



Get the Facts: Ensuring Travel-Safe School Days

In a Nutshell

Whether they walk, bike or are driven, there's only one right way for kids to get to school – safely!

What should I know about getting kids to school safely?

Kids face a variety of traffic safety risks as they travel to and from school. If you're among their adult caregivers, it's important to make sure that not only you know, but they know the safest way to make the trip. That includes having proper safety restraints in vehicles and using them right and awareness of risks posed by other drivers.

Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of unintentional injury death among children ages 1-14. Minnesota requires children who are both under age 8 and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches to use a child safety seat that meets federal safety standards. But when in doubt, go by size not age!

Keep in mind that getting out the door on a school day can be hectic and stressful for everyone involved. That means it's easy to let safety standards and attention to traffic and other risks slide "just this one time." Make every school day journey a safe trip.

If you're a driver, follow the speed limit and slow down in school zones and near bus stops. Be alert to kids walking to or from school or the school bus.

Slow down and stop if you're driving near a school bus that is flashing yellow or red lights - that means kids are getting on or off. It's the law!

No matter how you go, here's the safest route to school

- **Riding:** Always use child safety seats and seatbelts correctly for EVERY passenger every time. Know what's required by law for each occupant by age and size (including the driver). Never carry more passengers than there are proper safety belts in the vehicle. Remember, the back seat is the safest place





for children of any age to ride. When you arrive, use the designated drop off area and make sure kids enter and leave the car on the curb side.

- **Taking the Bus:** Walk with kids to the bus stop and wait until the bus arrives. Have kids stand at least three “giant steps” back from the curb as the bus approaches. Teach kids to wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before getting off. When crossing the street after exiting the bus, kids should take five giant steps in front of the bus (never go behind the bus), look both ways and make eye contact with the bus driver before stepping into the road.
- **Walking:** Choose the safest route and walk it with kids in advance. Kids should walk on sidewalks or paths facing traffic or, if there are no sidewalks, as far left as possible. Teach them to look both ways before crossing the street and cross only at designated crosswalks or at corners. Children under age 10 typically are developmentally unable to cross streets alone. With driver distraction at all-time highs, remind kids to make eye contact with the driver in a stopped vehicle before stepping into the road. Kids should reduce their own distractions by putting down the phone and turn off volume in headphones when crossing streets.
- **Biking:** Make sure children have the right size helmet and wear it every time when riding. Take the helmet fit test. Select a safe route and do a test bike with the kids. Kids should ride on sidewalks (being alert for vehicles going in and out of driveways) or bike paths until around age 10. Kids should be able to show they know how to follow the rules of the road before cycling with traffic.

Sources:

Safe Kids Worldwide

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

