

# 10 Ways to Test Your Child About Stranger Danger

<http://www.parttimenanny.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/stranger-danger.jpg> According to estimates by the United States Department of Justice, roughly 800,000 children will be reported missing each year. This figure includes kidnappings by relatives, acquaintances and strangers. While kidnapping by a person the child knows may be difficult to prevent, there are things you can do to keep your child from getting into a car or walking away from a safe place with a stranger. Once you have trained your child not to talk to or leave with strangers, there are also ways to test the effectiveness of your efforts.

- 1. Make Sure Your Child Understands That There are Familiar Strangers** – Just as parents need to teach their children to be wary of strangers, when it comes to abductions and molestations the vast majority are perpetrated by known family and friends. These are the familiar “strangers” that often go unknown for years. Teach your child basic personal safety precautions like good touch, bad touch. Make sure your child knows your phone number and address. Keep the lines of communication open and stress to your child that no one should ever tell him to keep a secret from you at all, but especially not one that makes him feel uncomfortable. Perpetrators are known to threaten kids that they will hurt or kill the parents if the secret is exposed. Drill into your children that no one will hurt you or them for telling a secret that they’ve been threatened to keep.
- 2. Give Your Child the Stranger Danger Quiz** – The [Stranger Danger quiz](#) is a simple online quiz that can help your child understand that just because people look “normal” doesn’t mean that they are safe. The quiz consists of pictures of people and asks if the person is safe or not. The bottom line is that all of these people are strangers. The quiz is an attempt to show kids that anyone they don’t know is a stranger.
- 3. Check with Your Local Police Department** – Some police departments run stranger danger programs. Children need to be at least six years old to participate and one parent needs to attend. The officers set up real world scenarios to test whether or not your child can be tempted to leave with a stranger. As you watch with officers from a distance, a program volunteer will approach your child and attempt to coax the child to leave. Parents become educated in training their children to make the right choices, while kids learn to recognize stranger dangers. Grants are available for local police departments to set up a program through the [Cops and Kids Foundation](#).
- 4. Enlist the Help of Friends** – You can set up your own role play with friends you trust. Watch some of the stranger danger test videos to get an idea of how to set up your scenario. Rehearse scenarios with your child. Pick a location like a park where you can easily find a place to watch from a safe distance. Tell your child you will be right back, and then have your friend come up to the child using a ruse to get the child to go with him. Discuss the results with your child.
- 5. Ask “What If?”** – On outings ask your child “What if?” questions about a variety of people: point to the ice cream truck and ask, “What if the ice cream man told you he was

giving out free ice cream and wanted to show you the inside of his truck, would you go with him?” “What if that nice little old lady over there asked you to come to her house to help her plant some flowers, would you do it?” Make sure that your child understands that just because someone looks friendly or nice does not mean it is okay to go anywhere with them unless they have your permission.

- 6. Talk About Recognizing Strangers** – This is a homemade version of the Stranger Danger Quiz. Collect an assortment of photos of people your child knows and does not know, show him one picture at a time and ask if this person would be all right to go with if you weren't there with him. Reiterate for every stranger that “You don't know this person, so it's not okay for you to go anywhere with her.” You are driving home the point that anyone you don't know is a stranger.
- 7. Look for Teachable Moments** – The news is rife with stories about kids being abducted. Using your discretion and taking age-appropriate content into account, talk to your child about real world stranger danger. Ask your child what he would have done in the same situation.
- 8. Quiz Kids on “Safe” Strangers** – Even though there is a propensity to instill a fear of all strangers in children, there are some strangers with whom they should become acquainted with, such as law enforcement officers, fire fighters and school personnel. Moms with children in tow can be helpful too. Make sure that your child knows that some strangers are safe to talk with, and even to approach for help if they're scared. Quizzing kids on which strangers could be safe ones is a great way to introduce the subject, and can help you avoid the natural tendency to warn your child away from any and all strangers.
- 9. Ask Questions About Online Predators** – Quiz your kids about online safety. Do your kids know not to give out personal information or clues regarding where they live to people they meet online? This is another time when it may be wise to share actual news reports with your children so they will understand why it is critical not to share personal information with online strangers, even though the person may seem to be friendly. Making a verbal quiz about online predators and Internet strangers a non-negotiable aspect of preparing him for his own social media accounts or ownership of a web-capable smartphone is essential.
- 10. Watch the Dateline Stranger Danger Episodes** – View “My Kid Would Never Do That: Stranger Danger” episodes on Dateline. After viewing the episodes to familiarize yourself with the topic, watch the segments in which a stranger approaches a child together. Have your child view the initial encounter, and stop the segment before the child in the video reacts. Ask your child what he would do, and discuss the answer accordingly.

\*Information gathered from

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