

Holiday Safety Tips for your Children



The holidays provide a wonderful opportunity for family and friends to gather and celebrate. It is also a time of continuous activity, with errands to run and scheduled activities that demand attention and time.

The Tampa Police Department encourages parents and guardians to talk with kids about safety **before** attending bustling shopping malls or public celebrations. Crowds are greater this time of year and it is easy for children to become separated from their parents and guardians. If it happens, you need a plan; your children should know what to do. And remember: child safety is a year-round priority. Parents and guardians need to look out for kids and keep communication lines open 365 days a year!

1. **Teach your children to stay with you at all times while shopping.** They should always check first with you or the person in charge before they go anywhere. Always supervise your children in a public facility and accompany young children to the restroom.
2. **Make a plan in case you become separated.** Have older kids meet you in a pre-designated spot (e.g. the sales counter or mall information booth). Teach younger children to look for people who can help within the store or mall — a uniformed security officer, a salesperson with a nametag, a mother with children, etc. They should never leave the store/mall or go to the parking lot to look for you or your car.
3. **Turn shopping trips into opportunities for your children to practice these “safe shopping” skills.**
4. **Leave clothing that displays your children’s names at home,** as it can prompt unwelcome attention from people who may be looking for an opportunity to start a conversation with your children.
5. **Never leave children in toy stores or public facilities** (e.g. video arcades, movie theaters, and playgrounds) and expect store personnel to supervise your children.
6. **Have older children take a friend,** if you allow them to go shopping or to public functions without you. It’s more fun and much safer. Older children should check in with you on a regular basis while they are out. Agree on a clear plan for picking them up including: where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans.

Make other arrangements for childcare, if you feel that you will be distracted during holiday shopping.