



KNOW THE RULES...

SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

1. When in a public facility always supervise your child, and **ALWAYS** accompany young children to the restroom. Make certain your children know to stay with you at all times while shopping and always **CHECK FIRST** with you or the person in charge before they go anywhere. It is important to know where your children are and whom they are with at all times.
2. If children become separated from you while holiday shopping, teach them to look for people who can be sources of help within the store. For example a uniformed law-enforcement or security officer, store salesperson with a nametag, person with a nametag who is working at the information booth, or a mother with children could be safe "helpers." They should not leave the area, and they should **NEVER** leave the mall or store and go to the parking lot to try and find their car.
3. Make visits to the mall opportunities for your children to practice these "safe shopping" skills. Teach them how to use a public telephone; locate adult sources of help within the mall or a store; and, for older children, go to the restroom with a friend. Practice having them **CHECK FIRST** with you before going anywhere within a mall or store. Leave clothing with your children's names displayed at home, as it can bring about unwelcome attention from inappropriate people who may be looking for an opportunity to start a conversation with your children.
4. Parents or guardians should not leave children alone at public facilities such as video arcades, movie theaters, or playgrounds as a convenient "babysitter" while they are holiday shopping. Never leave children in toy or specialty stores expecting store personnel to supervise and care for your children. They are not trained in this role, and it is not a function of their employment.
5. If you allow your older children to go to the mall or other activities without you, they need to **TAKE A FRIEND**. It's more fun and much safer. Older children should check in with you on a regular basis while they are out. Make certain a clear plan is in place to pick them up including where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans.
6. Nothing takes the place of your supervision when you are in a public place with your children. If you are going holiday shopping and feel that you will be distracted, make other arrangements for the care of your children. It's easy for you and your children to get distracted with all the sights, sounds, and crowds of holiday shopping, so make certain they stay with you at all times.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD SAFETY CALL THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN AT 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678).

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