

Street Proofing Tips for Teens and Parents

Street-proofing is an essential skill for all students. Although it is often taught at the elementary level, it is also important for older students to remain vigilant as they travel to and from school on their own. Through practical knowledge and training, schools and parents can be prepared to deal with the various situations that students may encounter.

What's street-proofing all about? It's about helping kids identify and react to situations that are uncomfortable, unwelcome or even dangerous. Street-proofing skills help students become more aware of their surroundings and those in it.

Schools, parents and guardians can help make personal safety second nature to student's daily activities. We can't follow our children around everywhere, but we can teach them to trust their own instincts and "keep their radar up."

Secondary school students should be reminded to:

- Travel with at least one other person whenever possible;
- Avoid taking shortcuts through parks and fields;
- Walk in well-lit and well-travelled areas;
- Keep valuables such as cell phones, expensive jewellery, laptops and personal music devices (iPod, M3P players, and CD players) out of sight as much as possible when in public places;
- Be aware of suspicious behaviour and try to remember what the person or car looked like so they can report it to a teacher, Vice Principal, parents or the police if necessary (plate numbers can be written in the dirt or snow if nothing else is available);
- Keep their money hidden;
- If they are attacked, threatened or robbed, give up money and other valuables easily rather than risk injury. Comply with the attackers' requests. Do not fight back. You never know if they have a weapon;
- Always carry identification.

Parents and/or guardians can help to keep their children safe by:

- Keep school contact information up-to-date including cell and business numbers. The school needs to know who to contact in cases of emergencies;
- Making a point of knowing your child's friends. Keep a list of their telephone numbers (cell and home), where they live and get to know their parents;
- Keep an up-to-date colour photograph of their children;
- Know your child's approximate weight and height;
- Keep a medical and dental history of children's blood type, medical problems, scars, broken bones, pulled teeth, braces, glasses, medication allergies, fingerprints etc;

Taken from The Ontario Principals' Council with contributions from the Toronto Police Services