

# Student Safety News.com

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How to Keep Kids Safe from the 5 Latest **Back to School** Dangers!

**Summer has ended and kids are finally heading back to school, but a child safety expert and LAPD officer warns parents and teachers that this can be one of the most dangerous times of the year. Child predators are migrating from traditional methods to alternate media as a means of luring children. Research shows that 95% of the safety tips we teach children are outdated, leaving our youth unequipped to face today's dangers.**

Marina del Rey, California- Do you still tell your children, 'Don't talk to *strangers*,' 'Use the *buddy system*' and 'Be safe while surfing the Internet?' If so, you might be unknowingly placing them in danger. Not teaching kids the full extent of safety, from outdoors to on-line, is like leaving them in the woods without survival gear; like prey amidst a world of predators.

Tony Newsom is author of the "Student Safety Tips Series" and has over thirty years of experience in protecting adults and children from predators that make a career out of searching for their next victim.

Just years ago, it was okay to tell a child not to talk to strangers. At that time the average child abductor relied on conversations as a means to gain leverage over a child. Now modern day predators have evolved and they are using new tactics, as should parents and children.

The primary focus for a child abductor is not to kidnap a child in person. On the contrary, their number one goal is to remain unseen while abducting a child and now the Internet and console games create the perfect haven for this.

According to the Department of Justice, more than 1,379,000 American students were victims of violent crimes in 2006 and statistics are on the rise.

As students return to school, safety must remain an active focus in order to avoid a repeat of record high child abductions. To assure that no student is left behind in safety, Newsom has created 5 imperative safety tips to protect your child:

## **Back to School Safety Tip #1**

- If you tell your child not to talk to strangers, give him/her a plan of what to do when they are confronted by someone who may cause them harm.

If confronted by a stranger, DON'T talk to that person or look at them directly in the eye. DO immediately begin to walk briskly or run, if necessary, to a responsible adult and tell them what just occurred.

The responsible adult should be someone the parent has deemed to be trustworthy. Examples can be a school crossing guard, teacher, or another parent whom you know and trust.

## **Back to School Safety Tip#2**

- Do not spend a lot of time trying to persuade your children to use the buddy system as a means of personal safety. There are quite a few flaws with the buddy system. Many child abductors diligently seek the opportunity to kidnap multiple victims.

Recently, a 41-year-old Pizzeria Manager from Missouri received a life sentence for kidnapping two boys. You might remember this story making headlines and the parents appearing on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' in 2007. The boys, 13-year-old Ben O. and 11-year-old Shawn H., were kidnapped while walking and riding their bike in a safe area, near their homes. Ben went missing for four full years, while Shawn was kidnapped for a month. Michael Devlin was charged with 69 counts of forcible sodomy, each punishable up to a life sentence.

This shocking story brought increasing concern and fear for many, causing security personnel and parents to rethink safety measures for children.

Newsom suggests that children remain in the immediate eye sight of their parents, teachers or a responsible adult, at all times.

Parents and educators should teach their students "The New & Improved Buddy System," which inspires parent participation on behalf of children, not just their own.

For example, if your child's 7-year-old friend walks to and from school each day by herself, the New & Improved Buddy System encourages your child to ask you to contact her friend's parents and ask if her friend can commute with the two of you each day.

## **Back to School Safety Tip #3**

- Protect your child from Internet predators and become familiar with the sites they surf on a regular basis. Thousands of predators can have access to your child's personal information, placing him/her in a vulnerable situation, without you even knowing. Many of them spend three to four months searching MySpace, FaceBook and other Internet sources to find out a child's likes, dislikes, school, home address and favorite places prior to making their very first Internet contact.

There are many cases of child predators meeting a child on-line then trying to move the game off the screen and turn the relationship into something bigger.

A Utah man was charged with sexual exploitation of a minor for enticing a 12-year-old boy into having sex. Needless to say, they met through an online game, according to Utah Police.

In December, a Michigan suspect was convicted of sexual conduct with a minor. Officers say Adam Glenn Schroeder used the game, *World of Warcraft*, to lure a 12-year-old girl into having sex with him. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

These examples show that it isn't enough to simply tell your child to be careful on the Internet with strangers; parents must monitor their use so that their child won't become the next victim.

It's also important not to supply any tool that will be useful to a predator, since there are such a high number of them surfing the net on a daily basis, possibly looking at your child or one you know as their next prey.

Newsom recommends removing any photo of your child from the Internet and any posted information concerning where they live, attend school or hang out.

#### **Back to School Safety Tip #4**

- About 80% of on-line pedophiles use chat-rooms to make their luring attempts. Every time your child goes on-line, there's a 50% chance they may engage in an on-going conversation with someone who is pretending to be a young child, says Officer Newsom.

Prior to going on-line, a child should always obtain approval from a parent or teacher. This should also be done before the child visits any new sites, accepts emails or emails anyone.

Parents and teachers should also feel comfortable monitoring their children's on-line activity. If any of your children believe that they have a right to privacy, Newsom encourages you to advise them that using the internet is a privilege, not a right. Also advise them that you are only looking out for their well-being.

#### **Back to School Safety Tip #5**

- Many pedophiles use fictitious photographs that they have copied from the Internet in order to pose as an adolescent from another state or country. As a form of preparation, they usually spend 6-12 months getting to know a child on-line (with chats or Internet games) prior to ever attempting to meet them face to face.

Since it is difficult to know who is really a child and who is not, parents should refrain from having their child play on-line games with people they haven't met.

As students return to school this year, please join with me by forwarding this information to all the parents and educators you know. Together we can make a difference and protect our children.

**Many of the safety tips that you have just read were taken from Tony Newsom's Student Safety Tips Series. His 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade book, as well as his 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade book and "Parent's Guide for Raising Safer k-12 Students" are all available in English and Spanish. For further information, visit: [StudentSafetyTips.com](http://StudentSafetyTips.com)**

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