

10 Safety Tips to Talk About With Your Kids

Keep rules simple and talk about them once in awhile—make it fun to practice!

1. Decide who can answer phones, when, and what to say if home alone? (Make up examples and play with this subject.)
2. Who can answer a knock at the door? Does an adult have to be home? How do you look to see who is there? Make rules simple and clear and play-practice.
3. Lock doors even when you are in the house. This is not to scare anyone; it is just very smart. Most burglaries happen during day. Burglars knock, then try doorknobs if nobody answers. Anyone watching TV or wearing headphones might not hear someone knock--or enter.
4. DO have a safe neighbor. Talk to the neighbor about this, and then post their name, address and phone numbers by your phone and on your emergency list. Make sure the neighbor has all your contact numbers, too.
5. If you ever use cell phones, post your address throughout the house (solicit kid art and frame it). When excited and calling 9-1-1, it's hard for both kids and adults to remember their own address—what if a friend is there and needs to call for you?
6. Practice when to call 9-1-1 and when to use non-emergency numbers. LET YOUR KIDS KNOW 9-1-1 IS THERE FOR THEM and to call if they are alone and need any help or are scared. The folks at 9-1-1 will help them get non-emergency help too, but valuable time can be wasted looking for a special number. Then tell them to NEVER joke around calling 9-1-1; it could keep police from helping someone who urgently needs them. Practice with a play phone.
7. DO have lists of phone numbers: parents at work, neighbors, friends, family, and the 9-1-1 non-emergency number. Keep them easy-to-read and current.
8. DO have a plan for a few emergencies such as fire (home or across street), power outage, calling an ambulance, injuries. Even kids who are not home alone regularly should know all this. What if you fell and were unconscious? What if you are in a car crash and the child must call 9-1-1? Think up scenarios, practice.
9. Most kids, age 3 and up, can memorize their full names, parents' names, address and 10-digit phone number. Help them do this; they feel great when they know it and more likely to help themselves in a situation. Give them ID bracelets until they have it memorized. Practice with them—stuck in traffic? Grab the time!
10. DO make your kids believe they can talk to you about anything. Kids can fear telling because they might 'get in trouble'. Tell them to never, ever keep a secret from you no matter what someone tells them (or threatens them). Talk about situations instead of strangers: an easy rule for kids is not to do anything with anyone unless they check with you first, period.