Road safety matters

Guidance for parents of children aged 3–5
Contents

Why road safety matters .................................................. 4
Recognising traffic ...................................................... 5
Stop, Look and Listen .................................................. 6
Be Bright, Be Seen ..................................................... 7
So, what does the law say? .......................................... 8
What's online? .......................................................... 10
Twenty-nine children aged 0-5 were killed and 440 seriously injured on Britain's roads in 2008.

The purpose of this booklet is for parents and carers to be alert to the risks children face on the road and provide the best examples of how to behave.

Your child is learning about road safety at his or her nursery or school but as a parent or carer you also play a big part in helping your child to learn how to stay safer. Children will copy adults' behaviour, so if they see you taking risks they will probably take risks too.

One of the best ways that you can help your child to stay safer is to set a good example when using roads, on foot and in the car. This booklet will also help you to show your child how to recognise traffic, how to behave in the street and how to cross the road safely when with you. It also 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.

- In comparison with other countries, Britain's overall road safety record for children is on the whole very good, and its rate for child fatalities is well below the European average. But our record on child pedestrian fatalities remains less good than many European countries, though improving rapidly.
Recognising traffic

Children aged 3 to 5 need to learn what traffic is and understand that it can be dangerous. They also need to know about the different types of traffic found on roads.

How you can help your child

Talking about traffic with your child when you’re out and about is one of the best ways for him or her to learn:

• Play ‘spotting’ games: where’s a lorry? Can you find a bus? Let’s see who can spot a taxi first.
• Ask your child to tell you about the vehicles waiting at the traffic lights or passing you in the car.
• Talk about vehicles you see: which is biggest or fastest? What colours are they? Which carries the most people? Which way is it going? Do some counting.
• Building up your child’s language will help him or her to understand traffic: use words to describe speed, size, shape, directions or talk about signs, lights, signals and road markings.
• Talk about how we can tell when traffic is near or when it is coming towards us, asking your child when cars are safe and when they can be dangerous.

Pedestrian safety: The facts

• Every week, on average nine children under the age of six are killed or seriously injured on Great Britain’s roads.
• Almost 65% of children aged 0–5 killed or seriously injured in 2008 were on foot at the time. The other 35% were mostly travelling in cars.

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. What’s the best way to do this?

1. Set a good example
   • When you cross the road, don’t take risks – your children will copy you.
   • Remember to find a safe place to cross, then stop, look and listen.
   • Don’t use your mobile phone while crossing the road.
   • Wearing bright colours or fluorescent and reflective clothing helps motorists to see you (see p7).

2. Hold hands
   • Always hold hands with your young child near traffic (or make sure they hold onto a buggy if you’re pushing one).
   • Make sure your child walks on the side of the pavement away from the traffic.
   • If there is no pavement walk on the side of the road facing oncoming traffic.

3. Find safest places to cross the road
   • If you can, use traffic islands, zebra, pelican and puffin crossings, footbridges and subways (see p6).
   • Cross where you can see clearly in all directions.
   • Avoid crossing between parked cars if there is a safer place nearby (and be considerate yourself when parking).
   • Show your child how to STOP, LOOK and LISTEN.
Stop, Look and Listen

Parents and carers play a vital part in teaching children how to cross the road safely. Even from a young age it’s essential to set a good example and to help your child understand why we need to stop, look and listen before stepping onto a road.

Teaching your child to cross the road safely
1. Find the safest place to cross with a clear view all around, away from parked cars, junctions, bends or the brow of a hill if possible. Explain to your child why it’s important to choose a place with a clear view.
2. Holding hands with your child, show them how to stop on the kerb, look all around and listen for traffic before they cross.
3. When there is no traffic coming, walk straight across (not diagonally) and keep looking and listening.

Safer places to cross
Pedestrian crossings such as puffins and pelicans have traffic lights and a button to press which controls a ‘green man’.
Zebra crossings have two yellow beacons and striped markings across the road. Remember to wait for cars to stop in both directions.
Footbridges go over roads and subways go under roads.
Traffic islands are places you can stand in between lanes in the centre of a road.

How else you can help
• Explain to your child why they need to stop, look and listen when crossing the road.
• Talk about safer places to cross and how it’s harder to see where there are parked cars, junctions, bends or the brow of a hill.
• Help your child to learn the names of the different crossings, such as zebras, puffins, pelicans and footbridges.

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.
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 his or her nursery or school, and it’s important that you as a parent or carer help your child to be easily seen near traffic, as well as setting an example to your children by wearing something bright or white too.

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.

Child car seats and safety belts

There is a lot of confusion about rules for children travelling in cars, but some facts are clear:
- In 2008, 31 children aged 0–11 were killed and 258 seriously injured in cars.