and sound like. Ask younger kids questions like "Would you like to be picked up to see better?" or "Should I help you get dressed, or would you like to do that on your own?". Take it a step further by extending this behavior to adults that you and the child interact with, for example: "I'm sorry you had a bad day Aunt Maria, can I give you a hug?"



# TIPS FOR PARENTS: GOING OUT CHECKLIST



Heading out for some family fun at an amusement park, movie theater, mall or any other public place? Use this checklist to make your outing safer.



## REVIEW THE KIDSMARTZ RULES

Make sure your children understand the basic rules of safety – check first before going anywhere; take a friend everywhere you go; tell people “NO” if they try to touch or hurt you; and tell a trusted adult if anyone makes you feel sad, scared or confused.



## PLAN FOR EMERGENCIES

Look at a map of the facilities and locate information booths or customer service centers. Carry recent pictures of your children in case they get lost. You can even take a picture of them on your cellphone just before leaving.



## CHARGE YOUR CELLPHONE

Check that your cellphone is charged and your children have the number memorized. Consider giving older children a cellphone of their own so you can reach them more easily.



## PAY ATTENTION TO CLOTHING

Remember what your children are wearing so you can describe their clothing to staff members in case they are lost. Tip: If your children are wearing bright colors, they will be easier to spot in crowds.



## IDENTIFY ADULTS WHO CAN HELP

Teach younger children to look for people like security officers, store employees or park staff members who can help them look for you in case you are separated.



## CHOOSE A MEETING SPOT

Instruct older children to go directly to a designated spot, like a store or an information booth, to meet you. They should never leave or go to the parking lot to try and find you.



## PLAN FOR BATHROOM BREAKS

You should always go with younger children to the restroom. Make sure older children take a friend; it's safer than going alone.



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# TIPS FOR PARENTS: PREVENTING ABDUCTION



Teaching children about abduction safety is important, but the ultimate responsibility lies with trusted adults. Use the tips below to help you learn more about abduction and how to better protect your child.

## LEARN THE FACTS

### Many abduction attempts:<sup>1</sup>

- Involve a suspect driving a vehicle.
- Occur when the child is traveling to or away from school.
- Occur between 2 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- Involve girls and children between the ages of 10 -14.

### The top five methods used during abduction attempts are:<sup>2</sup>

1. Offering a ride.
2. Offering candy or sweets.
3. Asking questions.
4. Offering money.
5. Offering, looking for or showing an animal.

## TAKE ACTION

- Know the routes your children take, especially to and from school. Practice walking the routes with them so you can point out places they should avoid or where they can go for help.
- Talk to your child's school or day care facility about its pickup policy. Be clear that no one should pick up your child without your permission. Ask to be contacted immediately if someone else tries to pick up your child.
- Use role-playing scenarios to help children learn how to recognize and respond to risky situations. For example, have children practice yelling, kicking, pulling away or otherwise attracting attention when grabbed or approached by someone they do not know.
- Teach your child about the methods would-be abductors use. Have your child practice responding to the tricks by saying "no," walking away and telling a trusted adult immediately.
- Prepare children to act when you are not with them. They should know their full names, home addresses and telephone numbers, and how to dial 911.
- Keep a child identification kit, which includes a recent color photo of your child and descriptive details such as age, height and weight. For more information about creating a kit visit [www.missingkids.com/ChildID](http://www.missingkids.com/ChildID).



If your child is missing, contact your local law-enforcement agency immediately. Then make a report to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® at **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**.

<sup>1</sup>Based on an analysis by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® of more than 9,000 abduction attempts occurring between Feb. 1, 2005, and Jan. 31, 2014. For more information visit [www.missingkids.com/AttemptedAbductions](http://www.missingkids.com/AttemptedAbductions).

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*

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# TIPS FOR PARENTS: SAFETY SCENARIOS



Safety is about more than memorizing rules. It's also about knowing **how** to act **when** it matters. Use these tips and practice scenarios to help your child learn what to do in risky situations.

## TELL YOUR CHILD:

It's OK to be rude if someone is making you uncomfortable. Say "no," walk away and tell a trusted adult.



## HOW TO PRACTICE:

Ask children to pretend they are at the playground. An adult approaches and asks for help. What should they do? (*Say "no," and walk away. Adults shouldn't ask children for help; they should ask other adults.*)

## TELL YOUR CHILD:

Always go places with a friend and stay with the group. If a friend walks away from the group, tell a trusted adult right away.

## HOW TO PRACTICE:

Ask children to pretend they are walking home with friends. One friend wants to leave the group. What should they do? (*Remind the friend that it is safer to stay together.*) If the friend still leaves, ask children what they should do. (*Tell a trusted adult right away.*)

## TELL YOUR CHILD:

You should never approach or get into a vehicle without my permission. If someone is following you in a vehicle, turn and run in the other direction. Tell me or another trusted adult what happened right away.



## HOW TO PRACTICE:

Using a parked car as a prop, have children pretend someone is driving along beside them. Have them practice refusing the ride and running in the opposite direction.

## TELL YOUR CHILD:

When you are home alone, do not open the door for anyone.

## HOW TO PRACTICE:

Ask children to pretend they are home alone when someone comes to the door with a delivery. Ask children what they would do. (*Not answer the door; call you if the person does not go away.*)

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## TIPS FOR PARENTS: SAFETY SCENARIOS



### TELL YOUR CHILD:

It's important for me to know where you are and where you are going. If you want to change plans, check with me first.



### HOW TO PRACTICE:

Ask children to pretend that one of their friends has invited them to come over after school. Ask children how they should respond. *(I have to check with my mom/dad before changing my plans.)*

### TELL YOUR CHILD:

If we are separated and you need help, ask a police officer, a store clerk or a parent with children.

### HOW TO PRACTICE:

When going places, point out people that children can ask for help, especially when you take them somewhere new. Let children practice interactions with these helpful people, like asking a store clerk for help finding an item. This will make it easier for children to approach them in case of an emergency.

### TELL YOUR CHILD:

If someone grabs you, kick, yell and pull away.

### HOW TO PRACTICE:

Adults may believe that a yelling child is misbehaving. The phrases below make it clearer that a child is asking for help. Have your children practice saying them in a strong, confident voice.

No!

Stop it!

Leave me alone!

I don't like that!

You're not my mom/dad!

### TELL YOUR CHILD:

You can always tell me about anything that makes you feel sad, scared or confused.

### HOW TO PRACTICE:

Help children get into the habit of sharing with you by taking the time to listen to them on a regular basis. Try to react calmly, even when children share upsetting information.

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