

# Celebrating Halloween safely and respectfully

As kids gear up for school events and a night of tricks and treats, it's important to remember to be safe and respectful while celebrating the spookiest time of the season.

Students and staff alike may be excited to dress up, and it's important that costumes do not include elements of cultural appropriation or other potentially offensive themes.

Cultural appropriation is the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of customs, practices, ideas or elements of a culture or identity by members of another.

Some Halloween costumes may be unsuitable if they contain elements of:

- Race or ethnicity (i.e. blackface, brownface)
- Culture (i.e. Indigenous regalia/headaddresses, hijabs, dreadlocks)
- Religion or faith (i.e. religious figures, gods, saints, gurus)
- Gender (i.e. gender switching for the purpose of humour or mockery)
- Ableism (i.e. mocking physical or mental abilities)



Some costumes may also be traumatic if they contain violent imagery, such as weaponry or a hangman's noose. It's also important to be aware of the potential negative and triggering impact violent images and/or scenarios can have on students and families with varying lived experiences and backgrounds.

Students and staff are reminded that weapons (including fake ones) are not allowed at school, even as part of a costume. And everyone is urged to be mindful of cultural or racial stereotypes with their costumes and consider if their outfit may be offensive to others.

For those who are going door-to-door for candy in the evening, the Government of Canada has a number of [Halloween safety tips](#) to help keep kids safe:

## Costumes

1. **Wear brightly coloured costumes that can be seen by drivers.** Add reflective tape to your costume to increase visibility.
2. **Choose costumes that fit well and can be worn over warm clothing** to protect your child from cold and wet weather.

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3. **Avoid costumes that are too big, have dangling pieces and are flammable.** Children may trip on oversized costumes, or they may risk catching on something such as a tree branch or fence. Loose garments can also be hazardous around candles and open flames like those that may be in jack-o-lanterns.
4. **Use face paint or make up instead of masks.** Improperly fitted masks can interfere with your child's vision or breathing. Before applying face paint or make up, do a patch test to see if your child is sensitive or allergic to something in the cosmetic. If you do choose a mask, ensure it fits properly and allows your child to see and breathe easily.

### Trick-or-Treating

1. **Go trick-or-treating with a group – the more, the better!** Adults should trick-or-treat with their children until they are old enough to go with friends.
2. **Stay in well-lit areas and only visit homes that have their outdoor lights on.** Make sure children know to never go inside homes or cars. Carry a flashlight to make yourself more visible to motorists and others.
3. **Be careful when crossing the street.** Look both ways and only cross when no cars are coming. Cross at marked crosswalks and intersections, and never cross between parked cars.
4. **Don't eat any treats until your parents have looked them over.** Look for any treats that could be choking hazards such as chewy or hard candies and treats with peanuts in them. Also look for treats that may come with toys and do not let children under three play with them.



### Decorations

1. **Leave the pumpkin carving to the adults.** Have your child draw a design on their pumpkin, then have an adult carve it for them.
2. **Use LED candles instead of real candles.** An LED candle will still light up your jack-o-lantern.
3. **If you do use real candles, keep them away from flammable objects** such as curtains and other Halloween decorations. **Do not leave candles unattended.** Avoid using candles with multiple wicks as they can produce a large flame that can ignite nearby materials.

Let's work together to create a warm and welcoming Halloween for all!

For more Halloween safety information, see the [Government of Canada's website](#)

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