Department for
Infrastructure
An Roinn
Bonneagair
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Road Safety

A Guide for Parents of 0-7 Year Olds





This leaflet is designed to provide you, as a parent, with information on how to keep your children safe as young road users. It is your responsibility to ensure they are protected from the dangers present on or near roads and you should use opportunities, as they grow, to teach them age appropriate lessons.



Children will follow by example, so make sure you practise positive road safety behaviours – from ensuring everyone in the car is wearing a seatbelt, taking young children by the hand (even when on the footpath), to insisting all the family wear a helmet whilst cycling.

By setting a good example, you can help ensure your child remains safe and develops road and traffic awareness as they grow. Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, we hope that the guidance contained proves useful and helps you educate the new generation of road users!

Pedestrian Safety

Children under the age of eight have difficulty judging distance and speed of traffic so make sure they are accompanied by an adult until they are ready to cross roads on their own.

On the pavement

When walking near a road it is a good idea to:

- ✓ hold your child's hand - don't let them run ahead;
- ✓ look out for and encourage your child to be aware of hidden entrances or driveways crossing the pavement;
- ✓ put reins on a younger child if they are not strapped in a pushchair;
- ✓ be wary of pushing your pram or buggy onto the road while you wait for traffic to pass. Instead,

position it beside you on the pavement until it's clear to cross;

✓ make sure your child walks on the inside of the pavement, away from the traffic.

It can be hard for motorists to see small children, especially when they are reversing, so take extra care. Never let your child go near a road alone or even with an older child.

Children are generally not ready to cross roads on their own until they are at least eight years old – and many will not be ready even then.

Crossing the road

When the time comes to teach your child about crossing the road, remember the following:

- always set a good example by choosing a safe place to cross and explaining what you're doing;
- let your child help you decide where and when it's safe to cross;
- tell your child that it's safest to cross at a pedestrian crossing or a crossing patrol;
- tell your child not to cross where they can't see far along the road;
- explain that they should not try to cross a road between parked cars; drivers won't be able to see them very well and the cars might start moving;
- use the Green Cross Code with your child – explain that you have to stop at the kerb, then look both ways and listen for traffic before crossing;
- when it's safe to cross, walk straight across the road and keep looking and listening out for traffic;
- remind your children to concentrate – they may be easily distracted, forget what they have been taught and dash out into the road;
- make sure that anyone else looking after your child follows the same road safety rules that you do.



Pedestrian crossings

You might feel that pedestrian crossings are safe, but they can still be dangerous for children if they don't take care.

REMEMBER TO:

» explain that pedestrians have to wait on the pavement until all the traffic coming from both directions has stopped – only then is it safe to cross;

» explain that if there is an island in the middle of the road, your child should treat each half of the crossing as a separate crossing;

» tell your child it's important to keep looking and listening while crossing, in case a driver has not seen them;

» warn your child to watch for cyclists or motorcyclists who might not have seen them;

» make sure your child can be seen easily – bright or fluorescent clothes are best during the day and reflective materials work well at night;





» always use a zebra or light-controlled crossing, or a school crossing patrol if there is one.

Be Safe, Be Seen

It is important that other road users can see you and your children easily. Explain to your child how wearing brighter materials help drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists, etc. see pedestrians from further away and, as a result, are able to slow down or adjust position on the road in good time. Remember:

- **By day** – bright or fluorescent materials are best;
- **At night** – reflective materials are best.



Walking to School

The Northern Ireland Public Health Agency recommends children from the age of five need to do moderate to vigorous intensity activities for at least 60 minutes daily. Walking to school is a good way to increase physical activity and helps reduce the congestion (and pollution) in and around the vicinity of the school. It also provides an excellent opportunity to talk to your child about road safety issues on route.

REMEMBER TO:

- Use the same crossing points where good sight lines exist;
- Practise the Stop, Look, Listen procedure;
- Point out how some pedestrians are more easily seen than others (Be Safe, Be Seen).

For more information on pedestrian safety visit: **www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/rules-pedestrians-1-35**

Passenger Safety

Child car seats, restraints and seat belts

Children are much more vulnerable than adults in a car so taking time to make sure you use the right child seat (restraint) or booster correctly, could save your child's life. Drivers and passengers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured when they don't wear a seat belt.

The law states that you must use the right car seat for your child in cars, mini buses, vans and other goods vehicles. It is the driver's responsibility to make sure that any child under 14 years of age uses a seat belt or the right child restraint. Any child restraint used must conform to EU safety standards that is either Regulation 44.04 or Regulation 129 (also known as i-Size seats).



