

# Tips for Parents and Other Adults For Teaching Pedestrian Safety to Children

**SafeRoutes**  
National Center for Safe Routes to School



TIP SHEET

Walking is a fun and healthy way to spend time with your children while teaching them skills that can serve them well throughout life. The walk to school is a great time to use these safety tips.

## Be a walking role model

Children learn through experience. Walking with parents or another caregiver is an important way for children to practice crossing real streets and picking safe places to walk. There is no magic age when children are old enough to walk without an adult. But, as a parent, you should decide when your child has the skills and experience to deal with traffic safely without you.

As you walk with your child, remember these safety tips:

- Wear bright-colored clothes, and carry flashlights or wear reflective gear if it is dark or hard to see.
- Look for traffic at every driveway and intersection. Be aware of drivers in parked cars that may be getting ready to move.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Cross the street safely:
  1. Stop at the curb or edge of the street.
  2. Look left, right, left and behind you and in front of you for traffic.
  3. Wait until no traffic is coming and begin crossing.
  4. Keep looking for traffic until you have finished crossing.
  5. Walk, don't run across the street.

## Understand your child's limitations

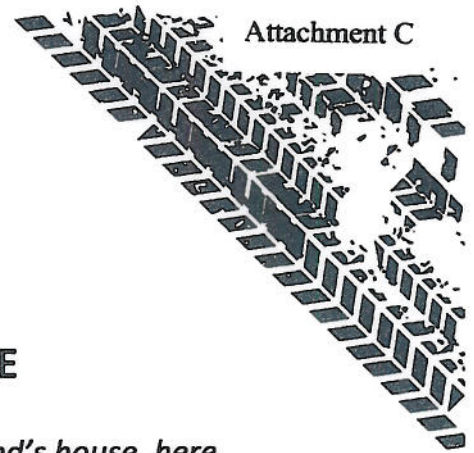
Children are not small adults. It will take time and practice for a child to develop the ability to deal with lots of traffic. Over time, children develop the ability to accurately judge the speed and distance of oncoming traffic. Young children may think that a car is able to stop, when in fact, it is not. Also, children may think that if they can see a driver, the driver can see them. But, children are smaller and harder for drivers to see. Get down to a child's height to experience their perspective and see what they see.



## Choose the safest route to school

Select a walking route with less traffic and intersections.

- Pick places where there are sidewalks or paths separated from traffic. If there are no sidewalks or paths, walk as far from the motor vehicles as possible and, if possible, on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Limit the number of street crossings. When available, cross at a location with an adult school crossing guard.
- Avoid crossing busy or high-speed streets.



## HELP US KEEP STUDENTS SAFE

*Whether teens are walking to school, the park, or a friend's house, here are a few tips to make sure they get there safely.*

### **Drive safely – drivers are often the cause of crashes!**

- Slow down and watch for teens and others walking.
- Stop for people in crosswalks.
- Yield to pedestrians, especially when turning.
- Never drive distracted.

### **Engage your teen.**

- Ask about his or her walking pattern. Emphasize the importance of looking up, listening, and making eye contact when crossing the street.
- Act out various scenarios that your teen might encounter while walking. Demonstrate that it's easy to put your phone down or take headphones off before crossing the street.
- Set a good example by putting away your phone when driving or walking.

### **What to say to your teen:**

- Pedestrians don't always have the right of way. Cross at crosswalks and wait for the walk signal.
- Look up! Keep your head up and devices down while crossing the street.
- Make eye contact with drivers to be sure they see you.
- If you're wearing headphones, pull them down or turn the volume off before you cross the street.
- If you need to use your phone, stop on the sidewalk and find a safe area to talk or text.