

Road safety matters



**Guidance for parents of
children aged 7–11**

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This booklet has a simple purpose: to reduce those figures by helping you to keep your children safe.

Why road safety matters



Around 1,500 children aged 0–11 are killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads every year. That's almost  children every week.

This booklet has a simple purpose: to reduce those figures by helping you to keep your children safe.

Your child is currently learning about road safety at school but as a parent or carer you also play a big part in helping him or her to learn how to stay safe. Children copy adults' behaviour, so if they see you taking risks they will probably take risks too. One of the best ways you can help your child stay safe is to set a good example when using roads, whether you're on foot, in the car or cycling.

This booklet will also help you to teach your child how to be a safe pedestrian, about the importance of the Green Cross Code and how to stay safe when cycling and riding in a car. In addition it contains guidance on how children can 'Be Bright, Be Seen' and the law relating to child car seats and seat belts.

Still not sure that road safety matters?

- Research shows that young children can't judge how fast vehicles are going or how far away they are.
- Children are more likely to die in a road collision than from any other accidental cause.
- In comparison with other countries, Britain's overall road safety record for children is very good, and its rate for child fatalities is well below the European average. While our record on child pedestrian fatalities is improving, it does not compare so well with many other European countries.

Be Bright, Be Seen

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. Most primary schools don't have rules about outer garments, so selecting a bright coat can help, as can providing fluorescent and reflective armbands, school bags etc.

This is a particular issue with 11 year old children who are moving up to secondary school where longer journeys are often made on foot and uniforms are usually compulsory.

How can my child be seen more easily?

1. On dull days your child can wear bright or fluorescent colours.
 - Special high-visibility tabards and other clothing can be bought from many retailers.
 - Fluorescent armbands can also be worn over coats and other clothing.
 - Bags are also available in bright colours or with high-visibility strips.
2. If walking near traffic at night reflective clothing is needed.
 - Reflective clothing reflects light from car and bike headlamps.
 - Reflective armbands and clothing can be bought for children.
 - Remember that fluorescent colours do not show up in the dark.

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.

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

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





The Green Cross Code

Walking is good for children's health and fitness and we support parents who encourage their children to walk as much as possible.



Children need to learn how to cross the road safely.

 In 2008, almost 20 child pedestrians (aged 0–11)  were killed or seriously injured every week in Britain. The Green Cross Code is taught in schools but needs to be reinforced from home. Do you know it? Do you follow it? The code is for everyone.

The Green Cross Code

1. First find the safest place to cross

- If possible, cross the road at: subways, footbridges, islands, zebra, puffin, pelican or toucan crossings, 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 and 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.



2. Stop just before you get to the kerb

- 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.

3. Look all around for traffic and listen

- Look all around for traffic and listen.
- Look in every direction.
- Listen carefully because you can sometimes hear traffic before you can see it.

4. If traffic is coming, let it pass

- 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.

5. When it is safe, go straight across the road – do not run

- 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.
- Do not cross diagonally.

How you can help your child and other children

- Set a good example. Use the Green Cross Code yourself.
- Show your child how to use the Code to cross the road when you're out and about.
- Let your child show you that they know how to cross the road safely – start practising on quiet roads first.
- Point out dangerous places to cross on local roads. Point out safer places as well. Some places may be safer at some times of the day than at others.
- Use pedestrian crossings even if it involves a small 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 safer on the streets if we show them how.



In 2008, almost 20 child pedestrians (aged 0–11) were killed or seriously injured every week in Britain.

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

Crossing between parked cars

Try not to cross between parked cars

But if there is nowhere else to cross:

- Choose a place where there is a space between two cars and make sure that it is easy to get to the pavement on the other side of the road.
- Make sure neither car is about to move off – look for drivers in the cars, lights and listen for engines.
- Don't cross near large vehicles. You could be standing in a blind spot, where the driver cannot see you.
- Walk to the outside edge of the cars and stop. Here you can be seen by drivers and you can look all around for traffic.
- Use the Green Cross Code. When the road is clear, cross, still looking and listening as you go.

