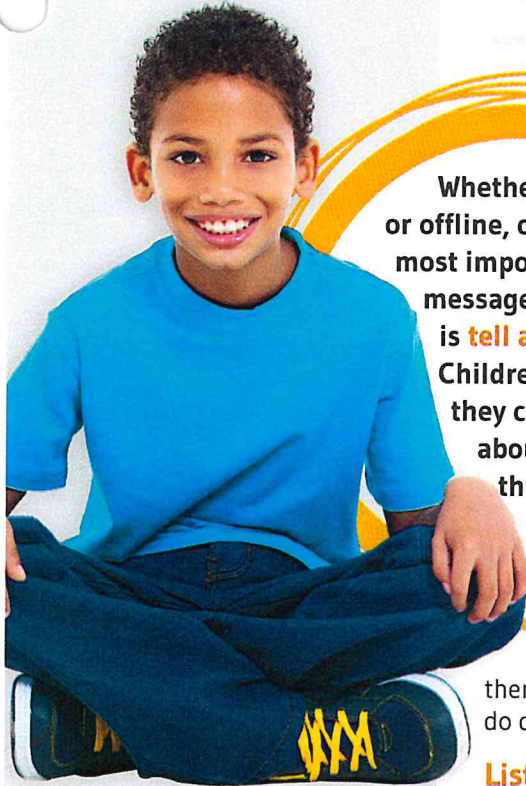


Discussion Guide

(Ages 5-8)

It is important to talk to young children about safety without overwhelming or scaring them. This discussion guide offers age-appropriate messages and strategies to help you start a conversation about personal and online safety.



Whether on- or offline, one of the most important safety messages for children is **tell a trusted adult**. Children should know they can talk to you about anything that happens.

What to Talk About

When discussing **personal safety**, empower children by helping them learn what to do if they find themselves in a threatening situation. Tell children:

- A trusted adult is someone like your mom, dad or teacher who makes you feel safe, helps you and listens to you. You can tell a trusted adult any time you feel sad, scared, uncomfortable or confused.
- Ask me or another trusted adult first before going anywhere, helping anyone, or accepting anything.
- It's important to stay with me or the trusted adult in charge when you are away from home.
- Let's learn your full name, home address and telephone number. If we get separated, knowing this information can help you get home.
- Some of the body parts your swimsuit covers are private. If anyone touches you there or anywhere else in a way that makes you uncomfortable, you can say "no" — even if that person is a grown-up.

When discussing **online safety**, focus on helping children learn behaviors that minimize risks. Tell children:

- Our family has rules about what you can do online in order to help keep you safe. You may not like all of these rules, but it's important that you follow them.
- We should be polite and treat others with respect while online.
- Just because something is online does not mean it's true.
- Ask a trusted adult before sharing information like your name, address or telephone number.
- Not everything online is meant for children. It's not your fault if you accidentally see these things, but you should tell me about it so we can deal with it together.

How to Talk About It

Focus on how, not who. Instead of saying, "Don't talk to strangers," discuss the methods would-be abductors may use such as offering treats or money, asking for help, or offering to show an animal.

Role-play. Don't just talk about safety. Practice it! For example, have children practice yelling, kicking, and pulling away when discussing what to do if someone tries to take them.

Don't skip the hard stuff. It can be hard to talk about some safety issues, especially those involving sexuality. Set the foundation early by talking openly with your children about their bodies. For example, teach them to use the correct names for private parts.

Keep calm. Children make mistakes. If they break a safety rule, remind them why you set it and enforce the consequences. Then talk about what they should do differently the next time.

Listen. Encourage your children to talk about their concerns and listen respectfully — even when you disagree.

Teachable Moments

The following stories demonstrate how you can incorporate the safety tips into real-life interactions with your children.

Ask before going places

Tom and his 8-year-old son Aaron are at the playground. "Do you want me to come with you to the monkey bars?" Tom asks. "Dad, I'm not a baby!" Aaron says. He wants to be more independent so his parents have been teaching him about personal safety. Before Aaron goes to play, Tom asks him to repeat their family's personal safety rules. "Remember," Tom says, "these rules are to help keep you safe. When you follow them, your mom and I know that we can trust you to do more things by yourself."

Inappropriate online content

Jeanine's 6-year-old daughter Rachel accidentally clicks a link to an adult website while playing an online game. Jeanine wants to slam the laptop closed and pull Rachel away from the disturbing images, but she knows that this could confuse or scare Rachel. Instead, Jeanine calmly navigates away from the website. She tells Rachel, "Some online sites are just for adults. Children may accidentally find these sites, but it's not their fault. If you come across another site like this, tell me or another trusted adult so that we can help you get back to a children's site."

