



# Personal Safety Skills that Reduce Risk of Sexual Victimization and Exploitation of Children and Youth

Safeguarding children and youth is a shared responsibility of schools, families, and community. In school, your child will learn the following personal safety concepts and skills in every grade. It is important for families to review these concepts at home, too. This includes having ongoing conversations and using everyday opportunities to practice incorporating skills to increase their safety.



## PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Personal boundaries — or limits — are central to personal safety. Learning to establish and assert personal limits, as well as respect the limits of others, helps keep people safe. Teach children to assert personal boundaries and that it's okay to say 'no' to others, including to adults, if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Use 'what if' scenarios to practice establishing personal boundaries and responding safely if someone does not respect their limits. Use teachable moments to model healthy/safe boundaries for children. Show them how to set personal boundaries and how to respect the personal boundaries of others.



## SAFE AND UNSAFE SECRETS

Teach children the difference between safe and unsafe secrets. It is important for children to learn how to confide safely and to build closeness in relationships. It is also necessary for children to learn when keeping secrets is unsafe and they need to tell a safe adult. Safe secrets are harmless, fun, and always have an ending — such as a surprise party or a present. Unsafe secrets are harmful, and make kids feel worried, scared, confused, and/or sick — such as secrets about touching, picture taking or videos, and/or whenever someone tells them never to tell something. Reinforce you want to know about unsafe secrets, not because they are in trouble, but it is your responsibility to take care of them.



## SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Teach children to use the buddy system and explain how this increases their safety. For young children a 'buddy' is an adult or someone old enough to supervise them. For older children and teens a 'buddy' also includes peers. Children require different levels of supervision based on factors such as age, development, environments, and individual characteristics.



## INSTINCTS

Talk with children about the body’s response to danger and how to trust their instincts (their intuition). Discuss the feelings they get in their body when they feel scared, nervous, or when something doesn’t feel quite right. Use ‘what if’ scenarios to practice identifying feelings that alert us of danger and responding safely, such as being assertive, leaving the situation, and getting help from a safe adult.



## HUMAN RIGHTS

Talk with children about their human rights. Reinforce the message that all children have the right to be safe from abuse and treated with dignity and respect. Help children recognize their own self-worth and teach them to expect to be treated well.



## SUPERVISION

Reinforce the importance of adult supervision related to children’s safety. Explain that a parent or caregiver’s job is to help children be safe. Reinforce that children always need permission from their parents before going anywhere with anyone — whether it is someone they know or someone they don’t know. Use ‘what if’ scenarios to practice checking first with parents before going somewhere with someone.



## ONLINE SAFETY

Talk with children about online safety. Explain that the internet is a public place and set the expectation that parents/caregivers will monitor them online. Establish online safety rules, such as checking first with parents/caregivers before talking to people or sharing personal information, pictures, or videos. Encourage children to tell you if anything happens online that makes them uncomfortable or worried, or if someone talks to them and asks inappropriate or weird questions. Explain they won’t be in trouble or lose privileges, and that it is not their fault if someone is inappropriate with them online. Explain that you want to know if this happens because it is your responsibility to take care of them.



The Canadian Centre for Child Protection has the following resources for families: [Protecting your Child: Reduce the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse](#), information about personal safety and supervision at [kidsintheknow.ca](http://kidsintheknow.ca), and information about online safety at [protectkidsonline.ca](http://protectkidsonline.ca).

For more information, contact your school counsellor, teacher(s), YMCA Schools Settlement/YREACH staff, or Immigration Francophone staff.

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