

School Bus Safety

Twenty-five million students across the country use the school bus to get to and from school. While statistics show that kids riding the school bus are much safer than those riding in cars to school, there are some safety tips students can follow to make their trip on the school bus a lot safer.

Catching the Bus

According to the National Safety Council, most school bus accidents that result in a child getting hurt or killed do not happen because of a crash. These accidents usually happen while students are getting on or off a bus.

So, to keep your child safe, make sure they know these tips:

- Arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes early.
- Wait in a safe place for the bus, at least 5 giant steps (10 feet) away from traffic and the street.
- As the bus arrives, look for its safety lights and make sure they are flashing.
- Wait until the bus stops completely, the door opens and the driver tells you it's OK to get on.
- Look both ways for traffic before walking toward the bus. Drivers are supposed to stop for school buses, but sometimes they don't. So, don't get near the bus until all traffic in both directions stops.
- If you're crossing the street to get on the bus, always walk in front of it. Never walk behind the bus. Walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the road at least 10 steps ahead of the bus. Be sure the bus driver can see you, and you can see the driver. After the driver says it's OK to cross the street, look left, right, left before crossing. If a parked car or something else keeps you from seeing the street clearly, move to where drivers can see you and you can see them. Keep an eye on traffic as you cross the street.
- Use the handrail to walk up the stairs when you get on the bus. Take your time.
- Make sure clothing with drawstrings, book bags with straps or any other dangling objects don't get caught on the handrail or the door.

Going Along for the Ride

Good behavior on the bus isn't just polite, it's also important in keeping everyone on the bus safe. Pass these rules along to your child to keep his bus rolling safely along:

- As soon as you get on a bus, find a seat (or go to your assigned seat) and sit down.
- If your seat has a seat belt, put it on.
- Do not talk loudly or make loud noises. This can distract the driver.
- Don't place books or bags in the aisle. The floor between the seats needs to be clear so nothing is in the way in an emergency.
- When you're close to your stop, get your books and belongings together so you'll be ready to get off the bus.
- When you arrive at your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat. Then, walk to the front of the bus and exit at the door. Make sure you use the handrail when walking down the steps. Take your time.
- Make sure clothing with drawstrings, book bags with straps or any other dangling objects do not get caught in the handrail or door.



Heading Home

Once off the bus, there are still hazards to be aware of before the bus pulls away from the stop. Teach children to follow these guidelines:

- Look for the bus safety lights and make sure they are flashing.
- Look for traffic before stepping off the bus. Don't get off the bus until all traffic stops.
- When being dropped off, get off the bus and walk 5 giant steps away from the bus, making sure you keep a safe distance from it. Never walk behind the bus. The bus driver can see you much better when you are away from the bus.
- If crossing a street, look left, right, left before crossing. If a parked car or something else keeps you from seeing the street clearly, move to where drivers can see you and you can see them. Wait for the bus driver to say it's OK to cross the street. Always cross in front of the bus (never behind it!). While walking, watch out for traffic.

Other Safety Tips

- Always have your child stay 10 feet (5 giant steps) away from the bus.
- Tell your child if he drops something and it rolls under or near the bus, to let the driver know. The child should never try to pick it up himself. The bus driver may not be able to see the child.
- Students should stay away from the rear wheels of the bus at all times.
- If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about changing the location. ■

Resources

- National Safety Council. (2005). *School bus safety rules*. Retrieved July 21, 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/schlbus.htm>
- National School Transportation Association. (2005). *Tips on safely boarding and exiting the school bus*. Retrieved July 21, 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.yellowbuses.org/documents/boardingtips.htm>