

Subject

Navigating Traffic Environments Safely

Age level

Recommended for grades 4 & 5

Background

Children see, hear and process information differently than adults and do not have the developmental skills to adequately deal with traffic. This puts kids under age 19 at a greater risk for pedestrian injuries than adults. After age 10 and during the preteen and teen years, kids are exploring the world more independently and are learning to navigate traffic without the supervision of an adult. This safety activity will give children an opportunity to learn about the traffic environment, driver behavior, as well as how to stay safe while crossing the street.

Kids today are raised with technology, so by the time they're teenagers, they are already pros at texting and posting pictures. It is important to make safety part of the discussion about responsible use when a child gets his or her first MP3 player or phone.

Goal

The purpose of this activity is to prepare kids to walk safely around traffic, to be aware of their surroundings, learn the risks associated with crossing the street while distracted, and to learn about the safety resources that are present while they are walking. After participating in this activity students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of road safety/ traffic signs and safe crossing techniques.

Discussion Topics

- Define and discuss traffic.
- Ask students if they walk and some reasons why.
- Ask the class what might be dangerous about the street as a pedestrian.
- Ask students where to walk (sidewalk, side of street, facing traffic).
- Ask the students what the word "**pedestrian**" means. (Allow students time to try and describe the word.)
 - A **pedestrian** is a person traveling on foot, whether it be walking or running. It comes from the Latin word "ped" which means "foot".
- Ask the students what the word "**yield**" means.
 - Yield or **give way** traffic sign indicates that a driver of a vehicle must slow down and prepare to stop if necessary (usually while merging into traffic on another road) but does not need to stop if there is no reason to.
- Ask the students what phrase "**Right – of – Way**" means.
 - The legal right of a person, or vehicle to pass in front of another.
- Ask the students **who** taught them how to walk in traffic and cross streets.
- Ask the students **what** they learned and what do they know already about pedestrian safety and have them make a list of their responses.*
- Discuss why signs, signals and laws are needed to keep pedestrians safe while they are walking



- *Signs indicate to drivers and road users the legal, recommended way to behave on the road.*
- *Signals are used so that vehicles, bicycles and pedestrian traffic are managed on the roads.*
- Ask the children if they have seen any other children do dangerous or safe things while walking.
- Ask the children if they have seen drivers do dangerous or safe things while they are walking or in their cars? Have they ever felt unsafe while walking? Why?
- Ask the children to make a list of all the things that they can do, wear or use to make them more visible when walking on or near the road.
- Ask the children if some roads and streets may be harder to cross than others. Why?

Distracted Pedestrians

Students report that parents & teachers speak with them less about safety as they get older. We can remind pre-teens and teens that taking a moment to lower their cell phone, headphones or game player before crossing the street could be the difference between life and death. It's a valuable discussion to have when talking about distracted driving—another important danger for pre-teens and teens looking forward getting their drivers' licenses. Also, encourage students to keep the volume down on headphones and keep their eyes on the road when crossing a street.

- Put your device down, look, and make eye contact with drivers before crossing. Remember to watch out for cars that are turning or backing up.
- Always walk on sidewalks or paths and cross at street corners, utilizing traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Be aware of others who may be distracted—and speak up when you see someone who is distracted.
- Teens account for 50 percent of child pedestrian injuries.
- If you need to use a cell phone, stop on the sidewalk and find a safe area to talk. Look up and pay extra attention when using headphones and turn the volume off when crossing the street.



***Be sure the following topics/rules are covered as you go over the students responses:**

- Cross the street at the corner or at a crosswalk if there is one, and obey all traffic signals.
- Walk on a sidewalk; if there is no sidewalk; walk on the left side of the street, facing oncoming traffic.
- Walk with an adult until you are at least 10 years old.
- Only cross in front of a school bus when the driver says it is safe. Do not cross behind the bus or where the driver can't see you.
- Hold an adult's hand when you cross the street. Look left, right and left again before you cross and keep looking both ways until you reach the other side.
- If you walk when it is dark, wear light-colored clothing or clothing with reflective material so drivers can see you. A flashlight is also a good idea.
- If a toy or pet goes out into the street, ask an adult for help getting it back.
- When you are outside playing, play in a backyard or playground away from the street or parking lots.

If working with children under 10 years old, consider addressing these additional topics as this lesson plan is geared towards older kids walking alone:

- Discuss with the students why they should not walk alone until they are at least 10 years old.
- Discuss why younger children may need to walk with an adult and/or to hold a grown-up's hand while they cross the streets.
- Ask the children who can help them to cross the street safely and have them make a list or say it out loud.
 - parent, guardian, older sibling, crossing guard, police officer etc.
- Explain to the children why drivers will not be able to see them due to their smaller stature/size.
- Introduce the basic traffic signs to gauge the students level of knowledge and to explain the meaning of each sign.
- Explain to the children that it is difficult to judge the speed of cars, how far away they, are and which direction traffic sounds are coming from.