You don't have to wait for a real-life situation to arise before discussing safety with your children. Start talking to them about it right now by creating your own teachable moments.

Get Started

While at the grocery store, ask your child

"What would you do if we got separated?" Have your child point out people to ask for help such as a store clerk or parent with children.

While driving to school, ask your child

"Who are your trusted adults? Why?" Later, make a list of your child's trusted adults so he or she knows who to contact for help.

While playing an online game with your child, ask

"Has anyone or anything you've seen online ever made you feel confused or uncomfortable?"



Pledge to talk to your child about safety at Take25.org

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Discussion Guide

(Ages 9-12)

As children grow older, they need safety messages that will help them navigate the world with less adult supervision. This discussion guide offers age-appropriate messages about personal and online safety you can use to start a conversation.



Whether on- or offline, one of the most important safety messages for children is **tell a trusted adult**. Children should know they can talk to you about anything that happens.

What to Talk About

When discussing **personal safety**, empower children by helping them learn what to do if they find themselves in a threatening situation. Talk to children about:

- The methods would-be abductors may use like offering treats and money, asking for help, or offering to show an animal.
- Never accepting anything or going anywhere with anyone without your permission.
- Staying with a friend when going places and asking for permission before changing plans.
- Saying “no” to anyone who makes them feel scared, uncomfortable or confused — even grown-ups. No one has the right to touch them in private areas without their permission.
- How to tell if someone is trustworthy. A trustworthy friend or adult will not ask or pressure you into doing anything dangerous or inappropriate.

When discussing **online safety**, focus on helping children learn behaviors that minimize risks. Talk to children about:

- Respecting others online and not cyberbullying. Children should not join in if someone is being cyberbullied; they should report it instead.
- Not trusting everything they read or everyone they meet online. Teach children methods for verifying online information, like triple-checking websites’ information.
- Not sharing personal or revealing information online. Information shared online can be permanent and far-reaching.
- Telling a trusted adult if anyone online makes them uncomfortable, asks for or shows them revealing photos, or asks to meet offline. Help your child make a report to www.CyberTipline.com.

How to Talk About It

Set boundaries. Be clear with children about your family’s safety rules and the consequences of breaking them. Consider creating a family contract.

Role-play. Don’t just talk about safety. Practice it! For example, pretend to be a friend asking your child to engage in a dangerous or inappropriate activity. Have your child practice saying “no.”

Keep calm. Children make mistakes. If they break a safety rule, remind them why you set it and enforce the consequences. Discuss what they should do differently the next time.

Don’t skip the hard stuff. It can be hard to talk about some safety issues, especially those involving sex. But keeping quiet about them may make it difficult for your child to talk to you if a problem arises.

Listen. Encourage your children to talk about their concerns and listen respectfully — even when you disagree.

Teachable Moments

The following stories demonstrate how you can incorporate the safety tips into real-life interactions with your children.

Not accepting gifts

Michelle and her 10-year-old son Kevin are at the bookstore. Kevin looks through some comic books while Michelle sits nearby. "This one's my favorite!" Kevin exclaims enthusiastically. A young man also perusing the comic books looks over. "That is a good one! I bought a copy, but I'm done with it. Would you like to have it?" Before Michelle can respond, Kevin says, "Yes! But I have to ask my mom if it's OK first." Kevin runs over to Michelle, who smiles to herself. Kevin has certainly learned his personal safety rules.

Privacy

Mike's 12-year-old daughter Leanne has joined a social networking site for children under 13. Once a week, Mike asks Leanne to show him her page. Leanne's posts are fine, but some of her friends' comments and images are inappropriate. Mike and Leanne look over her friends' posts, discussing which posts may be a bad idea. Mike tells his daughter, "You never know who may see what you post online. You should try to post comments and images that will leave a good impression on anyone who may see them."

You don't have to wait for a real-life situation to arise before discussing safety with your children. Start talking to them about it right now by creating your own teachable moments.

Get Started

While walking to school, ask your child

"What would you do if someone drove up next to you and offered you a ride?" (*Say no and run in the opposite direction.*) Point out places your child can go for safety.

While eating dinner, ask your child

"Do you feel comfortable with all of your teachers, coaches and neighbors? Which ones are you favorites?" Listen to your child's concerns about adult authority figures without dismissing them.

The next time your child uses the Internet to research a school assignment, ask

"How can you tell if a website's information is correct?" (*Check to see if the website has a reputable domain name such as .edu or .gov. Make sure the information is current and on more than one website.*)



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