

What's streetproofing all about? It's about helping children identify and react to situations that are uncomfortable, unwelcome or even dangerous. Streetproofing skills help students become more aware of their surroundings and those in it. They also help to build confidence and independence as students spend more time away from their parents.

Schools, parents and guardians can help make personal safety second nature to a student's daily activities. We can't follow our children around everywhere, but we can teach them to trust their own instincts and "keep their radar up."

In an age-appropriate way, students should learn the following:

- Their name, age, telephone number and address
- A secret family password to identify when someone different will pick them up
- How to reach a parent, guardian or family contact in an emergency
- How to contact police, fire and ambulance personnel
- To let a parent or other responsible adult know where they will be at all times
- Never to say they are alone if they answer the phone
- Never to invite strangers into their home
- Not to enter anyone's home without a parent/guardian's permission
- Not to accept gifts from strangers
- To say "no" to an adult, especially if that person wants them to do something they have been taught is wrong
- That no one has the right to touch any part of his or her body that a bathing suit would cover. The exceptions may be people who are trying to keep them clean (assistance in the washroom) or healthy (doctors or nurses)
- To tell a parent or guardian if someone has asked them to keep a secret
- Never to play in deserted buildings or isolated areas
- Never to take shortcuts through empty parks or fields
- Never to approach or enter a stranger's car
- Never to hitchhike
- About the Block Parent Program and Logo
- That adults should not be asking children or young people for help. A common technique to lure youngsters is to pretend to be searching for a lost puppy or kitten
- That if they become separated from parents at a store or in a mall, they should go to a cashier, security guard or counter clerk
- That if they are being followed, they should run home, or go to the nearest public place and yell for help
- To report to a parent, school authority or police officer anyone who exposes private parts
- That police officers are their friends and that they can rely on them if they are in trouble
- That if someone does something bad to them, parents/guardians will not be angry with them, but will need to know what happened.

Middle and secondary school students should be reminded to:

- Travel with at least one other person whenever possible

- Keep valuables such as cell phones, expensive jewelry, laptops and personal music devices (iPod, walkman, CD players) out of site as much as possible when in public places
- Be aware of suspicious behaviour and try to remember what the person or car looked like so they can report it to parents or the police if necessary (plate numbers can be written in the dirt or snow if nothing else is available)
- Keep their money hidden and if they are attacked for it, to give it up rather than risk injury
- Carry identification.

Adult Responsibilities

Parents and/or guardians can help to keep their children safe by:

- Keeping contact information up-to-date. The school needs to know who to contact in case a child does not arrive on time.
- Providing the school and day-care centre with the names of persons to whom their child may be released. Inform the school immediately if plans change and someone else will be collecting their child.
- Keeping an up-to-date colour photograph of their child.
- Knowing their child's approximate weight and height.
- Keeping a medical and dental history of children's blood type, medical problems, scars, broken bones, pulled teeth, braces, glasses, medication allergies, fingerprints etc.
- Labeling children's clothing and personal items (lunch box, knap sack, toys etc.) on the inside, rather than the outside with last name or code name only. This is important because children are less likely to be fearful of someone who knows their name. Students should avoid wearing athletic sweaters with their name on the back in public, as they advertise the student's identity.
- Checking all potential babysitters by calling references and families who have used the sitter before.
- Knowing the phone number and address of their children's friends.
- Never leaving children alone in a public place, stroller or car.
- Accompanying children to the bathroom in a public place, and advising them not to loiter in or around the area.
- Accompanying children on door-to-door activities such as Hallowe'en and fundraising campaigns.
- Making a list of important names, telephone numbers and addresses and placing it where it will be easily accessible to children at home.
- Arranging an alternative place where children can wait if parents are delayed, especially in the colder winter evenings. Suggest a well-lit store or inside an arena or school.

Reminding children to "keep their radar up." Teach children to watch, listen and trust their instincts. Discuss why it's never silly to be 'scared' and that instinct is one of the best ways to spot and avoid danger.

- Encouraging children to use a consistent route for walking home with a buddy, in case parents need to find them between school and home.
- Making a point of knowing their child's friends. Keep a list of their telephone numbers, where they live and get to know their parents. Teach children never to enter anyone's home without your permission.

With contributions from Stanley Park Public School in Kitchener and the Toronto Police Service