

Top 10 Tips for Teaching Kids About Fire Safety

Child care providers, teachers and parents alike should partner together to teach children of all ages, and especially youngsters, about fire safety. Here are 10 tips for teaching fire safety for kids.

1. Escape Route Planning

Designate two ways out of every room, if at all possible. Today's media rooms (rooms created without windows) can create a particular fire entrapment issue, and parents should evaluate their home and establish a plan in those instances.

2. Windows Are For More Than Fresh Air

Make sure that windows are not stuck closed, that screens can be removed quickly, and that security bars can be opened. For parents in particular, if a child's bedroom is upstairs, they should be able to complete these tasks in the event of an emergency.

3. Second Floor Safety

Escape ladders should be placed near second floor windows, and children should practice using them. For extremely young kids, a "mini-exercise" from a first-floor window can at least educate the child as to expectations.

4. Feeling Way to Safety

Children should practice feeling their way out of the home in the dark or with their eyes closed. Parents and providers can turn this into a game by blindfolding a child and placing in a room and asking them to feel their way to a designated area. Daycares and child care providers can set it up an obstacle course, and then provide cues and help so that when they reach a designated end point, a special treat awaits! (It could be as simple as lunch served outside!)

5. 9-1-1 Is A Critical Teaching Skill

Children show how to call 911. Consider teaching a 911 song to reinforce the numbers (one option is sung to "Frere Jacques"): There's a fire! There's a fire! 9-1-1! 9-1-1! Call the fire department! Call the fire department! 9-1-1! 9-1-1! Reinforce this by letting them practice on an unplugged phone. Or, have them create telephones with large keypads they can practice on. (One crafty child care provider uses the small sticky notes taped on a cardboard phone cut-out.)

6. Smoke Detectors 101

Teach children about smoke detectors, why they are installed, how they work, and the sound that they make. Children need to be able to associate the sound going off with a fire as part of fire safety for kids. Adults should change batteries regularly to avoid having the alarm go off because batteries are running low, and risk frightening a child.

7. Out Means Stay Out

Teach children that once they are out of a burning house or building, they must go to the designated place and never, ever venture back in. If someone or a family pet is missing, they should inform a fire fighter or adult. There are too many tragedies that could have been avoided in the cases where an individual who has gotten out safely to venture back in the home or building, only to perish.

8. It's In The Touch

Instruct kids how to check doors to see if they are hot, and if so, how to find another way out. Fire safety for kids includes having them find a towel to use for handling, touching or grabbing items to avoid burns, and to also use the towel or cover to protect their faces and cover their mouths.

9. Stop, Drop and Roll

Teach kids what to do in the event that their clothes catch fire. Make sure they understand "stop, drop and roll." Many a fire-related injury could have been avoided or greatly minimized if a child heeded this advice instead of the natural instinct of running.

10. Practice Monthly

Practice your escape plan at least twice a year with children as part of fire safety for kids, preferably monthly. Families and providers should also practice fire drills and alter areas affected by fire.