



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

• CITY OF CAMBRIDGE •

Parents and Caregivers,

In Physical Education classes each year, second grade students in Cambridge complete a unit on pedestrian education as part of the National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. The unit introduces concepts around smart safety when walking and bicycling to support students, when feasible, in choosing active transportation (walking, biking, non-motorized scooters, etc.), particularly when going to and from school.

From the Massachusetts Safe Routes to School program: “Cognitively, students at the second-grade level are ready to learn about the principals of being a safe pedestrian...It’s never too soon to start walking or biking with your little one to prepare for the day when he or she is ready to make the trek alone.”

Cambridge’s Community Development Department has compiled some focus points and tips that you may use when you are out walking to help your 2nd grader complete the pedestrian education unit. While the concepts and skills we use when walking around Cambridge are intuitive to many adults, this curriculum is a good refresher for us all!

To find our more info about the City of Cambridge Safe Routes to School program, please visit us at www.cambridgema.gov/saferoutes.

Best regards,

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Sidewalks & Driveways

- ❑ “*What is a pedestrian?*” A person walking. We all walk sometimes, so we are all pedestrians.
- ❑ “*Why is it called the sidewalk?*” Because it is on the side of the road and you walk on it. It is not the side-run, the side-skip, or the side-dance!
- ❑ “*Is it easier to stop yourself if you are walking or running down the sidewalk?*”

ANSWER: Walking makes it easier to control our bodies, so we should always walk on the sidewalk. Plus, if you are walking instead of running, it is easier for people driving to *predict* your movement because they have more time to adjust their behavior. (*Bonus: what does predict mean?*)

- ❑ “*Where is it safe to walk?*”

ANSWER: On the right side of the sidewalk, not the edge closest to the street. When walking with a friend or adult, the **taller (not necessarily older)** person should be closer to the street because they will be more visible to people driving in cars.

- ❑ Sloping sidewalks and/or low curbs are a signal that people in cars cross over that section of sidewalk – make sure to look into alleyways, driveways, and all places where a person might drive a car or truck and use your **sneak and peak** if you do not have a clear view of the driveway! **Explain that when we cross a driveway or alley we need to act just like we are crossing a street (i.e. look for people in cars or on bikes).**
- ❑ Discuss how reflective or bright colored clothing as well as flashlights help make you visible to drivers and others when walking anytime between dusk and dawn, especially in the winter when it gets dark earlier.
- ❑ Talk about the curb – it separates the sidewalk & the street and we should never walk along it because of the risk of falling into the street. Also, people in cars sometimes drive onto the sidewalk when they are not being careful or drive close enough to the curb that we could get bumped by the mirrors on the sides that stick out wider than the car.
- ❑ “*How can you be safe near a bus?*”

ANSWER: Wait a few extra steps back from the curb for the bus driver to stop the bus. For school buses, wait for the driver to put out the stop signs before you to walk cross. Explain the **dangers of standing/walking too close to the curb in the sidewalk section at bus**

stop: bus mirrors stick out far and we should be careful to stand back and away from them when the bus is pulling in.

- ❑ Review how you recognize MBTA signs (T and bus numbers)
- ❑ Discuss being aware of surroundings, don't let toys/phones/headphones/anything else distract you.

Parking Lots

- ❑ Explain what a *blind spot* is. Show your child that drivers may have trouble seeing them by demonstrating that their heads barely come up to the windows of small cars and below window height of many large cars.



MA SRTS

To demonstrate, kneel to their height in front of a car (preferably a van or SUV) while they stand behind it and ask if it is easy to see you (without jumping). Ask whether the child would be able to see the driver and if the driver would be able to see them when they stand in that position.

- ❑ Demonstrate the **sneak and peak**: stay between two cars, bend your upper body slightly forward to look out and around the parked cars to see if the parking lot (or road) is safe to cross. If there is no one in vehicles coming, walk across to the nearest safe area meant for pedestrians.

Explain that this technique can be used whenever

there is an obstacle preventing someone from seeing oncoming traffic, like cars parked too close to a crosswalk. The key is staying protected behind the obstacle while looking. (Bonus: make a funny face while doing your sneak and peak – remember to walk calmly and not to run out once you have decided it is safe to cross)

- ❑ “Pretend that you are a detective, what are the different clues that a parked car might be about to move?”
 1. You see that the brake lights (red) or reverse lights (white) are on.
 2. You see a person in the driver seat.
 3. You can hear the motor.
 4. You can smell or see the exhaust.



MA SRTS

- ❑ *“When we get out from the back seat of a car should we just step out and start walking in the parking lot?”*

ANSWER: No, we should wait for our parent (or adult) by the car door. They will help us decide if the cars parked around us are really parked and not getting ready to move. When it’s safe, we should walk with our parents through the parking lot to the nearest sidewalk or safe area meant for pedestrians.

