

# KNOW THE RULES...

## For Going To and From School More Safely

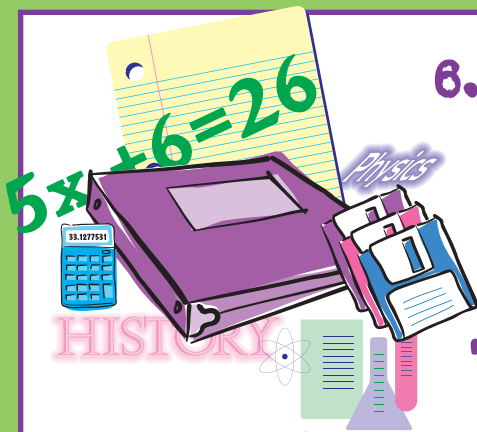


**E**very day millions of children take to the streets and roadways to get to and from school. They walk, ride their bicycles, take buses, and arrive in vehicles with one purpose — getting to and from school safely. Every year approximately 440,000 public school buses travel more than 4 billion miles and daily transport 24 million children to and from school and school-related activities.<sup>1</sup> 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 families to supervise young children and practice safety skills with their older children. The tips noted below will help prepare your 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. When walking and biking stay aware of your surroundings and observe all traffic rules in place to more safely share the roads and sidewalks with others.
- 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 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** you or another trusted adult. If an adult approaches your child for help or directions, remember 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 children about knowing which bus to ride.
- 5.** Instruct your children if anyone they don't know or a person who confuses, scares, or makes them feel uncomfortable offers a ride, say **NO**. Children should never hitchhike. Also children should never accept a ride from anyone unless you have told them it is OK to do so in each instance.





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

7. Teach your children if anyone 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/guardian." If anyone tries to grab them, teach them to make a scene and every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting.

8. Children should be taught to never leave school with anyone they don't know. They should always **CHECK FIRST** with you or another trusted adult. If anyone tells them there is an emergency and they want your child to go with them, your children should always **CHECK FIRST** before doing anything. Make sure your children understand to **TELL** a trusted adult if they notice anyone 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 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](http://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](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

<sup>1</sup> *School Bus Safety: Fact Sheets*, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/GTSS/factbus.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/GTSS/factbus.html), accessed July 11, 2005.

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

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

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