



DISABILITY SAFETY TOOLKIT: SAFETY TIPS FOR SELF ADVOCATES

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST

Sometimes, you might find yourself lost and unsure of how to get home or what to do next.



Many parents and professionals are worried about this. They have suggested different ideas to know where you are.

One idea is to put devices on people with disabilities that will show them where you are on a computer. They also suggest having special disability identification or ID cards.

Most of us would prefer to have the ability to look for help if we get lost. That is better than being stopped from going where we want to go.

Here are some ways to stay safe if you find yourself lost:

Make a Plan for What to Do If You Get Lost

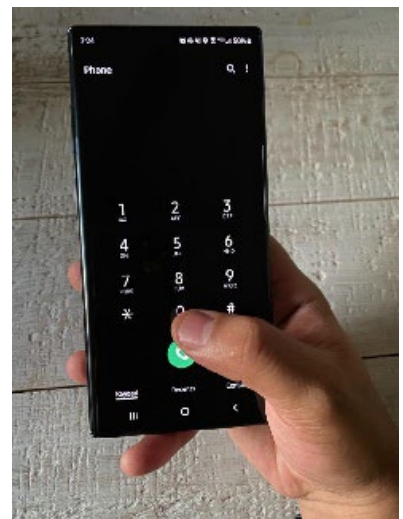
It is a good idea to have a plan in case you get lost.

Here are some ideas that you can include in your plan:

Contacting your friends or family:

Always carry a phone with you. Make sure it is charged.

If you have a smartphone, you can download a personal safety app that allows you to share your location with people. This way, you can send your location to someone you trust if you are lost.



Save phone numbers of people you know. You can call or text them for help.

If you do not have a phone, carry a list of phone numbers. You can borrow someone's phone to make a call or send a text in case of an emergency.

Asking for help:

You can use your augmentative and assistive communication device, also called AAC device, to ask for help. You can program a message into your device to use when you get lost. The message should state your name, disability, and that you are lost and need help.



You can also carry a printed card with a message that you can show to people if you get lost. Be careful when showing it to police officers. Let the police officer know you will be pulling something out of your pocket so they do not feel threatened.

Always carry some form of identification or ID. Your ID should include your name, address, and an emergency contact. This will help others help you in case of an emergency.

Carry credit cards or money with you. You may need to use a taxi to get home.



Avoid rides from strangers who are not first responders like police officers or firefighters. Especially if you do not have your phone with you.

Instead, use a taxi or rideshare service. You can also call a friend to pick you up.



It is okay to ask a stranger for directions when you are in a public place.

- If a stranger offer to guide you from one public place to another, do not follow them into areas where there are no people
- If you feel nervous about where a stranger is taking you, tell them you would rather go a different way
- If a stranger keeps trying to lead you somewhere you feel unsafe, tell them that you want them to leave you alone. Do not worry about sounding rude or getting loud
- If you have trouble with faces, listen to their voice and body language. Ask them for their name

When using a taxi, Uber, or Lyft:

Get to know the taxis in your area. Taxis usually have a sign on top of the car. They may also look a certain way like having the same paint colors.



Before getting in an Uber or Lyft, check if your name or address are on the driver's phone.

Most Uber or Lyft drivers will say your name and the address where you are going. If they do not, ask them for that information.

If you have trouble asking questions by voice, write them down or use your AAC device before your ride arrives.

Make sure the license plate on the car matches the one listed on the Uber or Lyft app. If you have trouble reading or remembering it, ask someone nearby to read it aloud for you.

Helping people find you:

Create a list of places you often visit and share it with someone you trust. This will help them find you if they need to.

- If you are with a group, decide on a meeting place where everyone should go if they get lost or need to regroup.
- If you are lost inside a building, go to the front entrance and find the nearest person who can help direct you.
- If you are lost outdoors, go to an area with a lot of people and ask someone for directions.
- If there are no people around and you are lost outdoors, stay close to where you got lost so that others can find you easily.
- If you are lost outside and there is water nearby like a lake or stream, stay near it. First responders are more likely to search near bodies of water. Do not enter the water or drink from it as it may not be safe.



Know how to get around and use safety skills

When going to new places, it is helpful to have certain skills:

- Learn traffic safety skills
- Know how to use public transportation or call a taxi
- Know how to let people know when you are lost in a crowded area
- If near water, learn how to swim



If you have not learned these skills, it is not too late to start. Ask friends or family members to teach you, or take classes. Check with your city's public transportation department to see if they have a class on how to use public transportation.

Example 1:

Sally does not know how to swim. Sally takes adult swimming lessons with her friend Joan. Sally takes classes to feel confident and safe while swimming in her neighbor's pool.

Some skills, like traffic safety, are best learned by practice. Try and practice with someone who knows you and your needs.

Example 2:

Mi Sun wants to learn how to use public transportation. She seeks help from her friend Imani, who teaches her how to use the bus system and reach her workplace.

Be Prepared for the Unexpected

Sometimes, unexpected things happen. It could be a Metro station is closed or you missed your stop. When that happens, take a moment to think about your next steps. If possible, contact someone you know who can provide advice.

It is also helpful to talk about common unexpected things that can happen with someone and plan how to respond.

Remember, to stay calm, adapt to unexpected situations, and have alternative plans. It can help you handle those unexpected situations more easily.

