



Real-World Safety with NetSmartz® Workshop

Going back to school is an exciting time for many families. But while children are busy thinking about friends, new classes, and new challenges, parents and guardians have an additional concern: their children's safety. Helping parents and guardians address these concerns is an integral part of the work done by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC). Through education programs, like NetSmartz Workshop, parents and guardians have access to the materials they need to help keep their kids safer.

Both NetSmartz and NCMEC strongly believe that preparation and family communication are a key part of keeping kids safer; our goal is to have you use the following tips to help empower your children. Be on the lookout for teachable moments year-round to help you communicate with them about personal safety. When you talk to your children and help them practice safety skills you help prepare them to act quickly and wisely should a potentially dangerous situation arise.

Before the First Day

1. Check to see if you have current photos of your children. Plan to update those photos every six months.
2. Make sure that your children's files at school contain the most recent emergency contact information. Also, talk to the school office about who is authorized to pick them up from school.
3. Find out about the school's online policy and make sure they don't post identifying/personal information such as your children's names, address, and photos on the school's website.
4. Help your children memorize your telephone number and the telephone numbers of other trusted adults.
5. Write your children's names on the inside of backpacks where they are hidden from view. Someone addressing your children by name may trick them into thinking they know that person.
6. Make sure your children know how to identify other trusted adults in case you're not available during an emergency, such as uniformed law enforcement officers, crossing guards, and parents with children.
7. Take your children on a dry run of the trip to school, pointing out places where they may go for help in case of an emergency.
8. Practice "what-if" scenarios with your children in which they are offered rides or approached by unknown people.
9. Review the NetSmartz Real-World Safety Pledge with your children at NetSmartz.org.

Going to and from School

10. If your children walk or bike to school make sure that they go with a group. Know the names and telephone numbers of the children in that group and their parents or guardians. If your children wait for a bus, wait with them at the bus stop.
11. While waiting for the bus, children should not wander away from the bus stop or play in the street. Help your children pick a spot to wait that is in plain view of the bus driver.
12. Talk to your children about the importance of paying attention to their surroundings and obeying traffic signals.
13. Advise your children to walk on well-lit paths and not take short cuts.
14. Adults needing help should not ask children; they should ask other adults. If an adult approaches your children for help or directions, teach them to immediately get away from that person and tell you or another trusted adult.
15. Teach your children not to accept gifts or rides from people they do not know. If someone offers to show them something in a car, they should say NO and move away as quickly as possible.
16. Instruct your children not to leave school grounds without first getting your permission and checking with the school office.
17. Know your children's after school plans. Make sure that they know to notify you before changing them.
18. Talk with your children on a regular basis about their trips to and from school. Ask them if they have seen anything or anyone suspicious, and encourage them to tell you right away about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Home Alone

19. Remind your children that they should never open the door when they are home by themselves.
20. Teach your children not to let anyone, other than trusted adults, know that they are home alone.
21. Remind your children that they are not to have anyone over when they are home alone unless you have given them permission.
22. Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers by the telephone and instruct your children of who to contact if they need help.

Check NetSmartz.org for these tips and more.