

# How To... Handcuff Youth

Prepared by Robert Rail

Author of *The Unspoken Dialogue: Custodial Cuffing & Restraint and Reactive Handcuffing Tactics*

The application of handcuffs during arrest and transport procedures is meant to restrain and protect youth, but the proper procedures must be followed with utmost care when arresting youth; otherwise, handcuffing can become dangerous for police and youth, and a liability for departments.

The age and size of a youth are major determinants in whether and when to use handcuffs. There is no one size fits all approach to handcuffing youth. Instead, when working with children and teens, it is critical to consider and treat cases individually.



## HANDCUFFS MAY BE USED

- For safety purposes when arresting and transporting youth
- When youth will be under constant supervision
- To prevent youth from hurting himself or others

## HANDCUFFS MUST NOT BE USED

- When youth will be left unsupervised
- To detain
- To punish
- To coerce
- To intimidate
- To attach youth to a fixed object (such as a pole, fence, radiator, banister, etc.)

## PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE HANDCUFF USE ON YOUTH

- Extreme care must be taken when handcuffing youth in every situation, every time.
- Once handcuffed, youth must remain under constant supervision.
- An officer should have plastic “flex-cuffs” on hand to use to restrain a youth whose wrists are too small for regular handcuffs.
- Instead of force, officers should use more effective physical techniques of handcuffing and body language assessment. They are more effective, promote officer safety and reduce the risk of harm to youth.
- Handcuffs must never be used for detention purposes, such as handcuffing a youth to a pole or fence. This is dangerous, ineffective, and opens the police officer to high liability.