

## Safety instructions

for parents and educators in case of emergencies and incidents involving children. These safety instructions are specifically designed for young primary school children who are beginning to roam independently outside the home and explore the internet on their own. At that age, children should be able to manage emergencies, problems, and risks, and know how to act and who to contact.

These safety instructions are based on the guidelines from the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) for children aged 4 to 11 (*Tunne- ja turvataitoja lapsille 2015*, Lajunen Kaija, Andell Minna, Ylenius-Lehtonen Mirja, THL:n ohjeita 4–11-vuotiaille lapsille p. 101).

Safety is a fundamental right for children. Safeguard this fundamental right and provide children with appropriate safety instructions for different situations.

### Emergency number 112 and the EU's common child helpline numbers 116000 and 116111

1. **Emergency number 112:** Teach your child the emergency number 112 and its correct use. The emergency number should only be called in urgent situations where assistance from emergency services is needed. Call 112 if you know or suspect that life, health, property, or the environment is threatened or in danger.

More information: [When to call 112? – Emergency Response Centre Agency](#) and [Problems and enquiries – Emergency Response Centre Agency \(112.fi\)](#) (in Finnish).

2. Teach your child what qualifies as an emergency and when it is appropriate to call the emergency number. Go through different problem scenarios with your child, giving examples of situations where help and advice is needed. Together, consider whether it is appropriate to call the emergency number in the following situations:
  - Their friend hurts their leg badly and cannot move (*yes*)
  - The dog runs away from the yard (*no, unless* the dog is known to be dangerous)
  - If the child notices another child carrying a blade at school (*yes* – it is illegal to carry sharp weapons in public, and no weapons, including toy weapons, are allowed at school). If someone is in a car outside the school, inviting children to get in (*yes*). If a fight breaks out among pupils (first try to contact a nearby adult.
  - If no adults are available and someone's health is at risk, it is okay to call 112). If someone in their circle of friends breaks the law by taking or damaging
  - someone else's property (consider the situation on a case-by-case basis. It might be advisable to discuss the incident with an adult first.)

- If they see someone stealing a bike, for example, it is okay to call the emergency number.
- An animal in distress – when to call the emergency number [Animal in distress – when to call 112? - Emergency Response Centre Agency Instructions - Emergency Response Centre Agency - Finland \(112.fi\)](#)

3. Make sure your children know their parents' phone number by heart and consider having them memorise the number of another trusted adult as well.

4. The EU's single child helpline number is 116111. Other helplines for children: In addition to the emergency number, there are child helplines that children can call if there is no emergency: inform your child about these services, including The EU's single child helpline: In Finland, the child helpline is run by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto, MLL): [www.nuortennetti.fi/apua-ja-tukea/lasten-ja-nuorten-puhelin/](http://www.nuortennetti.fi/apua-ja-tukea/lasten-ja-nuorten-puhelin/) (in Finnish and Swedish). Calls to the child helpline are free of charge.

Child helpline in Swedish: Mon-Tue at 14–17 and Wed-Thu at 14–20 at 0800 96 116.

Help is also available from:

- Apuu chat (for 7–15-year-olds) is open every day from 9–22, address [apuu.fi](http://apuu.fi) apuu chat, SOS Children's Village chat support.
- SekasinChat (for 12–29-year-olds) <https://sekasin.fi/> (Mieli ry's chat service) (in Finnish).
- In crisis situations, help is available from Mieli ry's national crisis hotline: [MIELI crisis hotline 09 2525 0111](tel:0925250111) (in English and several other languages).

5. The EU's single hotline for missing children 116000: If a child gets lost or goes missing during a family trip within the EU, help is available through the EU's single helpline number, 116000. In Finland, the first point of contact for reporting a missing child is the emergency number 112. For instructions see the link to the Emergency Response Centre and <https://www.kadonneetlapset.fi/en-gb/missingchild/>.

When travelling abroad, it is a good idea to have your child wear a wristband with their parents' phone numbers on it, in case they get lost. Parents have a responsibility to supervise their children and ensure their safety. For instance, children should not be left unsupervised to sleep alone in a hotel room.

**School routes and school neighbourhoods, adults asking children to get into their car or pretending to need help**

6. School routes and areas around the school: If a stranger asks children to get into their car outside or near the school, children should be instructed never to enter a stranger's car and to report the incident immediately to the emergency number and the school. They should also be instructed to try and memorise the car's registration number, if possible.
  
7. On the way to school, children may also encounter strangers asking for help or advice. These adults may ask the child for directions to an address or for help with something and may try to convince the child to go with them, to help look for a lost object, for example. Instruct your child that they do not need to assist such strangers and that they should leave the scene as soon as possible. Adults can and should ask other adults for help and advice. There have been cases where a stranger has used various excuses to get a child to go with them or away from a public place. These individuals may intend to abuse the children, and there have been some very disturbing cases.
  
