



# PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

## What Every Parent Should Know

-  Teach kids at an early age to look left, right and left again before crossing the street. Continue looking while crossing.
-  It's always best to walk on sidewalks or paths and cross at street corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far left as possible.
-  Teach kids to make eye contact with drivers before crossing the street.
-  Children under 10 need to cross the street with an adult. Every child is different, but developmentally, most kids are unable to judge the speed and distance of oncoming cars until age 10.
-  Encourage kids to be especially alert for cars that are turning or backing up.
-  Teach kids not to run or dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.
-  If kids are walking when it's dark out, teach them to be especially alert and make sure they are visible to drivers. Have them wear light or brightly colored clothing and reflective gear.
-  Teach kids to put phones, headphones and devices down when crossing the street.
-  Be aware of others who may be distracted and speak up when you see someone in danger.

# Tips for Parents and Other Adults For Teaching Pedestrian Safety to Children

Walking is a fun and healthy way to spend time with your children while teaching them skills that can serve them well throughout life. The walk to school is a great time to use these safety tips.

## Be a walking role model

Children learn through experience. Walking with parents or another caregiver is an important way for children to practice crossing real streets and picking safe places to walk. There is no magic age when children are old enough to walk without an adult. But, as a parent, you should decide when your child has the skills and experience to deal with traffic safely without you.

As you walk with your child, remember these safety tips:

- Wear bright-colored clothes, and carry flashlights or wear reflective gear if it is dark or hard to see.
- Look for traffic at every driveway and intersection. Be aware of drivers in parked cars that may be getting ready to move.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Cross the street safely:
  1. Stop at the curb or edge of the street.
  2. Look left, right, left and behind you and in front of you for traffic.
  3. Wait until no traffic is coming and begin crossing.
  4. Keep looking for traffic until you have finished crossing.
  5. Walk, don't run across the street.



## Choose the safest route to school

Select a walking route with less traffic and intersections.

- Pick places where there are sidewalks or paths separated from traffic. If there are no sidewalks or paths, walk as far from the motor vehicles as possible and, if possible, on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Limit the number of street crossings. When available, cross at a location with an adult school crossing guard.
- Avoid crossing busy or high-speed streets.

## Understand your child's limitations

Children are not small adults. It will take time and practice for a child to develop the ability to deal with lots of traffic. Over time, children develop the ability to accurately judge the speed and distance of oncoming traffic. Young children may think that a car is able to stop, when in fact, it is not. Also, children may think that if they can see a driver, the driver can see them. But, children are smaller and harder for drivers to see. Get down to a child's height to experience their perspective and see what they see.

# Starting a Walking School Bus: The Basics



## Why develop a walking school bus?

Studies show that fewer children are walking and biking to school, and more children are at risk of becoming overweight. Changing behaviors of children and parents require creative solutions that are safe and fun.

Implementing a walking school bus can be both.

## What is a walking school bus?

A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. If that sounds simple, it is, and that's part of the beauty of the walking school bus. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school OR as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.



***A variation on the walking school bus is the bicycle train, in which adults supervise children riding their bikes to school. The flexibility of the walking school bus makes it appealing to communities of all sizes with varying needs.***



Parents often cite safety issues as one of the primary reasons they are reluctant to allow their children to walk to school. Providing adult supervision may help reduce those worries for families who live within walking or bicycling distance to school.

## Starting simple

When beginning a walking school bus, remember that the program can always grow. It often makes sense to start with a small bus and see how it works. Pick a single neighborhood that has a group of parents and children who are interested. It's like a carpool—without the car—with the added benefits of exercise and visits with friends and neighbors.

For an informal bus:

1. Invite families who live nearby to walk.
2. Pick a route and take a test walk.
3. Decide how often the group will walk together.
4. Have fun!

## Reaching more children

Success with a simple walking school bus or a desire to be more inclusive may inspire a community to build a more structured program. This may include more routes, more days of walking and more children. Such programs require coordination, volunteers and potential attention to other issues, such as safety training and liability. The school principal and administration, law enforcement and other community leaders will likely be involved.

### First, determine the amount of interest in a walking school bus program. Contact potential participants and partners:

- Parents and children
- Principal and school officials
- Law enforcement officers
- Other community leaders

### Second, identify the route(s).

- The amount of interest will determine the number of walking routes.
- Walk the route(s) without children first.

### Third, identify a sufficient number of adults to supervise walkers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend one adult for every six children. If children are age 10 or older, fewer adults may be needed. If children are ages 4 to 6, one adult per three children is recommended.

### Next, finalize the logistical details.

- Who will participate?
- How often will the walking school bus operate? Will the bus operate once a week or every day?
- When do children meet the bus? It's important to allow enough time for the slower pace of children, but also to ensure that everyone arrives at school on time.
- Where will the bus meet children—at each child's home or at a few meeting spots?
- Will the bus operate after school?
- What training do volunteers need?
- What safety training do children need?

### Finally, kick-off the program.

A good time to begin is on International Walk to School Day. Walk and look for ways to encourage more children and families to be involved. Have fun!

For more information about planning and conducting a walking school bus, see <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/resources.html>.

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National Center for Safe Routes to School | [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org)

## When picking a route, answer these four questions:

- 1 Do you have room to walk?**  
Are there sidewalks and paths?  
Is there too much traffic?
- 2 Is it easy to cross the street?**
- 3 Do drivers behave well?**  
Do they yield to walkers?  
Do they speed?
- 4 Does the environment feel safe?**  
Are there loose dogs?  
Is there criminal activity?

For more help identifying walkable routes, use the Walkability Checklist at <http://bit.ly/wchecklist>.