

Being Lost

Children can feel absolute terror when they are lost. The environment looks double the size, adults look like giants, and fear can build up like a big blue monster. The instinct to flee is certainly the wrong choice in such a situation. Providing children with basic safety skills will help them to control their fear and take the required actions to be safe.

Prevention and preparation are the keys to safety.

Prevention: Stay vigilant. Most children are lost by careless inattention by parents/guardians. Keep an eye on children and engage them in the shopping or errands. Play games that have you both interacting to keep a constant connection going.

- Hold hands when possible and always keep children in front of you and within eyesight.
- Do NOT leave your children in toy departments to play while you shop.

Preparation: Create mental muscle memory. Practice safety scenarios so that if something threatening arises, children know what to do. Creating mental muscle memory enables them to react more quickly because they have done it before.

- When discussing safety or role-playing scenarios, keep it fun and positive. You want to empower your children, not scare them.
- Children respond surprisingly well to being lost when their toolbelt is full of skills and confidence. They are most often not as panicked as the adults when reunited!

Play “Lost inside a building.” Role play being lost in a store the next time you go shopping.

- Instruct children to call out your name. Most likely, you will be close by.
- Explain that if you do not respond, they should seek adult assistance. During your shopping trip, ask your children who could assist them if they were lost. Have them point out the checkout clerks and store employees they could access for help.
- Remind children NEVER to hide or leave the building.

Play “Lost outside.” Being lost outside adds environmentally associated risks. Teach children to look around for their safety friends: police officers, fire fighters, and paramedics, who will always help them.

- Children who carry a cell phone should know how to connect with you, another trusted adult, and 9-1-1 as a last resort. Teach your child the value of the 9-1-1 system and what constitutes an emergency.
- When you are out in the community, make a game out of pointing out safe places, safe neighbours, and businesses that children could go to in an emergency.

Remember that safety is a process, not an event. Start today for a safer tomorrow.

- Child Safe Canada teaches these skills and more in our two most popular courses, Strangers and Dangers (ages 4–8) and Street Smarts (ages 6–11).

“Prevention Is the Key to Safety”

Child Safe Canada
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