



# Safe Steps to the School Bus Stop:

## How Parents Can Encourage Safe Walking

**G**etting to school on-time and ready to learn starts with the trip to school. Whether walking to the bus stop or all the way to school, parents and caregivers play a critical role in building their child's pedestrian safety skills. Spending time walking together can also be a chance for parents and children to connect and for children to understand the world around them as they build their independence. Parents and caregivers can help their child by encouraging safe behaviors while walking. The following tips apply to pedestrian safety for any walking trip, with some special considerations for the trip to and from the school bus.

### **1. Take a "practice walk" with your child.**

Walk the route at the time of day that they will typically walk to the bus stop. Discuss how you decide where to walk and, if needed, where to cross. When possible pick low speed roads, minimize street crossings and choose places with sidewalks or where there is space to walk. Make an agreement that your child will always walk this same route.

### **2. Use the practice walk to assess your child's pedestrian safety skills.**

Depending on the age and abilities of your child, you may need to walk with them daily. Most children under the age of ten are not ready to cross streets without a responsible adult (near a school a crossing guard may serve this role).

### **3. Ensure that your child understands safety signs and traffic signals during walking trips.**

#### 4. Tuck away phones and other distractions before walking.

#### 5. Light levels and weather change with the time of year.

Use a flashlight and wear reflective gear to help with visibility in low light and darkness. In some places, snow might make the typical walking route unpassable so you and your child may need a new route plan at these times.

#### 6. There are some special safety considerations at the bus stop.

- Arrive before the school bus to make it easy for the driver to see all children.
- Ask the bus driver for instructions on where to stand when waiting for the bus, including distance from the street.
- If your child drops something near the school bus, like a ball or book, they should immediately tell the driver and wait for instructions. If a child bends down without the driver's knowledge, the driver might not be able to see them.
- If your child needs to cross a street to get on or off the bus, they should first walk along the street to a place at least five giant steps (10 feet) in front of the bus and make eye contact with the bus driver to make sure they are seen. In some places, the bus driver will give a special signal indicating it is time to cross.
- Do not walk behind a school bus.



#### 7. Like so many skills, pedestrian safety skills require more than one conversation.

Find other ways to integrate pedestrian safety discussion and practice into life, such as when walking to the park or even through a parking lot. During dinner, ask how their walk was that day.

#### 8. Get help with safety concerns.

If you identify road safety problems or driver behaviors that need attention (like speeding), notify your community's transportation and planning department. For concerns about the bus stop, contact the school district transportation office.

To learn more about how to assess and strengthen your child's pedestrian safety skills, see **Teaching Children to Walk Safely as They Grow and Develop: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers**. For more tips on school bus safety, see the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**.



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Information Center**

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