

CHILD BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TIPS

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

The best way for a child to learn bicycle and pedestrian safety skills is to be instructed by adults and to have the opportunities for reinforcing learning through repeated exercises. Children who practice bicycle and pedestrian safety skills develop safe bicycling and walking behaviors.

Parents of young children may be surprised to know that children see the world of traffic very differently than older school age children and adults. The cognitive skills of young children develop quickly, but the stages of development often display the lack of skill sets and physical aptitude. For example, children in their early years of elementary school do not have fully developed peripheral vision. Why is this important, because a child standing ready to cross a street, without looking both ways may not see an approaching vehicle because of a narrow field of view. Image the field of view as a semicircle; a young child may only recognize objects in 60-80% of that view, where as the average adult can see objects in 90-110% of the field of view. So children must be taught to “look left, right and left again”.

When children reach middle school age they have made greater strides in their abilities independently. Many children will be walking and biking without supervision to friends and neighbors' homes or possibly a local park. Parents should not take for granted that these young people have mastered the skills of moving in and around traffic. Instruction is still necessary until the child has proven that they understand basic traffic laws, signs, signals and crossing streets.

PEDESTRIAN

For young walkers it's a big world with many familiar sights, like cars, traffic signs and signals, but learning how and when to cross with traffic is something new to most young children. There is a process of learning that must take place to develop the confidence needed to interact with traffic and to know the best and safest behaviors for walking in and around traffic. In 2008, there were 2,488 pedestrian motor vehicle crashes, 10% where children under the age of 15 years. Parents can be their child's best line of defense when it comes to traffic safety.

Crossing the street, especially at four-way intersections can be intimidation to adults and frightening to children. Should I cross now, does the car see me? Is the car supposed to stop? Is the traffic light in my favor, what about the turning lane? As a pedestrian, knowing the laws that apply to both motorists and pedestrians aid in knowing when is the best time to cross that street. Here are a few laws that apply to motorists and pedestrians:

- When traffic-control signals are not in place vehicle drivers shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians crossing the roadway **within** a marked crosswalk. G.S 20-173(A)
- Pedestrians crossing a roadway at any point other than within a marked crosswalk shall yield the right-of-way to all vehicles upon the roadway. G.S 20-174(A)
- Between adjacent intersections, where traffic-control signals are not in operation, pedestrians shall not cross the roadway at any place other than in a marked crosswalk. G.S. 20-174(C)

Parents, take the opportunity to educate yourself on traffic safety do's, don't and the laws. Walk around areas in your neighborhood that your children like to visit, such as parks, school or to the home of a friend. These routes can be great areas to practice safe walking skills with your child, include roadway crosswalks and pedestrian signals. Where there are no sidewalks demonstrate to your child walking facing traffic. Reinforce safe behaviors, looking both ways, making eye contact with drivers when possible and explaining why and how you move with traffic. These shared opportunities will be valuable lessons for your child that may save their life.

Pedestrian Safety Tips

- Look both ways when crossing at a crosswalk, intersection, or coming out of an alley or driveway – ALWAYS watch for cars
- Even when crossing on the green light at an intersection, still look both ways before crossing and wait for vehicles making right turns on red
- Learn, know and obey traffic signs, signals and pedestrian crossing signals
- Cross the street at the crosswalk, not in between intersections where there is no crosswalk and do not cross street in between cars
- Sidewalks are a safe place to walk; where there are no sidewalks walk facing traffic
- When walking across the street pay attention and watch for cars and other vehicles, no running, no pushing, no playing in the street
- Never cross railroad tracks when the crossing guard is down or when the signals are flashing
- Come off of bicycles and skate boards when crossing the street
- Children under 9 years old should never walk alone

For more info on crossing at intersections see NCDOT, "[Pedestrian Safety](#)"

For information on laws that apply to pedestrians go to www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/lawspolicies/policies/

BICYCLE

Bicycling is a fun healthy activity that can be shared with the whole family. North Carolina has many bicycle trails and multi-use greenways in local areas. Before you ride properly fit your children with bicycle helmets. Children under age 16 must wear a bicycle helmet by law. Remember children learn by example, helmets protect adults as well. Bicycle helmets reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85%.

