Road safety matters

Guidance for parents of children aged 7–11
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 29 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.
The Green Cross Code

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.
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

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/children/childincar). '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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Front seat</th>
<th>Back seat</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td></td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child up to three years of age</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used</td>
<td>The correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a licensed taxi / private hire vehicle, the child may travel unrestrained.</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child from third birthday up to 135cms in height (approx 4'5&quot;) or 12th birthday, whichever is reached first</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used</td>
<td>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: • 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.</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 12 or 13, or over 135 cms (approx 4' 5&quot;) in height</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers aged 14 years and over</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td>Passenger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>