

11 Steps you can take to increase your child's safety walking to school:

1. **Discuss possible routes and choose the safest and most direct route** – pick routes with sidewalks if you can, and avoid busy streets, intersections and/or roads with construction.
2. **Practice the route together** – practice the route before the first day of school and walk the route until you feel comfortable letting them walk alone. Don't know if they're ready? Start walking part way until they show the confidence to do it alone.
3. **When can a child go alone?** Start young – when children are young, teach them pedestrian safety. Research often suggests children have the skills to cross a street safely around the age of 10. It is important that children can assess the speed of a car, judge safe gaps in traffic, and decide where and when it is safe to cross. However, all children are different and it is up to parents to decide when their child is ready.
4. **Plan ahead** – know how long the route takes and set the alarm clock in time to have an enjoyable and not rushed walk to school.
5. **Walk with a buddy** – walking with a friend or sibling will keep children safer. Consider starting a 'Walking School Bus' at your school where a group of students are chaperoned by adults to and from school.
6. **Identify landmarks and safe houses along the route** – point out where people you know live and places they can go if they need to.
7. **Review safety tips** -
 - **Make sure your child knows** – their name, parent's name(s), address and telephone number;
 - **Stay on the sidewalk whenever possible** – if there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the road facing traffic;
 - **Cross the street at crosswalks and intersections** – look left, right and left again to make sure the way is clear; obey traffic signs, lights and crossing guards;
 - **Wait for traffic** to come to a complete stop before crossing;
 - **Make eye contact** with drivers to be sure they see you before crossing.
8. **Identify possible road dangers** - such as train tracks, busy intersections, and establish safety rules.
9. **Do not accept rides or any invitations from strangers** – brief your child on how to respond to strangers.
10. **Bring a phone** - particularly if the route is lonely or if there is no buddy to walk with – make sure your child knows how to call for help.
11. **Stay alert and remove distractions** – keep electronics such as iPods and cellphones stored away. Texting or listening to music puts them in danger as it takes their attention away from traffic and their surroundings.

Be Safe and Have Fun!

Source: <http://www.activesaferoutes.ca/resources/safety-tips/>

References:

Canada Safety Council. *Safety Reminders for Back to School*. Retrieved from <https://canadasafetycouncil.org/child-safety/safety-reminders-back-school>

Subdhan, Abigale (2012, July 26). *7 Tips to teach your kids about walking home from school*. Parents Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.parentscanada.com/school/7-tips-to-teach-your-kids-about-walking-home-from-school>