

# "Stranger Danger" and How to Talk About It

*Most experts consider stranger danger to be a dated term. Shifting to something like "tricky people" is crucial because children are most often harmed by someone they know. "Tricky people" may make children uncomfortable, ask to keep secrets, or break boundaries. This framing helps children understand that danger isn't always from strangers and teaches them to trust their instincts and recognize inappropriate behavior.*

## Where to start:

- **Reshaping Stranger Danger**
  - Teach children to recognize "tricky people," not just strangers, who make them uncomfortable or ask for secrets.
- **Teach Safety Rules and Emergency Plans**
  - Walk routes with children, pointing out safe places. Role-play responses to risky situations, like yelling or pulling away from strangers. Ensure children know how to call 911 and have a list of trusted adults for emergencies.
- **Set Physical Boundaries**
  - Encourage children to say "no" to unwanted touch and discuss consent regularly.
- **Clear Instructions for Different Environments**
  - Provide safety instructions for different places like parks, malls, and online spaces.
- **Safe Strangers Awareness**
  - Teach children to stay alert and aware of their surroundings and how to seek help from bystanders if they feel threatened. Identify safe strangers, like police officers or store clerks, who can help if they need it.

## For Young Kids:

- **Stay Close**
  - Explain the importance of staying close to trusted adults in public places and never wandering off alone.
- **Listen to Feelings**
  - Encourage children to listen to their feelings and trust their instincts if they feel uncomfortable around someone.

## For Tweens:

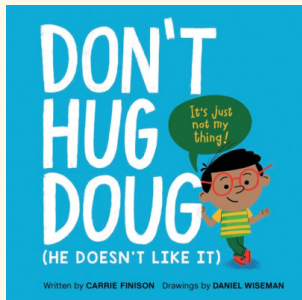
- **Online Safety**
  - Teach kids not to share personal info online and recognize online strangers.
- **Code Words**
  - Use a family code word for unexpected pickups to ensure safety.
- **Self-Defense**
  - Teach basic self-defense and encourage trusting instincts to avoid unsafe situations.
- **Consistency and Repetition**
  - Regularly reinforce safety lessons and discuss safety scenarios.

## Additional Resources / Sources

- KidSmartz (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)
  - <https://www.missingkids.org/education/kidsmartz>
- National Children's Advocacy Center
  - <https://www.nationalcac.org/for-parents/>
- Safely Every After
  - <https://safelyeverafter.com/>
- Scholastic
  - <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/social-emotional-learning/social-skills-for-kids/talking-about-stranger-safety.html>
- Indiana State Police
  - [https://www.in.gov/isp/files/Child\\_Molestation\\_Prevention.pdf](https://www.in.gov/isp/files/Child_Molestation_Prevention.pdf)
- Indiana Gov
  - [https://www.in.gov/dcs/files/Home\\_Alone\\_Brochure.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dcs/files/Home_Alone_Brochure.pdf)
  - <https://www.in.gov/dhs/get-prepared/general-safety/resources-for-kids/>
- Illinois State Police
  - <https://isp.illinois.gov/TrafficSafety/ParentsGuide>
- UNH - Crimes Against Children Research Center
  - <https://www.unh.edu/ccrc/resources>
- The Gentle Counsellor
  - <https://thegentlecounsellor.com/talking-to-your-child-about-safety-strangers-tricky-people/>

### Books Available Through Evergreen IN

## Picture Books To Teach About Consent



- **Don't Hug Doug (He Doesn't Like it)**  
*by Carrie Finison*
- **Can I Give You a Squish?**  
*by Emily Neilson*
- **Rissy No Kissies**  
*by Katey Howes*
- **My Body! What I say goes!**  
*by Jayneen Sanders*

## Picture Books To Teach About Safety



- **Be Safe Around Strangers**  
*by Bridget Heos*
- **What if a Stranger Approaches You?**  
*by Anara Guard*
- **The Berenstain Bears Learn About Strangers**  
*by Stan and Jan Berenstain*