



## STAYING FOUND *What You Need to Know*

Staying found is a concept taught to Scouts during the road to achieving the Search and Rescue merit badge. At the simplest level, “staying found” tips are used by SAR teams to help find missing persons. The following basic tips will help parents and caretakers if trying to find a lost child or elderly person:

### ***Children Ages 1 to 3 Years***

Young children are unaware of the concept of being lost, tend to wander aimlessly, and do not respond to whistles or calls. In the event that one becomes lost:

- Begin your search in high-risk areas, such as swimming pools, appliances, vehicles, and nearby streams and lakes.
- Search areas under thick brush, beneath picnic tables, inside logs, and other spots that feel like shelter. Lost children often seek out a place to lie down and go to sleep.
- Because of limited mobility at this age, contain your search to nearby, easily walkable areas.
- Contact local law enforcement. Young children do not leave tracks and have no navigational skills or sense of direction. If not found after an initial search, get professional help.

### ***Children Ages 3 to 6 Years***

This age group has a developing concept of being lost and will attempt to return to a familiar place. However, they may panic and become further lost as they attempt to “find” themselves. In the event that one becomes lost:

- Walk out in all directions from the point of origin. This age group does not understand that a return trip is needed. Explorations are usually one way.
- Find out where neighbors’ and friends’ children may be exploring. Younger children can become lost following an animal or group of older kids.
- As with children 1 to 3, passive methods such as waiting at home or calling a child’s name are rarely effective. Call law enforcement after an initial search.

### ***Children Ages 7 to 12 Years***

Older children have more developed navigation/direction skills and start to construct “mental maps” of their environments. They may become upset and confused while lost and act irrationally. In the event that one becomes lost:

- Check with friends for any “secret” play places and favorite hideouts.
- Look at favorite locations, like playgrounds and schools, and alternate routes of how to get there. Children often become lost while taking a shortcut to familiar locations.
- Walk area trails. They often resort to known trails, but may take them in the wrong direction.

*Courtesy of Boy Scouts of America*

