



Preparing Children for Trick or Treating

Dressing up to go trick or treating is very exciting for children and it creates lasting memories for both children and parents. Help children prepare for trick or treating with these five strategies.

1. Select a Costume – Help children select a costume that fits properly and is safe. Children may be uncomfortable with anything on their face especially make up. Some children may not like masks because of sensory issues or limited vision. Keep these factors in mind when selecting an outfit. For children who have difficulties with masks, holding a mask rather than wearing it or not using one at all may make the evening more enjoyable.

2. Set Costume Guidelines – Children often want to wear their costume other times than trick or treating. Let them know if/when they can wear it besides trick or treating. Be sure to tell them this before they buy the costume and after it is purchased. Explain why they can wear the costume only at certain times. For example, “You can put it on in the evening for a few minutes to see how you look, but you can only wear it for a little while so it doesn’t get dirty before Halloween.”

3. Practice Going to People’s Doors – Role play going to someone’s door, saying “Trick or treat,” holding a bag out, and saying “Thank you.” Remind children to be polite, wait their turn, and take only one piece of candy when they are asked to select something. It is tempting to rush to a door and take a handful of things when offered a basket or bowl to select from so multiple opportunities for review are important. Be sure to practice other things that may happen such as someone not being home or someone complimenting them on their costume.



From the story, *Halloween*

4. Establish Guidelines in Advance – Prepare children for factors such as: What time trick or treating starts and ends; How they know when it ends; Where they can trick or treat (e.g. only houses with lights on, only people the child knows, only homes in a four block radius, etc.); and What the rules are such as staying with a sibling or parent. Be sure to review these guidelines days in advance with a story, visual cards, or written rules. Before trick or treating, review them again so children clearly understand expectations.

5. Set Candy Guidelines– Children become very excited about getting candy and other treats while trick or treating. Set rules in advance about eating candy. Let children know before trick or treating that they need to bring all of the candy back for you to check before they can eat it. Make sure children have dinner before trick or treating so they are not hungry. Have guidelines about the number of pieces they can eat per day and create a schedule for when they can eat their candy. Display the candy plan where they can easily look if they have questions.

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