Car seats, boosters and seat belts


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. To find out what type of child restraint your child needs visit www.childcarseats.org.uk




Booster seat

A lot of confusion surrounds the issue of child car seats and this section will address this problem. The need for them, however, is clear:

- In 2008, 31 children aged 0–11 were killed and 258 seriously injured in cars. 

So, what does the law say?

- By law, you must wear a seat belt in cars and goods vehicles where one is fitted. There are very few exceptions to this. The driver can be fined if a child under 14 years does not wear a seat belt or child restraint as required. Anyone 14 and over not wearing a seat belt, is responsible for themselves.
- Children under 12 and also under 135cm tall must use the appropriate child restraint for their weight (not age) when travelling in the front or back seat of any car, van or goods vehicle. There are very few exceptions (see <http://think.dft.gov.uk/think/focusareas/childrenchildincar>). 'Child restraint' means any of baby seat, child seat, booster seat or booster cushion. 
- A child can use an adult belt when they reach 135cm or their 12th birthday, whichever comes first.
- In buses and coaches with seat belts fitted, passengers aged 14 years and above must use them.

Helping your child stay safe

- Make sure that your child has the right type of child seat or booster.
- Make sure that the seat or booster fits your car.
- Make sure it is properly fitted in your car every trip.
- Check that your child's booster seat raises him/her into the correct position so that the belt fits well.
- Show your child the chart opposite and talk about it.
- Make sure that your child knows that it is against the law for them not use a child restraint if they are under 12 years old and also under 135cm tall.
- Make the child seat/booster 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 colour or pattern they like best, so that they feel it's theirs.

The law for cars, taxis, vans and other goods vehicles is summarised in this table:

Person	Front seat	Back seat	Who is responsible?
Driver	Seat belt must be worn if fitted		Driver
Child up to three years of age	Correct child restraint must be used	The correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a licensed taxi / private hire vehicle, the child may travel unrestrained.	Driver
Child from third birthday up to 135cms in height (approx 4'5") or 12th birthday, whichever is reached first	Correct child restraint must be used	Where seat belts are fitted, the correct child restraint must be used. The child must use an adult belt in the back seat if the correct child restraint is not available either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle • for a short distance in an unexpected necessity • if two occupied child restraints prevent fitting of a third. A child three years and over may travel unrestrained in the back seat of a vehicle if seat belts are not fitted in the rear.	Driver
Child 12 or 13, or over 135 cms (approx 4' 5") in height	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Driver
Passengers aged 14 years and over	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Passenger

Cycle safety



You can learn more about cycle training in your area at www.bikeability.org.uk

Cycling needs to be encouraged – it's green, healthy and fun and it helps children to become independent. However, in 2008, 166 cyclists aged 0–11 were killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads, so it is vital that 7–11 year-olds learn how to stay safe on a bike.

Helping your child stay safe

- Ask your school or Local Authority about cycle training in your area. Your child shouldn't cycle on roads until they have been trained.
- Check your child's bike to see if it's roadworthy: look at brakes, tyres and lights/reflectors (when riding at dusk or at night you must have white front lights and red back lights and reflector).
- Make sure the bike is the right size for your child.
- When out driving, teach your child about roundabouts, traffic lights and pedestrian crossings.
- Find out where local cycle paths and lanes are.
- Make sure your child has a helmet which fits and is worn correctly, it should not be pushed too far back on the head.
- Ensure your child wears some high-visibility clothing when cycling.
- When out and about with your child look at cyclists and talk about how easy they are to see.

Remember that if you cycle yourself you should set a good example!

The basics of cycling safety

These are all covered in detail in the Tales of the Road booklet which your child should have a copy of.

