

FINDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN YOUR CHILD
BEING SAFE AND INDEPENDENT IS DIFFICULT.

THIS PRACTICAL GUIDE SHOULD ASSIST PARENTS AND CARERS
TO HELP PREPARE A CHILD FOR BEING OUT ON THEIR OWN.

STRANGER AWARENESS

Most strangers are normal people who are nice, but a few may not be. Children see strangers every day in streets, in shops, at the park, and in their communities.

Parents and carers can protect their children from suspicious strangers by teaching them about strangers and their behaviour.

WHO IS A STRANGER?

A stranger is anyone that your child doesn't know well. Children often think that "*bad strangers*" look scary, like the baddies on the television. This isn't true! Nice looking strangers can be just as bad. Talk to your child about strangers, explain that no one can tell if a stranger is nice from how they look. Tell your child that they should be careful around all strangers.

You should reassure them that most strangers are good. If children need help, if they are lost, being threatened by a bully or being followed by a stranger then the safest thing for your child to do in many cases is to ask a stranger for help. You can make this easier for them by showing them which strangers are "*safe strangers*" and can be trusted.

SAFE STRANGERS!

Safe strangers are people children can ask for help when they need it. Police officers, Fire-fighters, Nurses, Teachers, Shop Assistants in large supermarkets and Security Guards, are adults your child can trust, and can be easy to recognise when they're at work.

If your child is in a place where they are unable to locate a helpful stranger in a uniform then your child should go to a public place to ask for help.

You can help your child recognise safe strangers by pointing them out when you're out in your community. Show your child places they can go if they need help, such as local shops, restaurants and the homes of family friends in your neighbourhood.



HOW TO RECOGNISE DANGEROUS SITUATIONS AND WHAT TO DO

Perhaps the most important way parents and carers can protect children is to teach them to be wary of dangerous situations. Help your child recognise the warning signs of suspicious behaviour. This can be in a number of ways. If an adult asks them to keep a secret, asks them to do something without their parent or carer's permission or makes them feel uncomfortable in any way.

Teach your child that an adult should never ask a child for help, and teach them to find a trusted adult right away and tell them what has happened.



Talk to your child about dangerous situations and what they should do.

If they feel scared, threatened or they are in a dangerous situation or a situation where they feel uncomfortable, teach them to shout...

"Help, No, Stranger"

as loud as they can and run away, and tell a trusted adult what happened right away.

Make sure that your child knows that it is okay to say **NO** to an adult in a dangerous situation and to **SHOUT** to keep safe, even if they are indoors.

Practice with your child using role play so that they are aware of what they should do in different situations so they feel confident in knowing what to do.

HERE ARE A FEW POSSIBLE EXAMPLES OF WHAT BAD STRANGERS MAY DO TO GAIN YOUR CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE AND TRUST:

- ! A stranger tries to trick your child into helping them by saying there is an emergency or an accident.
- ! A stranger asks for help, perhaps by saying they have lost an animal or pet and need your child's help to find it.
- ! A stranger tries to bribe your child with sweets or gifts to get your child to go with them.
- ! A stranger asks your child if they would like a lift.
- ! While your child is walking home from a friend's house, a car pulls over and a stranger asks for directions.
- ! While your child is stood waiting to be collected from school a stranger approaches your child and says their parent is sick and has asked them to collect the child and take them home.
- ! Your child is invited into a neighbour's house for a drink or a snack without asking your permission.
- ! An adult your child knows, says or does something that makes the child feel bad or uncomfortable.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT OR CARER

AS WELL AS TEACHING YOUR CHILD HOW TO RECOGNISE AND HANDLE DANGEROUS SITUATIONS AND STRANGERS, THERE ARE A FEW MORE THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP THEIR CHILD STAY SAFE AND AVOID DANGEROUS SITUATIONS.

- ✗ Never leave a young child to play unsupervised in shops, parks or cars.
- ✓ Hold hands and use reins once they are old enough to walk unassisted. This will prevent them from running off the minute you stop to do something.
- ✓ Teach your child that if someone scares them tries to touch them and makes them feel uncomfortable then tell them '**NO**' or '**STOP**'.
- ✓ If a stranger grabs hold of your child then they should shout "**HELP, NO, STRANGER**" as loud as they can so that someone hears them.
- ✓ Tell your child if they feel scared and are frightened by a stranger they should run home and tell you as their parent, their carer or someone they trust straight away and try to remember as much as they can about the stranger.
- ✓ Make it a rule that your children must ask permission and check with you before going anywhere and have an agreed time that they should be back. As soon as your child can understand teach them their full name, address and telephone number and also your work and mobile phone numbers so they can reach you at all times.
- ✓ Show your child safe places to cross the road. (*children under eight years old can't judge distance and speed.*)
- ✓ Show them safe places to play and paths to take, and safe places to go if there's trouble.

- ✓ Explain that if they ever feel scared or uncomfortable, they should get away as fast as they can and tell an adult. Tell them that sometimes adults they know may make them feel uncomfortable, and they should still get away as fast as possible and tell another trusted adult what happened. Reassure your child that you will help them when they need it.
- ✓ Make sure they know that it's okay to say NO to an adult and to run away from adults in dangerous situations.
- ✓ Encourage your children to play with other children. There's safety in numbers!
- ✓ Pick a code word that only you and your child know. In the event of an emergency where you need a friend to collect your child from school or club, teach your child to only go with the friend if they know the code word.
- ✓ Listen to your child. It is really important to believe what your child is trying to tell you. This will help you address any concerns or issues they need your help with.
- ✓ Teach your child to remember the *Three W's...*

WHO they are going with,
WHERE they are going and;
WHEN they will be back.

...So they can tell you !