Getting to local greenways, oftentimes, you will have to cross streets if traveling by bicycle or there may be a street to cross along the greenway. Being familiar with how to move with traffic in these areas or whether on a trip to your local grocer will make the ride more enjoyable. *NCDOT does not recommend that young children take these trips by themselves or that you take your children on busy roads.* Roads that are not busy or are the connecting street between greenways paths can be a great place to instruct your child on the best ways to cross the street when riding their bicycle. As with walking, practicing safety skills is the way to help your child retain necessary skills they will use later. Children between the age of 6-10 accounted for 10% of all bicycle accidents. Children age 11-15 have the highest number of bicycle accidents, more than any other age group. They account for 17% of bicycle accidents. Although there are many contributing factors to the number crashes in this age group, it is safe to say that learning proper bicycling safety skills at an early age will work to make bike safety smart young people.

For helpful information on teaching bicycle safety to your elementary school age children go to www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/safetyeducation/materials/ and view "*Bicycle Safety and Your Child*".

Contact your local government and parks to find one close to you.

To helping your older child understand the **Do's and Don'ts** of bicycling click on the "[Rules of the Road](#)" to print.

For information on laws that apply to bicyclists go to www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/lawspolicies/laws/.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To find additional information click the links below:

- [Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Materials & Resources](#)

- [Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws](#)
- [Helmet Initiative](#)
- [Safe Routes to Schools](#)
- [Back to the Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Home Page](#)

FACT SHEET: Bicycle Helmet Safety



Proper Helmet Fitting



Incorrect Helmet Fitting

North Carolina Bicycle Crash Incidence and Prevalence

- In North Carolina, a bicyclist is killed or injured approximately every six hours.
- One out of every three bicyclists killed in NC is under age 16.
- Each year, an estimated 800 children are hospitalized in NC for bicycle-related injuries; an additional 13,300 receive emergency treatment

Bicycle Helmet Effectiveness

- Bicycle helmets prevent 60% of head injury deaths.
- Bicycle helmets reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85% and the risk of brain injury by as much as 88%.

North Carolina Bicycle Helmet Usage

- According to study by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center, fewer than 24% of all bicyclists in North Carolina currently wear a bicycle helmet when riding on the road.
- Helmet usage varies greatly by region of the state, by location and by age.

- Children between the ages of 6-18 are significantly less likely to wear a helmet than are adults or young children carried in a child seat on the back of a bicycle despite passage of the mandatory helmet use legislation.

Cost and Availability of Bicycle Helmets

- Good quality helmets that meet Consumer Product Safety Commission standards are available in retail outlets for between \$10-15.
- Many agencies and organizations including the DOT, the State Highway Patrol, NC Safe Kids Coalition and local health departments, law enforcement agencies and recreation departments can provide free helmets to needy children.
- Bulk helmet purchase programs sponsored by schools or other local agencies and organizations can make approved helmets available to children for as little as \$5.00 each.

Enforcement of Bicycle Helmet Laws

- Generally, a law enforcement officer gives a warning to a child not wearing a helmet for a first offense.
- If there is a second offense and a citation is written, the fee will be waived upon proof of purchase of a helmet.
- Frequently, a law enforcement agency has helmets to give to children whose parents cannot afford to buy them a helmet.
- Law enforcement officers can use the helmet law to undertake an incentive program, rewarding a child seen wearing a helmet with a coupon for fast food or a prize of some sort.
- Through these incentive programs, law enforcement officers have an opportunity to create positive interaction with children and can encourage helmet use.

N.C. Motorist Laws

The following are excerpts from N.C.G.S. chapter 20, sections 142.5, 154, 155, 158, 173, 174, and chapter 168, section 5.

Motorists must:

- avoid colliding with any pedestrian on any roadway
- check to see if a turning movement can be made safely prior to making the movement
- yield to pedestrians in any marked crosswalks or any unmarked crosswalk at or near an intersection
- not pass a vehicle that is stopped at a marked or unmarked crosswalk yielding to a pedestrian
- yield to a pedestrian if entering or exiting an alley, driveway, private road, etc.
- yield to pedestrians who are in, or in close proximity to, an intersection before making a right-turn-on-red movement
- not enter an intersection or marked crosswalk unless there is sufficient space to accommodate their vehicle on the far side of the intersection or marked crosswalk
- stop at a stop bar or prior to entering a marked crosswalk if required to stop by traffic control devices
- proceed with caution when moving through a location where a traffic signal is emitting a steady green light, or a steady or flashing yellow light
- take "all necessary precautions" to avoid injuring a visually impaired pedestrian who is using a white or silver cane or being led by a guide dog

