



Walking Distance

As a rule, the younger the child, the shorter the walking distance should be. Children over 12 may be reasonably capable of walking up to two miles, but younger children will need short, simple routes.

Crosswalks

Make sure your child understands how to use crosswalks and what the [symbols](#) mean:

Solid pedestrian symbol - It is safe to cross.

Flashing orange hand - Finish crossing, but do not initiate crossing.

Solid hand - It is not safe to be anywhere in the intersection.

Strength in Numbers

Pairing your child with another safety-informed child can add to their safety. You may also find a group of children in your neighborhood who would like to walk to school.

A [walking school bus](#) is a group of parents and students that walk to school together, with neighborhood children joining the caravan as it passes their homes until they arrive at school as one large group.

Walking as a group increases visibility, creates bonding opportunities, and makes the walk more enjoyable.



Stranger Danger

walk to school. Stranger abductions are rare, with just [100 per year](#) in the United States. Children are approximately [seven times more likely](#) to be killed in a car accident. However, the concern is valid, and children should be taught to keep themselves safe.

What is a stranger?

In addition to people they have never seen, [slight acquaintances](#) are strangers. A slight acquaintance is anyone who the family or child:

Has known for less than six months

Has known longer than six months but sees less often than monthly

Has seen before but does not know by name



Biking to School

Riding a bicycle to school provides the same exercise benefits as walking, with a faster way to cover longer distances.

Low to moderate traffic

Bicycle lanes or wide shoulders

No high-volume intersections, unless they have crossing guards

No secluded areas

Your child should have a [secure bicycle lock](#) that thieves cannot cut, such as a U-lock or high-quality cable lock. Your child should know how to secure the bicycle by the frame and not just the tire to a [secure structure](#), such as a bicycle rack at the school.

How to Ride Your Bike Safely

The first step in ensuring a [safe ride](#) is providing the correct equipment:

A correctly sized bicycle seat.

A well-fitting helmet. This is required in most states. The helmet should be positioned on top of the head in a level position.

Before each ride, you and your child should do the following until you can trust your child to do it on his own:

Check the brakes, chain, reflectors, gears, and tire pressures.

Make sure the child is not wearing loose clothing that could get caught in the chain or wheel spokes.

Teach your child that riding a bicycle to school is a significant responsibility that requires following your rules as well as traffic laws.

Bicyclists are required to follow the same traffic laws as motor vehicles and stay as close to the right as possible.

Many states do not allow bicyclists to use sidewalks.

Use [hand signals](#) when preparing to turn or slow down.

Wear brightly colored clothing or neon strips to increase visibility to motorists.

[Obey stop signs](#) and traffic lights.

Yield to other drivers and assume drivers cannot see you until they make eye contact.

Watch for left- or right-turning traffic.

Even if your young bicyclist does everything correctly, things can go wrong. They could experience a [bicycle accident](#) or flat tire. Discuss the plan of action if this occurs.

An action plan could consist of any of the following:

Secure the bicycle in a safe place and walk the rest of the way to school.

Call the parent or another designated adult to provide transportation to school and pick up the bicycle.

School Bus Safety

According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), students who take a school bus are 70 times safer than those who ride to school by car.

What makes school buses safer than cars?

School buses have numerous safety features and regulations for the protection of children.

Driver Training

School bus drivers are required to undergo background screenings and extensive training prior to and throughout their driving careers. They are commercial drivers who must abide by high standards of conduct imposed by federal and state law as well as individual school policy.

High Visibility

The size, lights, familiar markings, and characteristic yellow color make school buses highly visible in traffic, so drivers are more likely to notice them.

Loading and Unloading Procedures

School bus drivers and other drivers are required to follow strict safety protocols while children are boarding and exiting the bus. The bus driver turns on the amber warning lights while approaching a stop. When the bus door opens, flashing red lights and a stop arm are activated. Drivers going both directions are required by law to stop.

Bus drivers are trained to ensure passengers have safely left the street before leaving a stop.

Crash Protection

Buses are built with protective characteristics to reduce crash forces, including:

- The size and weight of the bus

- The closeness and strength of the seats and the energy absorbing seatbacks (large buses)

- Seat belts (small buses)

Bus Stop Safety

rear. Children should stay in the designated bus-stop area, avoid horseplay, and abide by [rules of safety](#):

Arrive at least five minutes early. Do not try to run and catch the bus.

Stay at least six feet away from the curb while waiting for the bus.

Do not approach the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver opens the door.

Cross at least ten feet in front of the bus, and wait for the driver to signal that it is safe to cross.

Never cross behind the bus.

Never pick up a dropped object near the bus without first asking the driver.

Behavior on the Bus

only when children are seated properly, facing the front

Backpacks and other possessions should be contained within the seating area, not in the aisle.



Ages four to seven

Use a forward-facing car seat with a harness and tether until the child outgrows the car seat as indicated by the manufacturer. At that point, use a booster seat with a harness and tether.

Ages eight to twelve

Use the booster seat until the child can fit a seat belt properly. A properly-fitting seat belt fits snugly across the thighs but not the stomach. The shoulder belt should fit snugly across the shoulder and chest but not the neck or face.

All children under twelve should ride in the back seat.



Tips for Adult Drivers

While driving during school rush hours, keep the safety of school children in mind. Leave early enough to allow for the delays school traffic creates. Children are not always as careful as they should be, so drivers must watch for them.

When preparing to back out of your driveway, check for kids before you get into your car and again before you start.

Use your mirrors and back out slowly.

Drive below the speed limit.

Pay special attention in and near school zones.

Do not block the crosswalks when stopped at a red light or waiting to turn.

Stop for crossing guards, and do not try to hurry through intersections.

Always stop when school buses are loading and unloading, even if their red flashers are not on.

Be alert to children darting out suddenly.

Watch for bicyclists and give them plenty of space.

And, as always, when operating a motor vehicle, avoid distracting activities such as talking on your cell phone, eating, or playing with the radio.