

# KNOW THE RULES...

## For Going To and From School More Safely



**E**very day millions of children take to the streets and highways to get to and from school.<sup>1</sup> For many children this experience is a new one, and they may not understand or be able to use the safety rules. Young children do not have the same frame of reference for safety as adults do. They may not "look before they leap," which is why it is so important for families to supervise young children and practice safety skills with their older children to make certain they really know and understand them. In an analysis of attempted nonfamily abductions the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) found approximately 36% of attempted abductions happened when a child was going to or from school or a school-related activity.<sup>2</sup> The tips noted below will help prepare for a safer journey.

### Tips for Parents or Guardians

1. Instruct your children to always **TAKE A FRIEND**, always stay in well-lit areas, never take shortcuts, and never go into isolated areas. Teach them to stay aware of their surroundings and observe all traffic rules in place to more safely share the roads and sidewalks with others.
2. Walk the route to and from school with your children pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they're being followed or need help. Make the walk to and from school a "teachable moment" and chance to put their skills to the test. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes to and from school. If your children wait for a bus, wait with them or make arrangements for supervision at the bus stop.
3. If anyone bothers your children or makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused, while going to or from school, teach your children to trust their feelings, immediately get away from that person, and **TELL** you or another trusted adult. If an adult approaches your children for help or directions, remember grownups needing help should not ask children; they should ask other adults. Instruct your children to never approach a vehicle or accept money or gifts from anyone unless you have told them it is **OK** to accept in each instance.
4. Even though there may be safety in numbers it is still not safe for young children to walk to and from school, especially if they must take isolated routes anytime during the day or in darkness. Always provide supervision for your young children to help ensure their safe arrival to and from school.
5. Instruct your children to leave items and clothing with their name on them at home. If anyone calls out their name, teach them to not be fooled or confused. Teach your children about the tricks someone may try to use to confuse them or engage them in conversation. Children should also be taught that they do not need to be polite if approached and to get out of the situation as quickly and safely as possible.
6. Ensure current and accurate emergency contact information is on file for your children at their school. If you, or another trusted family member or friend, need to pick up your children, make sure to follow the school's departure procedures. These procedures need to include the school's confirmation of your children's departure with only those you authorize to pick them up.





7. Teach your children if anyone tries to take them somewhere they should quickly get away and yell, "This person is trying to take me away" or "This person is not my father/mother/guardian." Teach your children to make a scene and every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting if anyone tries to grab them.

8. Teach your children if anyone follows them on foot to get away from that person as quickly as possible. If anyone follows them in a vehicle they should turn around, go in the other direction, and try to quickly get to a spot where a trusted adult may help them. Advise them to be sure to **TELL** you or another trusted adult what happened.

9. Instruct your children to never leave school with anyone until they've checked with a trusted adult. If anyone tells them there is an emergency and they want your children to go with them, teach your children to always **CHECK FIRST** with you before doing anything. Also teach your children to always **CHECK FIRST** with you if they want to change their plans before or after school. Make sure your children always play with other children, have your permission to play in specific areas, and let you know where they are going to be. Instruct your children to **TELL** a trusted adult if they notice anyone they don't know or feel comfortable with hanging around them.



10. In the event your children may be lost or injured, make sure they carry a contact card with your name and telephone numbers such as work and cellular. This card should be hidden from plain view.

### Key Tips to Reinforce With Your Children

1. Always **TAKE A FRIEND** with you when walking, biking, or standing at the bus stop. Make sure you know your bus number and which bus to ride.

2. Say **NO** if anyone you don't know or a person who makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused offers a ride. Do **NOT** accept a ride from anyone unless I have told you it is **OK** to do so in each instance.

3. Quickly get away and yell, "**THIS PERSON IS NOT MY MOTHER/FATHER/GUARDIAN**" if anyone tries to take you somewhere or is following you. If anyone tries to grab you, make a scene and every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting.



4. **NEVER LEAVE SCHOOL GROUNDS** before the regular school day ends. Always check with the office and me before leaving school early.

5. **NEVER** take shortcuts or walk through alleys to get to or from school. We will talk about which way to go to and from school. Remind me if activities you participate in cause you to leave earlier or arrive home later than usual. Remember to call me once you have arrived home.

<sup>1</sup>According to the National Center for Education Statistics in fall 2009, 49.8 million students were expected to attend public elementary and secondary schools. An additional 5.8 million students were expected to attend private schools, *Fast Facts*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, [www.nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372](http://www.nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372), accessed October 15, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>For purposes of this analysis NCMEC defined these incidents as the attempted abduction of a child, age 17 or younger, by someone who is not related to the child, not known to the child, and not known to the child's family. This information is based on the analysis of more than 3,000 attempted-abduction incidents known to NCMEC and confirmed with law enforcement, spanning a period from February 1, 2005, through September 30, 2009. The data includes confirmed, attempted-abduction incidents NCMEC Analysts were able to locate through the media and reports received from law enforcement.

For more information about school safety or other child-safety topics, call or visit

**1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)**

**[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)**

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