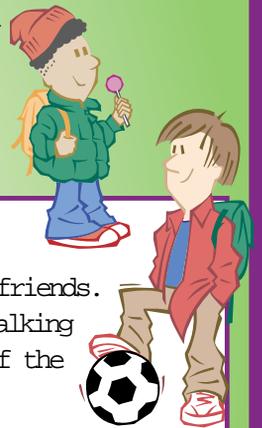


KNOW THE RULES...

For Going To and From School More Safely



Every day millions of children take to the streets and roadways to get to and from school. They walk, ride their bicycles, take buses, and arrive in automobiles with one purpose getting to and from school safely. Every year approximately 440,000 public school buses travel approximately 4.3 billion miles to transport 23.5 million children to and from school and school-related activities.¹ For many children this experience is a new one, and they may not understand the safety rules. Young children do not have the same frame of reference for safety as adults do. They may not look before they leap, which is why it is so important for parents to supervise young children and practice safety skills with their older children. The tips noted below will help parents prepare their children for a safer journey.



- 1.** Instruct your child to always **TAKE A FRIEND** when walking or riding his or her bike to and from school. It's safer and more fun to be with your friends. Walk and ride in well-lit areas, and never take shortcuts. Follow all the walking and biking rules especially the ones about riding on the right-hand side of the street and facing traffic when walking where there is no sidewalk.²
- 2.** Even though there is safety in numbers, it is still not safe for young children to walk to and from school especially if they must take isolated routes before or during daylight. Always provide supervision for your young children, whether it's you as a parent or an older sibling, to help ensure their safe arrival to and from school.
- 3.** Your child should stay with a group while waiting at the bus stop. If anyone bothers your child while going to or from school, you should teach him or her to get away from that person, and **TELL** a trusted adult. If an adult approaches your child for help or directions, remember that grownups needing help should not ask children for help; they should ask other adults.
- 4.** You should visit the bus stop with your children and learn the bus number. This will avoid confusion for your child about knowing which bus to ride.
- 5.** Instruct your children that if someone they don't know or feel comfortable with offers a ride, say **N O**. Children should never hitchhike or accept a ride from someone unless you have told them it is okay.





6. Tell your children that if someone follows them on foot to get away from him or her as quickly as possible. If someone follows them in a car they should turn around, go in the other direction, and try to quickly get to a spot where a trusted adult can help them. Advise them to be sure to **TELL** you or a trusted adult what happened.

7. Teach your children if someone ever tries to take them somewhere, they should quickly get away and yell, This person is trying to take me away or This person is not my father (mother).

8. Children should be taught to never leave school with someone they don't feel comfortable with or know. They should always **CHECK FIRST** with you or another trusted adult. If someone they don't know or feel comfortable with tells them that there is an emergency and they want your child to go with them, your child should always **CHECK FIRST** before doing anything. Make sure your children understand to **TELL** a trusted adult if they notice someone they don't know hanging around the school.

9. Walk the route to and from school with your children pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they're being followed or need help. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes to school, using main roads, and avoiding shortcuts and isolated areas. The map will be a good guide if your children ever need help finding their way.

10. Remember to practice these safety rules with your children to make certain that they really know and understand them. Make the walk to and from school a teachable moment and chance to put their skills to the test.



For more information about school safety or other child-safety topics, visit NCMEC's web site at www.missingkids.com or call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678). For additional information about specific modes of transportation to and from school visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

¹ *School Bus Safety: Safe Passage for America's Children*. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1998, page 3.

² *A Kid's Guide to Safe Walking*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Washington, DC, Publication No. FHWA-SA-96-057, April 1996.

1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

www.missingkids.com

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