



Prepared, Not Scared

Helping Children Stay Safe Away From Home

Few moments are more frightening for a parent than realising a child has wandered off or become separated from the family. Whether at a busy shopping centre, a sports event, a taxi rank or even while walking home from school, children can quickly become disoriented. Teaching children basic safety information is not simply helpful - it is essential.

While parents cannot prevent every unexpected situation, they can equip children with practical knowledge that may help them get home safely or reconnect with trusted adults more quickly. One of the most important lessons a child can learn is how to identify **where they live and who to contact if they need help**.

Many young children know their parents' names, but far fewer can confidently tell someone their home address or a contact number. In stressful situations, panic often makes it even harder for children to remember details. This is why repetition and preparation matter.

► Reinforce the Details

Parents should begin teaching children their full home address as early as possible. Start with the suburb or street name and gradually build towards the complete address. Repeating the information during everyday routines can help children memorise it naturally. Some parents turn it into a song, a rhyme, or a game to make learning easier and less intimidating.

Children should also memorise at least one reliable cell phone number. Ideally, they should know both parents' numbers, but even knowing one can make a significant difference. It is important to teach children to say numbers clearly and slowly.

Useful information children should know includes:

- Their full name and surname
- Their home address
- At least one parent or guardian's cell phone number
- The names of trusted adults who may assist them
- The name of their school
- Nearby landmarks close to home



► Practical Precautions

Practical precautions include:

- Taking a recent photograph of your child before outings
- Dressing children in bright, easily identifiable clothing
- Agreeing on a designated meeting point in busy public areas
- Teaching children to approach security guards, police officers or mothers with children if they are lost
- Explaining that they should never leave a public place with a stranger, even if the person seems friendly

It is equally important to teach children situational awareness without creating unnecessary fear. Conversations about safety should be calm, age-appropriate and empowering rather than alarming. Children who feel confident and informed are more likely to respond effectively during stressful situations. Role-playing can be particularly effective.

Parents can practise "what if" scenarios at home by asking questions such as:

- "What would you do if you could not see me in the shop?"
- "Who would you ask for help?"
- "What is our cell phone number?"
- "What landmarks do you recognise near home?"

These simple exercises help children build confidence and improve recall under pressure.