

Talking to Kids About Strangers

Talking to your children regularly about strangers can help reinforce the message.

One of the most important lessons to teach children is that it's always okay to run from strangers. Children sometimes risk safety to avoid being rude or disrespectful. Let your children know that safety takes precedence over other concerns.

Tips for Talking to Your Kids About Strangers

Be appropriately honest with your child

It is important to be honest with your child regarding dangers, while avoiding introducing unnecessary stress into your child's life. You're the best judge of your child's temperament, and can gauge your discussion accordingly. It may help to explain that the situations being discussed don't happen often, but are still important to be prepared for, "just in case."

Repetition

Repetition is one of the best ways to learn. Rather than talk about strangers once or twice, it's important to bring the subject up regularly. **A child needs to know the safety rules well enough to be able to act without stopping to think about it if a situation arises.**

Listen to their concerns

Be ready to listen and respond to your child's concerns. Children have great questions and experiences to discuss. **Make sure you give them the time to express their thoughts and feelings.**

Have a plan

Developing a **plan before you talk to your child** will help the conversation go smoothly and insure that you talk about everything you need to.

Be ready to play

Role playing is a great way to make safety rules more concrete and understandable for children. Have them practice running from a stranger to a safe adult, and plan what they will say. Practice using examples from the [lures that dangerous strangers commonly use](#). The more realistic you can make role playing, the better prepared your child will be.

Don't reinvent the wheel

There are several great resources out there to help in talking to children about strangers. [Check out some options for extra help.](#)

What to Tell Your Kids: Questions & Answers

What is a stranger?

A stranger is simply someone you don't know. Strangers can say they know you or know your family, teacher or friends. Strangers may even know your name or the names of people in your family. If you or your parents do not know that person, the person is a stranger.

Who are safe adults?

Safe adults are grown-ups that you can tell if something happens to you, **people that your parents or caregivers have told you are safe to talk with.** Examples of safe adults:

- Parents
- Caregivers
- Teachers or Principal
- School Counselors
- Policeman in uniform
- Fireman in uniform

What should I do if a stranger tries to talk to me?

Most of the strangers you will meet in your lifetime are not going to hurt you but you have to remember that not everyone is a safe person to talk to. Talk to a parent about how talk to strangers and how to begin learning how to talk to strangers.

It's important to remember that adults never have the right to ask a child that they don't know for assistance such as asking for directions. However, sometimes you have to talk to strangers and, in fact, everybody needs to learn how to talk to strangers. However, talking to strangers is something parents should help their children to do.

Trust your instincts. Animals aren't the only ones who have reliable instincts to detect danger, people have them too. If you have any reason to doubt a person or if a person or situation makes you feel uncomfortable, trust your gut instincts; if you feel a situation is dangerous, there's probably a reason for that feeling. Run! Go in the opposite direction as fast as you can and tell a safe adult about what happened.

The idea is to get away and get other people's attention so they can see what's happening.

What if I am out with my family?

That is a hard question. Sometimes people who work in a business will talk to kids, for example. **If you're with a safe adult, you don't need to run away.**

If you're not with a safe adult and a stranger talks to you for no reason, running away is still the safest thing to do. It's best to have an idea of what the safe places are where you're at, or even have a special meeting place planned when you go out, so you know where to go.

For example, in a store you might go to the customer service counter, the security desk or checkout counter. Look for the uniforms people who work in the business wear.