



Back-to-School Safety Lessons

One of the most important lessons kids need to learn starts before the school bell rings on the first day of class. The subject is traffic safety, and the instructors are parents. Whether they're on foot or behind the wheel, parents and other adults demonstrate the basics of traffic safety to children by example. Here's a refresher course in safety for anyone who's taking children to and from school or driving near a school.

Be Alert

Children are at risk of being injured when they walk to school for several reasons, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including:



Size. It's more difficult for drivers to see children than adults because they're small.

Judgment. Children often don't know whether it's safe to cross a street because they can't judge the speed or distance of cars.

Inexperience. Many children can't cross streets safely because they don't understand traffic signals or can't anticipate drivers' actions.

Misunderstanding. Children and drivers each assume the other party will yield to them.

- Make sure all passengers are **buckled up** in an appropriate restraint system — it's the law. Remember that children 12 and under must ride in the backseat.
- School areas can be congested and hazardous, so drive at a safe speed — no faster than **25 mph** when children are present.
- Obey **right-of-way rules**. Yield to pedestrians and other motorists when required so you don't contribute to traffic gridlock.
- **Don't talk on your cell phone** when driving near or in a school zone. Devote your full attention to driving.
- **Avoid U-turns.** If you must make a U-turn, do so only where it's safe and legal. Don't make them in school zones, congested areas, or close to intersections.
- **Park in designated areas only.** Don't park where it's illegal, even for a moment.
- Pull up to the curb in the school's **designated area** to drop off or pick up children.
- If you must drop off children across the street from school, send them to a **crosswalk** or an intersection where they can cross safely. Children age 10 and under shouldn't cross streets unsupervised.
- If you need to park farther away, **walk with your children** to school and periodically talk to them about traffic safety.
- **Cooperate** with adults directing traffic.
- Encourage children to walk to school, choosing the **safest route**. If possible, walk with them.
- **Praise children's good behavior** for walking and crossing streets safely, and for checking for traffic.