- ❑ *“Where should you walk in a parking lot?”*

ANSWER: Walk along the edge of the parked cars and not in the drive lane. Never walk directly behind a car. Leave space (an arm’s length) between you and the parked cars. That way, if a car begins to move, you can get out of the way before it bumps you.

Crossing Streets and Intersections

- ❑ Basic questions: *“What is an intersection? What is a crosswalk? What are signs? What are signals?”*

*An **intersection** is a place where two or more roads meet or cross*

*A **crosswalk** is a marked part of the road where pedestrians can safely cross*

*A **sign** is a permanent warning or direction to alert us of something. For example, a sign with the walking person symbol on it alerts drivers to look for someone crossing.*

*A **signal** provides information that changes in order to direct us. **Pedestrian** signals direct **pedestrians** while crossing the street. For example, at a traffic light, a red hand signal informs us not to cross and a white person walking signal informs us that pedestrians may cross.*

- ❑ *“Is it safe to cross the street between parked cars?”*

ANSWER: Absolutely not. If you cannot see the car coming toward you, then the person driving the car cannot see you. Also, parked cars may move.

- ❑ *“Where is it safe to cross the road?”*

ANSWER: Places where there is a light or a crosswalk, or where there is a crossing guard. Sometimes this means going a little bit beyond where you want to go. At an intersection where crosswalks do not exist on all sides, follow the crosswalk path to the side you want to be on, even if it is not the most direct! **Stop, look, and listen before crossing.**

- “Why do you look 3 times before crossing?”

ANSWER: (typically: left, right, left, or, on one way streets, start with whichever direction traffic is coming from). Looking three times instead of simply looking both ways to make sure the road is clear is important, because while you are looking away, the conditions in the lane you are about to step out into could have changed.

When crossing:

1. First look to make sure the lane directly in front of you is clear of people in cars or on bicycles.
2. You then look in the opposite direction to make sure no one is approaching from the opposite direction.
3. You look back again in the first direction to make sure nothing has changed while you were checking the other direction.

- “Why do you still need to look both ways on one way streets? Have you ever seen someone drive or bicycle in the wrong direction?”

ANSWER: People do not always follow rules and sometimes make mistakes. Also, some streets that are one way streets for people in cars are two way streets for people on bicycles.

- “Where should you stop and look before crossing?”

ANSWER: Stop behind the curb. Sometimes there will be a bumpy area on the sidewalk in front of the crosswalk which is there to help the visually impaired know when they are about to leave the **sidewalk** and enter the street. This is a good place to wait before crossing because it alerts drivers that you plan to cross. If a parked car is blocking the view of the road, try to get a better view, **first** by moving to a different place on the sidewalk where you can see in both directions and **second** by using the **sneak and peak** method (see parking lot safety section for detail) – emphasize that this involves stepping into the road so you must be very careful.

- Practice crossing the street (in class each student would get a chance to do this on their own on a low traffic volume street) – you can set up a model crosswalk indoors to practice.

1. At the corner, ask the child to point out all directions where cars could come from. Children often forget that drivers and cyclists can turn from various directions or come from behind them, so it is important to point these out. Remember: **“Look both ways” is not enough**, we need to look **“around the world” (in all directions)**.
2. **Stop, look, and listen** for people in cars.

3. If a person in a car is approaching the crosswalk, wait for them to **stop completely** before crossing.
4. *“What’s a good way to communicate with people in cars to know they see you and it is safe to cross?”*

ANSWER: hand signals. Ask the child to make **eye contact with the person in the car and wave to make sure they see them**. This is especially important if the person in the car is looking away from where the walker is standing to see if another person in a car is approaching. *(Just because a driver looks at you does not mean they are paying attention and see you - have you ever “spaced out” before while staring at something?)*

5. Direct the child to raise their hand when they think it is safe to cross, but to wait for your response before starting to cross. As the child crosses safely calmly remind them: **“keep looking as you cross!”**

- “If we see a person in a car approaching as we are crossing should we start running?”*

ANSWER: No way! Even if it is scary to see a person in a car approaching, we should continue walking and to try to communicate with the driver by waving to make sure they see us. Remember: by continuing at the same speed, you are more *predictable* to the people around you. This means that people are better able to guess what you are about to do.

- “If one person in a car stops and waves you across the road, but other people continue to drive towards you in their cars, what should you do?”*

ANSWER: You should wait until drivers in both directions have stopped before stepping into the street to cross the road.

- If there is a pedestrian signal at an intersection:

1. **Push** the button.
2. **Wait** for the walk signal.
3. **Look left and right and left again** to make sure all traffic has stopped.
4. **Walk** across the street and remain alert

- “Just because the pedestrian signal is showing does not mean it is safe to cross. Why?”**

ANSWER: Often people in cars still have green lights or may be permitted to turn while pedestrians have a walk signal. Therefore, you must stay alert when crossing and *anticipate* that people in cars may be turning and not see you. (Bonus: what does *anticipate* mean?). It’s important to look at the color of traffic lights that drivers have before crossing with the pedestrian signal.

