

HOW TO TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT SAFETY

How can you teach a child about safety?

1. **Start with the emergency number** – practice together when and how to call. A good guide can be found in the Emergency Response Centre Agency’s video “Lapsi soittaa hätänumeroon” (“A child calls the emergency number”).
2. **Talk about emergencies and dangerous situations** – using examples from everyday life.
3. **Use visual aids** – the illustrated children’s safety leaflet is a good tool and has been approved by the Finnish National Agency for Education’s safety expert. You can also make a safety card for your child, including their name, address and important phone numbers.
4. **Repeat and practice** – review safety topics regularly and according to the child’s age and level of development.

Emergency number 112 – for the safety of children

Tell your child that they may call the emergency number when something serious happens, such as:

- someone is injured or suddenly becomes ill
- a fire breaks out, or something at home starts to smoke
- an accident happens

A child should know that they themselves are also allowed — and able — to call the emergency number if no adults are present. You can call the emergency number even if the phone has no credit or is locked.

Recognizing dangerous situations

In addition to emergencies, it is important for a child to learn to recognize dangerous situations that may occur, for example, on the way to school or online.

For example:

- **A stranger approaching:** If an unknown adult asks for help or tries to lure the child along, the child needs to know that they do not have to — and must not — go with them or get into a car.
- **Dangers online:** On the internet, you may meet people who are not who they claim to be. Children should be taught not to send photos or arrange meetings without their guardian’s permission.

Although such situations are rare, they can happen. Every autumn somewhere in Finland there are cases of children being lured into cars. That is why it is good for children to know the basic rules for staying safe.

Examples from real life

In one case, on the way to school a child encountered an adult who asked for help finding a ring in the woods. The child went along, and the situation led to a serious crime. Such incidents remind us that children must know that they must not go with or get into a car with a stranger — even if the adult seems friendly.

An 8-year-old girl walking to school stopped to help an adult who asked for assistance. She was abducted into a van, but she had a phone, which made it possible to locate and rescue her from a summer cottage where the man had taken her.

MATERIALS

Printable safety instructions and the safety leaflet, as well as the Emergency Response Centre Agency's guidelines and videos.

You can use materials from the Emergency Response Centre Agency and the safety instructions and illustrated one-page children's safety leaflet/checklist available on the Children's Fundamental Rights Association website. They can also be printed from:

www.lastenperusoikeudet.fi

Videos:

“Lapsi soittaa hätänumeroon” (A child calls the emergency number), YouTube (Emergency Response Centre Agency)

“Ett barn ringer nödnumret”, YouTube (Emergency Response Centre Agency)

Other materials from the Emergency Response Centre Agency:

<https://112.fi/opeta-lasta>

<https://112.fi/112-paivan-materiaalit>

Materials from the Children's Fundamental Rights Association:

www.lastenperusoikeudet.fi/turvaohjeet — available in four languages: Finnish, Swedish, English and Sámi.

Safety leaflet/Checklist (A4): Finnish and Swedish (English version coming),

www.lastenperusoikeudet.fi

Guidelines “How to teach children about safety”: www.lastenperusoikeudet.fi

The materials can be printed free of charge from the website, where they are available in printable format.

Videos

“How to call the emergency number”: www.youtube.com/Lastenperusoikeudet

“Hur ringer man nödnumret”: www.youtube.com/Lastenperusoikeudet

Social media campaign 2025: Emergency number 112, 116000 and safety instructions: materials and images can be found on the Facebook page of Lasten perusoikeudet – Children's Fundamental Rights ry.

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE (THL)

“Feelings and safety skills for children” 2015, Kaija Lajunen, Minna Andell, Mirja Ylenius-Lehtonen.
THL’s guidance for children aged 4–11, p. 101.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

First, watch the video “Lapsi soittaa hätänumeroon” (Emergency Response Centre Agency, YouTube).

- What is the emergency number: 112
- What is an emergency
- When should you help other people
- How to call the emergency number
- Who is allowed to call the emergency number
- Dangerous situations to avoid
- Situations that should be reported to the school or guardians
- Situations that should be discussed with a trusted adult