8. Children should be instructed not to meet an unknown online friend without an adult present. A child should never go with an adult, even if they know them, without prior agreement from a parent or guardian. If a child deviates from the agreed-upon schedule, the parents should be informed to prevent unnecessary missing child reports.
  
9. According to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) guidelines, children should never enter dark or deserted places alone without an accompanying adult.
  
10. Discuss with your child what they should do if they get lost, are being followed, or encounter someone who is acting strangely or in a threatening manner. Following THL guidelines, the child should be instructed to go to a shop or another public place with many people and inform an adult about the problem.
  
11. Instruct your child never to accept sweets, drinks, food, or cigarettes from people they don't know.

### **Child alone at home and privacy protection**

12. Child alone at home: instruct your child never to open the door if they do not know who is on the other side. Children should also never tell anyone on the phone that they are home alone. They should be instructed to ask who their parent(s) can call back.

13. Privacy protection: children should be instructed not to give out their contact information (name, address, phone number, e-mail address) to people they do not know.
14. Privacy protection also includes teaching children never to post or share photographs of themselves naked or partially undressed on the internet. Teach your child that some parts of their body are private, and that these are the areas that are covered by their swimsuit. If someone asks a child for inappropriate photos or sends such photos to a child online, the child should be instructed to inform an adult immediately.
15. Privacy also includes not publishing offensive pictures of another child on the internet or elsewhere. Taking photographs in public places is generally allowed but publishing images that may offend others is not appropriate.
16. Teach your child how to use the internet safely: for guidance, see for example: <https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/en/> and <https://www.mll.fi/en/>.
17. If a child sees something upsetting or someone is behaving strangely towards them online or elsewhere, they should inform a safe adult.
18. Talk to your child about who counts as 'strangers' and how such people may try to deceive children. Child abusers often succeed in their harmful intentions by gradually getting to know the child online, pretending to be someone else and of a different age than they actually are, and hiding their true intentions. Child abuse is almost always based on deception. Tell your child what deception means. A child is in danger if they go out without telling their parent(s) to meet a stranger who has tricked them into such a meeting.

**Help is always available, and the child is not to blame**

19. Help for a child: If something unfortunate has already happened – for example if the child has sent naked pictures of themselves to a stranger online – prepare them in advance by telling them what to do and what such a situation may entail. Tell your child not to blame themselves, emphasising that the responsibility always lies with the adults, and remind them that help is always available. Some children may become depressed in such situations, which is why it is crucial to seek professional help and expert advice on how to support the child in overcoming anxiety and obtaining support. Children should never be made to feel guilty for something that an adult is responsible for. If a child falls victim to sex extortion – where someone who has obtained a nude photo of the child threatens to share it and demands money – the

case should be reported to the police, and guidance on how to collect evidence should be sought.

Many children turn to the internet to find information about sex if they do not have access to other sources of information. Ensure that, when the need for such information arises, the child knows where to find accurate and reliable information about sexuality. Criminals targeting children on the internet often exploit their curiosity about sexuality to manipulate them.

### **An offer too good to be true and dangerous social media challenges**

20. Teach your child to use common sense and pay attention to their 'internal alarm bells'. Discuss situations that should trigger their 'alarm bells' and advise the child on when to be cautious. Sometimes, someone offers something online, on the way to school, or elsewhere that seems too good to be true. An offer that seems too good to be true is a tactic commonly used by scammers. That is when the alarms should go off. An offer that seems too good to be true is often a bait and a trap designed to get the child or young person to do something the scammer or criminal wants.

Teach your child not to be a 'yes person' or otherwise easily swayed. Their internal alarm bells should go off if friends or an online challenge pressures them into doing something dangerous. The internet is full of dangerous online challenges that your child should never attempt. See [Lethal trends – MLL](#) for more information.

The infographic is set against a yellow background and contains several key messages:

- TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT DANGEROUS CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** (Accompanied by a speech bubble icon and a plus sign).
- TEACH THE CHILD** (Accompanied by icons of colorful pills and a child's hands).
- IF SOMETHING SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT'S BEST TO BE CAUTIOUS!** (A central warning message).
- DOES YOUR CHILD KNOW WHEN TO CALL THE EMERGENCY NUMBER?** (Accompanied by a circular image of a child on a phone and a large '112' icon).
- SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN** (A header for the bottom section).
- TEACH THE CHILD** (A sub-header for the bottom section).
- HOW TO CALL THE EMERGENCY NUMBER** (A sub-header for the bottom section).
- 112** (A large blue box with the emergency number, with an arrow pointing to it).
- WHEN? WHERE? WHO CAN CALL?** (Questions listed below the '112' box).

At the bottom, there are logos for the European Commission, the European Union, and the Ministry of Health.