

ROAD SAFETY FOR CHILDREN 7–11

Your child may be learning about road safety at school but as a parent or carer you also play a big part in helping your child to learn how to stay safe.

Children will copy adults' behavior, so if they see you taking risks they will probably take risks too.

Learning about road safety at school will help to prepare children for traveling around independently, but it is up to you to decide when you think your child is ready to make different journeys on foot or by bicycle.

One of the best ways that you can help your child to stay safe is to set a good example when using roads, on foot, cycling or in the car.

Find a safe place to cross

Children need to understand how to cross the road safely.

- cross the road using: islands, subways, footbridges, or where there is a crossing point controlled by a police officer, a school crossing patrol or a traffic warden.
- Otherwise, choose a place where you can see clearly in all directions, and where drivers can see you.
- Try to avoid crossing between parked cars, on sharp bends or close to the top of a hill. Move to a space where drivers and riders can see you clearly.
- There should be space to reach the pavement on the other side.

- Do not get too close to the traffic. If there is no pavement, keep back from the edge of the road but make sure you can still see approaching traffic.
- Give yourself lots of time to have a good look all around.

Stop just before you get to the curb

- Look in every direction.
- Listen carefully because you can sometimes hear traffic before you can see it.

Look all around for traffic and listen

- Look all around again and listen.
- Do not cross until there is a safe gap in the traffic and you are certain that there is plenty of time.
- Remember, even if traffic is a long way off, it may be approaching very quickly.

If traffic is coming, let it pass

- Keep looking and listening for traffic while you cross, in case there is any traffic you did not see, or in case other traffic appears suddenly.
- Look out for cyclists and motorcyclists traveling between lanes of traffic.
- When it is safe, go straight across the road. Do not cross diagonally.
- When it is safe, go straight across the road – do not run

How you can help your child

- Let your child show you that they

know how to cross the road safely – start practicing on quiet roads first.

- Point out dangerous places to cross on local roads. Point out safe places as well.
- If there is no alternative and you have to cross between parked cars, walk to the outside edge of the cars and stop. Make sure you can see all around and that drivers and riders can see you.
- Make sure that there is a gap between any parked vehicles on the other side of the road, so you can reach the pavement.
- Never cross the road in front of, or behind, any vehicle with its engine running, especially a large vehicle, as the driver may not be able to see you.
- Use pedestrian crossings even if it involves a detour.
- Talk about the importance of not using a mobile phone or texting while crossing the road.
- Remind your child that they cannot hear traffic if listening to music through earphones or see it properly if wearing a large hood.

But let's get one thing clear: it's still important for children to be outside. Walking is good for children's health and fitness and we support parents who encourage their children to walk as much as possible.

Taking your child in the car for short journeys puts more traffic on the road and adds to the problem.

Children can be safe on the streets if we show them how.

If you're a motorist then you'll know how difficult it can sometimes be to see pedestrians wearing dark clothes at night or when visibility is poor.

Your child will have been learning the road safety message 'be bright, be seen' at school, and it's important that you as a parent or carer help your child to be easily seen near traffic. This is an issue for all children, especially as many school uniforms are dark.

How can my child be seen more easily?

Your child can wear bright or fluorescent colors on dull days and reflective clothing if they are walking near traffic at night (fluorescent colors don't show up in the dark).

It may be a good idea for your child to wear both so that you don't need to change if it gets dark while you're out walking.

This message isn't only for children: make sure you wear bright clothing too.

You could consider:

- Special high-visibility clothing can be bought from many retailers.
- Fluorescent and reflective armbands can be bought for children and can also be worn over coats and other clothing.
- Bags are also available in bright colors or with high-visibility strips.
- For older children who may consider fluorescent and reflective armbands and clothing 'uncool', stickers can be bought

which can be put on bags or coats.

Be bright, be seen

A lot of confusion surrounds the issue of child car seats. So, what does the law say?

- By law, you must wear a seat belt in cars and goods vehicles..
- The driver can be fined if a child under 14 years does not wear a seat belt or child restraint as required.
- Children under 12 and up to 135cm tall must use the appropriate child restraint for their **weight (not age)** when traveling in the front or back seat of any car, van or goods vehicle.
- A child can use an adult belt when they reach 135cm or their 12th birthday, whichever comes first.

Why are child restraints important?

Even in a minor crash, an unrestrained child would be thrown about inside the vehicle, injuring themselves and others.

They could be thrown from the car through one of the windows.

Helping your child stay safe

- Make sure that your child has the right child seat or booster for their weight.
- Make sure that the seat or booster fits your car.
- Check that your child's seat or booster

is fitted properly – see the instructions.

- Talk with your children about the need to use their child seat or booster all the time.
- Make sure that your child knows that it is against the law for them not use a child seat or booster if they are under 12 years old and 135cm tall.
- Make it theirs – take your child with you when you buy it. The fit for the child and in the car are the first priorities, but then you can get them to choose the color or pattern they like best, so that they feel it's theirs.