

TRAVELLING UNACCOMPANIED

Throughout the year many children may travel unaccompanied on a bus, train, or plane to visit a parent, grandparents or other family members. Appropriate planning with the travel companies is the best way to guard against any potential unpleasant experiences and help ensure your child's safe journey from beginning to end.

Before allowing your child to travel unaccompanied, conduct a thorough research with the companies. Inquire about any age restrictions they may have, and ask about their policies and procedures regarding youth travelling on their own.



Help ensure that your child's voyage is an enjoyable and safe experience by reinforcing the following safety tips:

- Book your child's ticket for **travel during regular business hours**. It is not recommended for children to travel alone at night.
- When purchasing a ticket for your child, specify to the ticket agent and advise the staff/driver that he will be traveling alone. If possible, secure a seat for your child near the front of the bus, plane or train.
- **Avoid connections and transfers ...** the more your child has to move around, the more complicated it can become.
- Try to visit the bus terminal or train station prior to your child's trip. Take a tour of the area and review some of the basic safety rules, including who they can approach in the event they need help.
- Always arrive at the terminal or station early. This will give you time to make sure all is in order and that your child is comfortable. **It's also important to stay until the bus, plane or train leaves.** Should there be a delay, your child will feel more comfortable in the waiting area with you. In the event that the trip is cancelled or redirected, you want to be present to make alternate arrangements.
- **Make certain that your child knows who is meeting him at his destination.** Advise your child to only leave with that person and never with anyone else. Most companies will not permit your child to leave with an individual other than the one specified in the form completed prior to departure.
- In case the designated person is delayed in picking up your child, be sure they have a way to contact you and the transportation company.
- **Ensure that your child has sufficient monies in the event of an emergency, as well as coins should they need to make a phone call.** Consider providing your child with a cellphone for the duration of the trip. Cellphone use is allowed on both buses and trains, but not on planes. Remind your child of cellphone etiquette while around others!

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- If your child is travelling to another country, it is extremely important that you verify with Foreign Affairs about any travel restrictions or warnings by accessing their website www.travel.gc.ca
- Make sure your child travels lightly with a carry-on piece of luggage, possibly on wheels, or a backpack that holds clothes and other essentials, including **identification and medication**. Your child's identification and/or medication should be in an envelope for safekeeping inside the carry-on luggage or backpack.
- Caution your child not to become too friendly with other passengers and to never reveal any personal information. **As in any social situation, it is okay for your child to be polite but restrained.**
- Remind your child to **always trust his feelings and instincts**. If he feels unsure or uncomfortable, make sure he knows that he can always contact you or let transit personnel know if anyone is bothering him.
- Last but not least - whether it's a long or short voyage make sure your child has lots of snacks and things to keep him busy. A good novel, portable gaming device or activity books are excellent ways to keep them entertained throughout the journey.

For more information about our personal safety workshops, offered year-round, please contact our offices or visit our website at www.missingchildrensnetwork.ngo

