

# Holding hands and going for a walk



Holding hands and going for a walk is something parents and carers do with their child daily. It could be walking to the car, the shops, the local park or simply into preschool or childcare. Below are some ideas to help make going for a walk both safe and fun for you and your child.

## Before the walk

- Be clear about your expectations for a walk and communicate these using visuals or short concise words. For example, if your child can hold onto a pram, you can say “We hold onto the pram.” If they have difficulty holding onto the pram and holding onto someone’s hand is a safer choice, you can communicate this with clear language such as “We hold hands.”
- Talk about where you are going and what you might see and do. For example, “We are going to the park” “You can go on the swing” or “We will get an ice cream.”
- Create a visual schedule to help your child understand what they will be doing, like the one below.



- Make sure you have your child’s comfort toy with you if they have one.
- Pack snacks and a drink, just in case.

## During the walk

- Point out what you see along the way. For example, flowers, birds or clouds.
- Sing songs about holding hands such as “This is the way we...” and “Everybody hold hands.”
- Take a small bag with you and collect items that you find together along the way. For example, leaves, flowers, sticks or small rocks.
- If your child is able to, count steps as you walk. You could also make noises with each step like “bop” or “beep” to make a rhythm.
- Change how fast or slow you walk and/or how big or small the steps you take are.



## What if my child won't hold hands?

Making sure your child holds hands whilst going for a walk is important to keep them safe. Here are some tips to help teach this skill.

### Starting slowly

Holding hands involves your child to both tolerate touch and to understand the instruction "hold hands." Here are some ideas to help your child hold hands:

- Start with getting your child used to touch. You can do this by introducing touching their hands and arms during routine times and when they are feeling relaxed. For example, when they are in the bath or when they are engaged in their favourite activity such as playing with cars or watching TV.
- Progress to playing games involving holding and touching hands. For example, whilst playing a tickle game, hold onto their hands momentarily and encourage them to do the same.
- Play some fun games that encourage hand holding, such as Ring a Rosie, Row Your Boat or Giddy Up Horsey. There are some video links to these games below.
- Always use the same words, signs, or visuals to symbolise 'holding hands' so your child learns the meaning of these words.
- Practice holding hands at home first, or another safe place like an enclosed yard before going to bigger places like a park or shopping centre.

### Sensory Sensitivities

If your child doesn't like loud, high pitched or sudden noises such as car horns, engines or birds, taking along some headphones and encouraging them to wear these might make the walk more enjoyable for them. Choosing a quiet place to walk, away from busy roads could also help.

If bright lights are something your child doesn't like, you could try giving them sunglasses to wear. You could also go for a walk in a place where there is a lot of shade or on a cloudy day so they are not bothered by the light.

### After the walk

Depending on their interests and abilities, your child might need more or less help to do some of these activities:

- If you and your child were able to collect items while out walking, create a collage by putting glue on paper and sticking some of the things you found on it, such as sticks and flowers.
- If your child is interested and able to, you can help them trace around some of the items you collected. Use a crayon or pencil and some paper.
- Look at pictures in books or magazines you have at home to see if you can find any of the same insects or birds you saw if this interests your child.
- If your child prefers movement activities, you could play by pretending to 'fly like a bird' or 'buzz like a bee', naming any animals you saw.
- Share stories about walking and holding hands, such as 'Parpity-Parp' by Richard Tulloch and Fiona Quigley. You could borrow it from your local library or ask the librarian what books they can suggest to help teach your child how to hold hands.



## After the walk (cont.)

- Go on a 'Bear Hunt' encouraging hand holding as you go around looking for the bear. You can get the book here or at your local library:
  - [Were Going On a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen And Helen Oxenbury Book - Kmart](#)
  - [Michael Rosen performs We're Going on a Bear Hunt - YouTube](#)
- Here is a story about holding hands that can also be personalised:
  - [HMH Blue Haven fillable template book \(mq.edu.au\)](#)

## Need more resources?

Below is some more information for helping make holding hands and going for a walk fun:

[Songs and rhymes - Children - Staying safe - NSW Centre for Road Safety](#)

[Here we go walking holding hands - YouTube](#)

[The Wiggles Nursery Rhymes - Ring-A-Ring O' Rosy | Kids Song & Game | Kids Song & Baby Nursery Rhyme - YouTube](#)

[Preschool Action Song | Row Row Row Your Boat | Sing and Move Along - YouTube](#)

[Giddy Up | Better Beginnings \(better-beginnings.com.au\)](#)

If you have a Start Strong educator they can support you to make visuals, social stories and teach you some games to help your child learn to hold hands.

If your child has an Occupational Therapist let them know you are working on teaching your child to hold hands. Ask them if they have any more ideas for how to support your child to hold hands when going for a walk.

If your child has a Speech Therapist, they can help you with visuals and other ways to support your child to hold hands when going for a walk.

## References

[Pedestrian safety & road safety for kids | Raising Children Network](#)

[Kids and Traffic Key Road Safety Messages - Kids and Traffic \(mq.edu.au\)](#)



Remember to celebrate and acknowledge all of your child's efforts along the way. You can do this with words such as "good job holding hands" or gestures such as a high five. Use facial expressions like a big smile, that match your words and gestures.