

Back to School Safety



Help Your Kids Get Back to School Safely

As summer days grow shorter, communities across America will soon be observing that timeless annual ritual: the first day of school. It's a time when parents breathe a sigh of relief and students and teachers anticipate new beginnings and new challenges.

Unfortunately, the beginning of school is also a time when children are at increased risk of transportation related injuries from pedestrian, bicycle, school bus, and motor vehicle crashes because there are many more children on the road each morning and afternoon and many drivers' patterns change. Shorter daylight hours make it especially difficult to see young pedestrians and bicyclists. So as schools open their doors, it's time for everyone – motorists, parents, educators, and students – to improve their traffic safety practices. The following tips can help make this a safe and happy school year for the whole community.

Tips for Motorists

- Slow down and obey all traffic laws and speed limits.
- Always stop for a school bus that has stopped to load or unload passengers. Red flashing lights and extended stop arm tell you the school bus is stopped to load or unload children. State law requires you to stop.
- Be alert. Watch for children walking in the street, especially where there are no sidewalks. Watch for children playing and gathering near bus stops. Watch for children arriving late for the bus, who may dart into the street without looking for traffic. When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch for children walking or biking to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods or school zones, watch for young people who may be in a hurry to get to school and may not be thinking about getting there safely.

Tips for Parents

- Help your children learn and practice the safety rules for walking, bicycling, or riding in a passenger car, school bus or transit bus.
- Supervise young children as they are walking or biking to school or as they wait at the school bus stop.
- Be a good role model, especially when you are with your kids. Always buckle up in the car, always wear a helmet when biking, and always follow pedestrian safety rules.

Tips for Educators

- Teach young children the safety rules for traveling to school, whether it be walking, bicycling, on a school bus, or riding in a motor vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has developed a variety of kid-friendly materials and teaching tools. These can be downloaded from NHTSA's website at www.nhtsa.dot.gov, or you can fax your order to (202) 493-2062. The website provides links to many other organizations and materials related to safe school travel.
- Support any "Getting to School Safely" activities sponsored by your school, the PTA/PTO, or other community organizations.
- Be a good role model. Always use your seat belt, wear a helmet when bicycling or riding a motorcycle and practice pedestrian safety rules.

Tips for Students

- Always buckle up when you're riding in a car.
- Always ride in the back seat. It's the safest place for young people.
- Always wear a helmet and follow traffic safety rules when riding your bike.
- If you ride a school bus, learn and practice the safety rules for waiting at the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, and riding the bus.
- If you walk to school, learn and practice the safety rules for pedestrians. Always cross at cross walks, obey all traffic signs, stop lights and safety patrol instructions.
- Be a good role model for your younger brothers and sisters and friends, and help them learn and practice the safety rules.