- “Is it a good idea to cross the street in the middle of a block?”*

ANSWER: Usually, it is not a good idea. If there is no intersection or crosswalk nearby and you need to cross, you must make sure that you can see in all directions before attempting to cross mid-block. Sometimes we may need to walk a little out of the way to find a crossing point with a crosswalk.

If no crosswalk:

1. **Identify a safe place** to cross such as at an intersection or somewhere where you can see cars and people biking coming and where drivers and cyclists can see you.
2. **Wait** at the curb for driver to stop.
3. **Make eye contact** with the driver.
4. **Wave** to the driver and wait for the driver to wave back (“Wait for the Wave”).
5. **Walk** across the street and remain alert.

- “What would you do if you drop something in the street as you are crossing?”*

ANSWER:

1. Leave it there and keep walking to the other side. Never change direction when in a crosswalk. Whatever you dropped in the street can be replaced (e.g., toy, homework, phone). There is only one you – and **YOU CAN’T BE REPLACED!**
2. Ask an adult to help you. If there is no adult around, stop, look, and listen before going into the street. Put one arm in the air when you bend over to pick it up so you stay visible - remember the smaller you are, the harder it is for people in cars to see you.
3. After picking up the object, you should keep walking in the same direction to the opposite side of the road. Then turn around, and stop, look, and listen before crossing back.

- Is it better to cross in front of or behind a school bus?*

ANSWER: (Trick question!) Never walk behind a bus or directly in front of it. Stay at least 10 feet away.

- Ask your child if they have ever seen a driver do something by mistake or break a safety rule, ask them to give an example. Remind them that while adults can help to keep them safe, they have to be active in watching out for their own safety and not assume that other people will always follow the rules.

Vocabulary:

Pedestrian

Anticipate

Predict/Predictable

Intersection

Crosswalk

Sign

Signal

Yield

Visible

Curb

Blind spot





**PUSH
BUTTON
WAIT
FOR
WALK
SIGNAL**

MILK ST

RICOH



23655
CHA
CHA Cam
24-hr
Care wit
ASSOCIATED WITH
Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center

INMAN SQUARE

Ready to QUIT?

Burke Corner











PREPARING MY CHILD TO WALK TO SCHOOL OR TO THE BUS

It's never too soon to start walking or biking with your little one to prepare for the day when he or she is ready to make the trek alone.

ARE THEY READY?

As your child grows, you may have a sense of whether he or she is ready to graduate to "big kid" things where both age and maturity play a role. Since there is no legal minimum age to walk or bike independently, the decision is up to you to decide whether or not your youngster is ready. To decide, ask yourself if your child:

- Is attentive
- Follows rules
- Makes good decisions
- Is comfortable alone

You be the judge: try walking with them before letting them go off on their own.

CAN MY LITTLE ONE WALK WITH MY OLDER CHILD TO SCHOOL?

If your older child is good at following instructions, looking both ways, and understanding signs, he/she might make a great travel buddy to a younger sibling. Consider joining a walking school bus or creating your own. Your kids will feel independent - and you'll feel better - with them walking to school in the safety of a group.

MY CHILD KNOWS SIGNS, SIGNALS AND PAVEMENT MARKINGS

Children who walk or bike to school on their own need to understand and obey the signs and pavement markings that they see. Practice by walking and biking together. The recurring practice will help them - and you - to feel more comfortable with their journey without an adult. While children can get to the school or the bus stop on their own, you can help pick the best route by working with the school to get route maps with recommendations. If they are not available, consider these points:

- Choose streets with sidewalks, bike lanes, and low speed limits
- Note the school crossing guards' locations
- Choose crossing locations that have a clear view of traffic
- Dress for the weather and season
- Reflective gear is always recommended



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT EXERCISE INCREASES THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SKILLS OF CHILDREN. WALKING TO THE BUS OR TO SCHOOL - WITH OR WITHOUT YOU - CAN HELP YOUR LITTLE ONE COUNTER CHILDHOOD OBESITY, BUILD SELF-ESTEEM, AND GAIN INDEPENDENCE.



Do Your Part to Make Crossing the Street Safer!

Your driving impacts how safely your children and their friends can get to and from school. Whether school children walk, bike, or get dropped off, you play a key role in their safety. Please keep these in mind as you're out in your community:

- 1. Follow the directions given by crossing guards.** Crossing guards will use hand signals and their STOP paddles to indicate when drivers need to stop to allow students to cross the street.
- 2. Be aware of children's small size.** Children can be blocked from view by buses, cars, and even snowbanks.
- 3. Obey speed limits.** The school zone speed limit in Massachusetts is 20 MPH.
- 4. Reduce speed when approaching a crosswalk.** Scan the intersection to make sure there are no children approaching the crosswalk or roadway.
- 5. Yield at crosswalks.** Massachusetts law states that drivers must yield at a crosswalk if a pedestrian is walking in that half of the road or is within 10 feet of crossing that half of the road.
- 6. Do not pass other vehicles stopped at a crosswalk.**