

Does Your Child Walk to School? Rules for Safety

Establish a set of rules for your child walking to and from school. Discuss these rules often. Some of these rules may include staying on sidewalks, following crosswalk rules etc.

Be sure that your child always walks to school with at least one other child. As it has always been said, there is safety in numbers.

Ensure that your child uses the exact same route each and every day. Explain to your child that they should never take a new route unless you have both discussed it and walked it together in advance.

Determine whether or not your child is responsible enough to walk to and from school on his/her own. It may be necessary to have your child transported to school by you, a neighbor, a friend, etc., for a month, a semester, a year, etc.

Have a sibling or friend (someone older) walk with your child to and from school in order to model appropriate behavior for your child.

It should be understood by your child that they should never throw anything (rocks, books, etc.) into the road or at any vehicles. Be sure that they understand the result of such behavior (property damage, injury and so on) and the consequences that may ensue from not abiding by these rules.

Have a backup plan for days when walking to/from school may not be an option, such as a rainy or snowy day.

Always communicate with your child on who will be picking them up or dropping them off, and make sure that you have communicated the transportation change to your child's school.

It is imperative that you ensure that your child understands which conditions warrant them not walking to school. If they walked to school in the morning, but it is raining in the afternoon, there should be an understood procedure in place where your child may call a pre-appointed individual to transport your child.

You must make certain your child understands that he/she is to never accept rides from anyone other than who you have appointed. Remind your child about "stranger-danger" and that they should never talk to someone that they do not know or get in the vehicle.

Write a contract with your child so that everyone fully understands their responsibilities and obligation to communicate.

Give your child a time limit in getting to and from school. A great example is to have the school call if your child is not there by 8:15, and your child must be home by 3:25)

Post the rules for walking to and from school in a place where your child can read them frequently.

Have your child call you in the event any circumstance has caused the walking arrangement to be altered in any way.

Maintain open communication with school personnel in order to make certain that your child is arriving and leaving school at the designated times.

Walk to and from school with your child in order to show your child how to use the sidewalk whenever possible, follow crosswalk rules, take the most direct route to and from school, etc.

Allow natural consequences to occur as a result of your child's failure to demonstrate appropriate behavior while walking to and from school, for example his/her not walking directly to school may result in being tardy.

Have your child perform certain responsibilities while walking to and from school such as watching a younger sibling or friend, picking up trash etc.

Communicate with your child if there is a problem, such as a neighbor complaining that your child cuts through their yard.

Ask parents in the neighborhood to help you monitor your child's behavior while walking to and from school.

It is always important to keep communication lines open with your child, especially when they will be out of your range before or after school. Always be certain that your child's school understands that your child walks before and after school. Discuss school policies and ensure that the school understands their role in communicating a tardy or absence with you as soon as possible. There are many factors that work together to keep your child safe on their daily commute. Always be a positive and proactive part of your child's life and remain understanding, patient and loving.

CROSSING THE STREET

Children must learn traffic safety rules at an early age. Parents should teach their children to follow these ten steps, developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), whenever they cross a street:

1. Cross at an intersection or crosswalk, if available.
2. Stop at the curb, the edge of the road, or the corner before proceeding. Look left, then right, then left again for traffic in all directions. If you see a car, wait until it goes by. Then look left, right, left again.
3. When no cars are coming, walk - do not run - across the road. Keep looking for cars when you are crossing.
4. If a car is parked where you are crossing, look to make sure there is no driver and the car is not running. Then go to the edge of the car and look left-right-left to see if cars are coming.
5. At intersections with traffic lights, watch for turning cars and obey all traffic signals. Wait until you see the WALK signal and the green traffic light. Remember, the WALK signal and green light means it's your turn to cross the street, but does not mean it is SAFE to cross. You need to LOOK, and then go if no traffic is coming your way.
6. A flashing DON'T WALK signal means you should not start to cross the street. However, if you have already started crossing when it begins flashing, continue walking.
7. If you see a steady DON'T WALK signal, don't begin to cross the street. Wait for the next WALK signal.
8. Walk on the sidewalk if there is one. If there isn't and you have to walk on the road, be sure to walk facing traffic so you can see what's coming.
9. If you must walk through parked traffic, stop and look carefully before stepping out from between vehicles.
10. Don't run between parked cars and buses. Don't run across the street or through a parking lot.