

# Parents: Are Your Kids' Halloween Costumes Safe? Be Sure with This 10 Best Questions Shopping Checklist

## Highlight

Go costume shopping or create your child's Halloween costume with these 10 questions in your hand. This quick checklist could be a lifesaver.

## The 10 Best Questions

This is the shorthand version. The experts' suggested best answers are below.

1. Did I read the costume label and check for "flame-retardant" before buying it?
2. Can my child see and hear in this mask?
3. Do I know what's in this face paint? Did I read the ingredient label?
4. Does this costume fit? No, does it really, really fit my child well?
5. Is anything hanging down from the costume?
6. What will they be carrying?
7. Is my child's neck area clear in this costume?
8. Can my child walk safely in the costume's footwear?
9. Will my child be visible while walking around at night?
10. Are there any facial accessories that will block my child's eyes, nose or mouth?

## The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

What do my parental instincts tell me about this costume?

## The 10 Best Answers

### 1. Did I read the costume label and check for "flame-retardant" before buying it?

The QDoc hates to start off with a horror story, but here it is. British television presenter Claudia Winkleman watched in horror as her daughter Matilda, eight, burst into flames Halloween night 2014. Winkleman told *The Daily Mirror*, "It was like those horrific birthday candles that you blow out and then they come back...it was really fast, it was fast, it wasn't fire like I'd seen."

The U.S. National Association of State Fire Marshals warns, “If you cannot find a label indicating flame resistance, buy primarily polyester or nylon fabric. It may sound obvious, but your child is likely to be near candles, lanterns, and other decorative flames on Halloween.”

[Related: How to Save on Halloween Costumes: The 10 Best Questions](#)

## **2. Can my child see and hear in this mask?**

Many child and safety experts advise against children wearing a mask at all. Masks often fit your munchkin’s little mug poorly. Pediatricians Susan Kelly, MD and Kate M. Cronan, MD write for KidsHealth.com, “Kids shouldn't wear masks. They can make it difficult for them to see and breathe.”

If you do shop for a mask, look for ones with large-enough eyeholes to provide adequate peripheral vision. This is especially important because kids often trick-or-treat in the twilight hours around busy intersections with heavy oncoming traffic.

## **3. Do I know what’s in this face paint? Did I read the ingredient label?**

Face paint can be a fun, cheap and safe alternative to wearing a mask. But just make sure you read the label beforehand. Some face paint can cause irritation or an allergic reaction. Even the paint labeled “non-toxic” isn’t necessarily safe for the sensitive skin of a child’s face.

Doctors Kelly and Cronan advise, “Test the face paint or makeup on your child's arm or hand before applying to the face.”

Look for the expiration date. Don’t buy it if it’s past the date or none is listed.

## **4. Does this costume fit? No, does it really, really fit my child well?**

Avoid putting your child in a costume that’s too big or loose. Your child could easily trip, snag on objects along the way, or risk a fire encounter. Child safety experts also discourage billowing outfits, flowing veils, big capes (sorry, Superman and Wonder Woman!), and long scarves or belts.

Here are more questions to ask yourself:

- Am I buying the right size? (Check sizing carefully.)
- Can my child move freely, arms, legs and head?
- Is the costume well-made with finished seams?
- Is the material stiff or scratchy?

- Will this costume protect from the weather forecast for Halloween night (like a furry animal jumpsuit)?
- Does my child say he/she is comfortable in the costume?

[Related: Buy the Best Halloween Costume for Your Child: The 10 Best Questions](#)

### **5. Is anything hanging down from the costume?**

Another possible fire hazard are ornaments or objects hanging off the costume. The National Association of State Fire Marshals advises against strips of fake fur, stringy ribbon strands, lace streamers, and foam padding.

### **6. What will they be carrying?**

Everyone loves accessorizing Halloween costumes with things like swashbuckler swords, pirate knives, and witches' flying broomsticks. But before you buy or add a homemade accessory ask yourself:

- Would they be hurt if they fell on it?

Avoid sharp edges or points on swords, canes, or wands. Look for accessories made from soft sponge or flexible plastic materials.

### **7. Is my child's neck area clear in this costume?**

Think about the possibility (regardless of how remote) of strangulation or a choking hazard. Sashes, ties, and costume jewelry can get dangerously tangled while your child is trick-or-treating, at school, or at a party.

### **8. Can my child walk safely in the costume's footwear?**

No matter how cute your high heels or wing tips look on your child, oversized shoes can cause a trip. Pretty Cinderella slippers could cause painful blisters or a twisted ankle.

### **9. Will my child be visible while walking around at night?**

Keep your little guys, gals and ghouls extra safe with high-visibility reflective strips attached to their costumes. This is especially important if the costume uses dark colors. You can also put reflective tape on their treat bag. Ask them to carry a flashlight.

Think like a motorist for a minute as a double check. Jo Sitton, coordinator of the Safe Kids Coalition in Missouri says, "We need to remember our child's visibility."

[Related: Keep Your Child Safe in the Car: The 10 Best Questions Checklist](#)

## 10. Are there any facial accessories that will block my child's eyes, nose or mouth?

This question is about wigs, paste-on moustaches and fake beards. Just make sure they don't hinder

### The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

### What do my parental instincts tell me about this costume?

Trust your gut reaction if you aren't sure. If kids aren't comfortable, they won't enjoy themselves as much, period. If they aren't safe, you won't enjoy Halloween either.

[Related: How to Choose Great Halloween Costumes for Kids: The 10 Best Questions](#)

### QDoc's Q-Tipsters

Scary Halloween should only be about keeping the zombies away.

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