

12 Ways to Make Your Child's Bike Ride to School Safer

- 1.** Make sure your child's bike fits and that it is a type your child is able to use. A child should be able to straddle the top bar of the bike with 1 to 2 inches of clearance and touch one foot to the ground while sitting on the seat. Hand brakes or bikes with more than one gear are difficult for young riders to operate.
- 2.** Help your child remember to regularly check the condition of his or her bicycle, including the brakes, seat and handlebar tightness, and tire pressure. A bike in good condition is safer and more fun to ride.
- 3.** Get bicycle helmets for your child and any other riders in the family, and insist they wear them whenever riding. Helmets meeting the CPSC or ANSI standards can reduce the risk of serious head injuries by 85%.
- 4.** Make sure your child understands the meaning of traffic signs and signals and obeys them. Bicycle riders of any age have the same responsibility to stop at red lights that motor vehicle drivers do. Children under age 9 should not be allowed to ride on the road unsupervised.
- 5.** Teach your child to stop at the end of the driveway, check both ways for traffic, and wait for a break in traffic before entering the street. Riding out of the driveway without looking is one of the most dangerous crash types for children.
- 6.** All bicyclists should ride on the right, in the same direction as other traffic. Because they travel slower, bicyclists should ride about 18 inches from the right side of the road.
- 7.** Encourage your child to communicate with other road users by establishing eye contact with them and by using hand signals before making left and right turns, and stopping or slowing. Bicycle riders, just like others using the road, are required to signal their next move.
- 8.** While riding, your child should safely stow books, homework and lunch in a backpack. Bags dangling from the handlebars or carried in one hand make it difficult to balance, steer, turn, and give hand signals.
- 9.** Because motorists often overlook bicyclists, bicycle riders should wear bright colorful clothing. Remember that loose, baggy clothing could get caught in the chain or wheel. Use pant straps or tuck pant legs into a sock.
- 10.** Teach your child to make decisions for him or herself when riding in a group. A gap in traffic may only be wide enough for one rider, leaving the second and third riders in serious trouble. Remind your child that riding double (2 on a bike) is dangerous.
- 11.** Scout the streets, bike lanes and trails, paths, and sidewalks on foot or by bike with your child to select the best route from home to school and the other places he or she may ride. The best route is often not the shortest.
- 12.** Riding a bicycle at night, even with the headlight, taillight, and reflectors required by law, is very dangerous and not recommended for children. It's better they call for a ride or walk the bike home than to ride at night.