- Look behind before you turn, overtake or stop.
- Use arm signals before you turn right or left.
- Obey traffic lights and road signs.
- Do not ride on the pavement unless there is a sign saying that you can.
- On busy or narrow roads do not cycle next to another person.
- When overtaking parked cars, watch out for car doors opening suddenly.
- Do not listen to a personal stereo while cycling.

These are just some of the rules children who ride on roads should know. Young cyclists need to learn what road signs mean, how to deal with roundabouts and understand when to give way. If you have time, read through the Tales of the Road booklet with your child.

Find out if cycle training is available at your child's school – this is the best way to learn the skills and knowledge needed to stay safe on the road. You can learn more about cycle training in your area at www.bikeability.org.uk or contact your local Road Safety Officer through the Local Authority.



Making independent journeys

The Green Cross Code is a good start: armed with this, children will feel more confident about crossing roads, including unfamiliar ones.



Eleven year olds will be heading to secondary school and may face a longer walk or bike ride, using different roads. As a parent it is important for you to help your child plan for this important step by showing them how to stay safe.

What do children need to know?

- The Green Cross Code is a good start: armed with this, children will feel more confident about crossing roads, including unfamiliar ones.
- Where there are dangers or hazards in the locality, such as particularly busy stretches of road, complicated junctions or dangerous bends and hills.
- They need to know the safest route to where they are going: this may not always be the quickest.
- Children need to understand that using their eyes and ears all the time is essential to being safe near traffic: they should avoid distractions such as chatting to friends, using mobiles or listening to MP3s when crossing roads.
- That the more easily they can be seen by traffic, the more likely they are to avoid collisions.

You can practise pedestrian skills with younger children and show them how to cross the road safely and use the various types of crossing that are available. Remember that children copy their parents so always set a good example in everything you do near traffic!

What else is online?

www.roadsafetygb.org.uk

Road Safety GB, formerly LARSOA. Check the 'contacts' section for details of your road safety officer, or contact info@roadsafetygb.org.uk for further information.

What's happening at school?

Your child is currently learning about road safety at school using materials from the Department for transport's new website



www.dft.gov.uk/think/education. As well as resources for teachers to use in class, there are materials aimed at parents to help you reinforce the key safety messages with your child.

What's on the site?

1. Videos

There are four short online videos based on the four themes of pedestrian safety, crossing the road, cycling safety and in-car safety. Each one features the fictional story of a child who has been injured in a road accident. You can watch these videos with your child at and talk about them afterwards.

2. Online games

There is also a fun online game for each of the four safety topics. These are designed to help children learn some of the knowledge and skills they need to keep safe on the roads. Why not challenge your child and see if you can beat their score? The more times they play, the more they will learn.

3. Downloads

For each road safety theme there is a two-page home-link sheets with ideas for activities you can do with your child. These include quizzes, questions, information and topics to discuss. Your child's teacher may send these home with your child as part of the ongoing work at school.

4. Teaching resources

In the teachers' section you can find out about the learning activities your child is doing in class. There are also worksheets and information about using the videos and games, as well as ideas for practical lessons.

5. A parent's area

With more information and links to the above sections.

Encourage your child to talk about what he or she is learning in school about road safety. Encourage questions and have a look at the website together, letting your child choose an activity and tell you about the videos and games.

www.3m.co.uk/intl/uk/3mstreetwise2008/ChildRoadSafety.htm

Another site with games, quizzes and activities for children. It also has a parents' section where you can test your own road safety knowledge!

www.dft.gov.uk/think 

The government's official road safety website. This contains guidance for all road users and has detailed information about the law regarding child car seats.

www.bikeability.org.uk

Bikeability is the new national standard cycling award scheme, developed by the Department for Transport and various cycling bodies. From here you can find out where your nearest cycle training scheme for children is.

www.childcarseats.org.uk

A very useful site from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. It gives comprehensive advice about all aspects of child car restraints and has excellent illustrations.



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