All children up to 135cm (approximately 4ft 5in) in height, or up to 12 years of age (whichever occurs first), must use a suitable child restraint – that is, one that is suitable for your child's height or weight.

There is a fixed penalty fine of £60 and three penalty points for not using the right child restraint. If the case goes to court this could increase to a maximum fine of £500 for any occupant anywhere in the car.

Summary of seat belt and child restraint requirements

Driver or passengers	Front seat	Rear seat	Who is responsible?
Driver	Seat belt must be worn if fitted		
Child under three years of age	The right child restraint must be used	The right child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a taxi or minibus, the child may travel unrestrained	Driver
Child from third birthday up to 135cm in height (or 12th birthday whichever they reach first)	The right child restraint must be used	The right child restraint must be used where seat belts fitted. Must use adult seat belt if the right child restraint not available: – in a taxi or minibus; – for a short distance in an unexpected necessity; – if two occupied child restraints prevent fitting a third and suitable child restraint is not available in the front passenger seat.	Driver
Child 12 or 13, or over 135cm in height	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Driver
All passengers 14 and over	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Passenger

For more information on child car seats, restraints and seat belts:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/child-car-seats-restraints-and-seatbelts

Getting in and out of the car

Young children need help to get in and out of the car. As a general rule, make sure your child gets in (and out) on the pavement side. This may require turning your car before parking so that they are away from passing traffic. Otherwise, instruct the child, to move (once the car is parked), across the back seat to reach the door on the pavement side.

Park & Stride

To reduce congestion (and danger) at the school gate, why not park some distance away from the school entrance and walk with your child to/ from school. It may even assist you in getting away quicker than waiting in a queue at the school.

Public Transport

Reducing congestion and pollution is the responsibility of all citizens and, where available for your journey, use of public transport provides a more sustainable way of travelling than taking the car. Choosing public transport also helps:

- Reduce the risk of being involved in a road traffic collision;
- Reduce stress and save you time;
- Save you money;
- Improve health and fitness (when combined with short walks);
- Allow you to use travel time for other activities such as reading, catching up with friends, etc.



Cycling Safety

Cycling is a good way to increase physical activity and is a healthy, fun way of encouraging children to enjoy the outdoors but learning to ride safely gives them a life skill. Whilst more formal training (Cycling Proficiency Scheme in P6/7) is an excellent idea, here are some points to help keep younger children safe:

- Buy a bicycle that suits the size of the child (and adjust the saddle as they grow);
- Have the bicycle checked regularly to ensure its roadworthiness (even if it is only ridden off-road);
- Children should never ride unaccompanied by an adult;
- Teach your child to ride a bicycle in a safe place;
- Ensure your child is able to control their bicycle;
- Always wear a properly fitted helmet (applies equally to adults/ children!);



- Be Safe, Be Seen (wear hi-visibility clothing);

For more information on cycle safety for children: **www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/cycle-safety-children**

About the Safe & Accessible Travel Division

The DfI - Safe & Accessible Travel Division aims to help everyone to connect safely, no matter how they travel and to enable and encourage shifts to more sustainable modes of travel. It promotes, encourages and enables an increased take up of sustainable and active travel, with the promotion of increased use of Public Transport, Car Share, Park & Ride, Cycling or Walking.

In co-operation with other Departmental / Local Government colleagues, DfI helps to provide the roads and networks for public transport services and promotes moves to more sustainable forms of transport including taking forward the Bicycle Strategy, developing urban bicycle network plans, a plan for greenways, a small grants programme for greenways and the Active School Travel programme.

In addition, it also contributes to the reduction of road casualties. This is done through monitoring and oversight of the Road Safety Strategy to 2020, by developing policies to address poor road user behaviours' and by working with schools and communities to promote road safety.

Benefits of Safe, Sustainable & Active Travel

Walking and cycling for short journeys are easy and convenient ways to build physical activity into our daily routine. The Northern Ireland Public

Health Agency recommends that from age 5, children need to do moderate to vigorous intensive activities for at least 60 minutes every day.



Walking & Cycling helps:

- Improve health and fitness;
- Reduce commuting time;
- Protect the environment (by reducing road congestion and pollution);
- Reduce car maintenance, fuel and parking costs.

Choosing public transport helps:

- Reduce the risk of being involved in a road traffic collision;
- Protect the environment (by reducing road congestion and pollution);
- Reduce stress and save you time;
- Save you money;
- Improve health and fitness (when combined with short walks);
- Allow you to use travel time for other activities such as reading, catching up with friends, etc.

If you start making some small changes to your normal travel arrangements today you will soon realise some of the many benefits.



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