



IMPORTANT TIPS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO HELP KEEP THEIR CHILDREN SAFER

While many parents and guardians feel they are faced with new and unprecedented challenges when trying to keep their children safer in today's fast paced and increasingly global society, ATA offers these common-sense, general safety tips to help parents and guardians put these challenges into perspective.

1. **Practice basic safety skills with your children.** Make an outing to the mall or a park a “teachable” experience in which your children can practice checking with you, using pay telephones, going to the restroom with a friend, and locating the adults who can help if they need assistance. Remember, allowing your children to wear clothing or carry items in public on which their name is displayed can bring about unwelcome attention from inappropriate people who may be looking for a way to start a conversation with your children.
2. Notice when anyone shows one or all of your children a great deal of attention or begins giving them gifts. **Take the time to talk to your children** about the person and find out why the person is acting this way.
3. **Be sensitive to any changes in your child's behavior or attitude.** Encourage open communication and learn how to be an active listener. Look and listen for small cues and clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing event or feelings. This may be because they are concerned about your reaction to their problems. If your children do confide problems to you, strive to remain calm, non-critical and non-judgmental. Listen compassionately to their concern, and work with them to get the help they need to resolve the problem.
4. **Be sure to screen babysitters and caregivers.** Many states now have a public registry that allows parents and guardians to check out individuals for prior criminal records and sex offenses. Check out references with other families who have used the caregiver or babysitter. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was, and listen carefully to the responses.
5. Teach your children they have the right to say NO to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or action by others and to get out of those situations as quickly as possible. If avoidance is not an option, children should be taught to kick, scream and resist. When in such a situation, teach them to loudly yell that the person is not a parent/guardian and then immediately tell you if this happens. Reassure them you're there to help and it is okay to tell you anything.
6. **Remember there is no substitute for your attention and supervision.** Being available and taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security.

Most ATA/WTTU/STF schools offer FREE Child Safety/Child Abduction Awareness seminars to protect children in their communities. These seminars allow parents and children to learn and practice safety tips, techniques and strategies. Contact your local Songahm Taekwondo school to find out more.

