



Q: I recently took my two grandkids to Manhattan for a day at the theater. Everything went OK until we walked through Times Square. When the kids went over to the costumed characters to shoot some selfies, they heard nasty cursing and loud demands for money. I quickly pulled the kids away without paying anything. Was I right? *AAL, Scranton PA*

A: Of course, if you were offended by the language in front of the kids, you were right to leave. That scene happens often because all of the characters expect to be paid for posing for photos. Now that kids of all ages use smartphones frequently, on crowded days among the costumed characters many snap and leave without paying.

Some are dressed illegally in homemade Disney and other familiar costumes, and they often desperately compete with each other to get passing tourists to pay to pose for photos. Their turf battles too often include cursing that can be offensive to nearby tourists, especially those walking with kids.

Our advice is to consciously avoid them as you pass as quickly as possible, if that's your choice to avoid trouble. However, if your kids insist on taking selfies or otherwise posing for photos with the characters, offer a dollar or two for the few moments it takes.