



# SCHOOL'S OPEN DRIVE CAREFULLY

## PARENTS ARE THE KEY TO GETTING CHILDREN TO SCHOOL SAFELY

Motor vehicle crashes are the greatest threat children face. Parents are the key to keeping children safe. Nearly 1 out of every 5 children (14 and younger) who dies in a traffic crash is a pedestrian.

## MAKING OUR CHILDREN SAFER

Ensuring the safety of children is a top priority for parents. Regardless of how children get to school, they face many traffic safety hazards. Research shows that taking a school bus is by far the safest way for children to travel to school. But for many reasons, parents choose other methods.

## SHOULD YOUR CHILD WALK TO SCHOOL OR THE BUS STOP?

Walking is good exercise for children, but it's up to parents to decide if walking to school or the bus stop is safe. Here are some things to think about:

- ⚠️ **Your child's age:** Children younger than 10 usually don't have the skills to walk alone in areas with traffic. Parents should consider the readiness of each child — regardless of age — to face dangerous traffic situations.
- ⚠️ **Traffic:** The volume and speed of traffic may not allow a safe route to school.
- ⚠️ **Crime:** High-crime areas can be unsafe and put children at risk.
- ⚠️ **Crosswalks, street signs and traffic signals:** Crosswalks, as well as adequately posted signs and traffic signals, help protect drivers and children from traffic crashes.
- ⚠️ **Crossing guards and AAA School Safety Patrollers:** At intersections where many children cross, Patrollers or crossing guards can help get them to the other side safely.
- ⚠️ **Distance to the school:** The farther children have to walk to school, the greater the risk something can go wrong.



## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- ⚠ Walk with children many times to familiarize them with the route. This creates an opportunity to point out potential traffic hazards, as well as other situations to avoid.
- ⚠ Have children walk in a group. With more eyes and ears, children can cross streets together and negotiate dangerous situations more safely. Having an adult walk with the group can make the trip even safer. Consider creating a “walking school bus” so children and parents can walk together to school.
- ⚠ Talk with children about traffic safety and teach them when and where it’s safest to cross streets. Remember that intersections are usually the safest spots to cross, and the majority of child pedestrian deaths occur outside of intersections. Always use crosswalks to model safe behavior for your child.
- ⚠ Examine dangerous areas of your child’s walk, such as driveways and parking lots. Remind children to take their time and stop, look all ways and listen when crossing streets, even when there is a well-marked crosswalk.

## PARENTS, REMEMBER WHEN YOU ARE DRIVING TO:

- ⚠ Watch for children on their way to and from school.
- ⚠ Obey all school zone signs, signals and markings.
- ⚠ Look for AAA School Safety Patrollers and crossing guards.
- ⚠ Avoid using cell phones or driving distracted, especially around school zones.
- ⚠ Watch your speed.
- ⚠ Use seat belts and appropriate child safety seats or booster seats when transporting children. The safest place in cars for children younger than 13 is the back seat.

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TIPS

- ⚠ Cross only at corners so drivers can see you. Never cross between parked cars or mid-block.
- ⚠ Use a crosswalk when it is available. Don’t assume that because you can see the driver, the driver can see you. Always use caution when crossing.
- ⚠ Cross right when the light turns green so you have time to cross safely.
- ⚠ Use the crosswalk push-button signal when possible, and cross when the signal allows.
- ⚠ Look all ways before crossing. Look and listen for cars, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ⚠ Watch for cars that are turning left or right when you are crossing.
- ⚠ Walk on a sidewalk when it is provided. If you must walk in the street, walk facing traffic, on the left side of the road and as far to the left as possible.
- ⚠ Make it easy for drivers to see you — dress in light colors, wear reflective material or use a flashlight.
- ⚠ Remove headphones and don’t use cell phones or electronic devices when crossing the street.
- ⚠ Watch for vehicles backing out of driveways or coming out of parking lots.
- ⚠ Go directly to and from school or the school bus stop. Do not stop along the way.
- ⚠ Avoid walking alone. Walk with a friend.
- ⚠ Cooperate with crossing guards, AAA School Safety Patrollers and police officers.
- ⚠ Be careful in bad weather. Drivers may not see you, and cars may not be able to stop as quickly.