North Carolina Pedestrian Crashes

- approximately 32% of all pedestrians sustain either a serious or fatal injury, and almost all pedestrians struck by a vehicle sustain some type of injury
- approximately 20% of all pedestrian fatalities occur within 50 feet of an intersection
- approximately 69% of pedestrian fatalities occur at night
- approximately 17% of pedestrians involved in a crash have consumed alcohol, and approximately 10% are impaired from medicine, alcohol, or drugs
- pedestrians are either wholly or partially at fault in approximately 56% of crashes

2008 Pedestrian Crash Statistics

- 2488 pedestrians were involved in crashes with motor vehicles
- 164 pedestrians were killed on public roadways
- 190 pedestrians were disabled
- 15% of pedestrian crashes occurred with children under the age of 15 yrs
- Pedestrians failed to yield in 14% of crashes
- 8% of pedestrian crashes were in parking lots
- 46% of all pedestrian crashes occur on local streets



Pedestrian Safety



**Traffic Safety Unit
N.C. Department of Transportation**

**750 N. Greenfield Parkway
Garner, NC 27529
(919) 773-2800**

<http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/safety/default.html>



Look left-right-left before crossing. Never step in front of vehicles and assume they see you and will stop.



Watch for vehicles passing stopped vehicles. Make eye contact with motorists.



Watch for vehicles that do not stop.

N.C. Pedestrian Laws

The following are excerpts from N.C.G.S. chapter 20, sections 155, 172, and 174.

Pedestrians must:

- obey traffic control devices or traffic officers, if present
- yield to motor vehicles if not crossing at a marked or unmarked crosswalk or not using a pedestrian tunnel or overpass
- not enter a road if a pedestrian signal displays a flashing or steady red hand or DON'T WALK indication
- walk on a sidewalk or trail/pathway, if available
- walk facing traffic if walking in the road or on the shoulder, if no sidewalk or trail is present

An "unmarked crosswalk" is defined as a pedestrian crossing encompassed by the "prolongation of the lateral boundary lines of the adjacent sidewalk at the end of a block"

Be Alert!

Crosswalks, stop bars, stop signs, traffic signals, and other traffic control devices do not stop vehicles. Having the right-of-way, a green light, or a WALK signal does not mean it is safe to cross. Drivers of turning vehicles generally do not see pedestrians. Protect yourself by being vigilant and only cross when it is safe and prudent to do so.

This brochure adapted, and images borrowed, from "Pedestrian Safety is No Accident" produced by the Road Safety Advisory Committee of the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation & Public Works.



Wait for a green light or WALK signal (if present).



Watch for moving vehicles, and especially for turning vehicles, while crossing.



Motorists should stop behind designated stop bars or prior to entering a crosswalk.

A DOZEN "DOS"

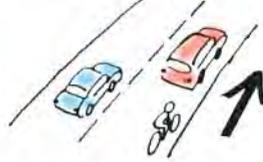
LEARN THESE BICYCLE "RULES OF THE ROAD"

A DOZEN "DONT'S"

1 Keep to the **RIGHT-hand side** of the **ROAD**



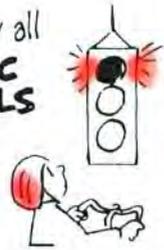
2 Go **WITH TRAFFIC**



3 Ride **SINGLE FILE** if with a group--



4 Obey all **TRAFFIC SIGNALS** and **SIGNS**



5 If possible, use **LESS-TRAVELED ROADS**



6 **WALK** your **BIKE** across **BUSY** streets



7 Keep **BOTH HANDS** on **HANDLE BARS** except when signalling



8 Give **PEDESTRIANS** the **RIGHT OF WAY**



9 **RIDE** in a **STRAIGHT LINE**



10 Keep your **EYES** straight **AHEAD**



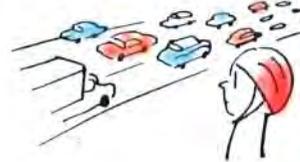
11 Keep **BEHIND** moving cars



12 at **NIGHT--** wear **LIGHT COLORED CLOTHES**



1 **DON'T RIDE** on high speed **HIGHWAYS**



2 **DON'T RIDE** on **SIDEWALKS**



3 **DON'T** carry **BUNDLES** that limit your **VISION**



4 **DON'T** make **REPAIRS** on the **ROAD**



5 **DON'T RIDE** a bicycle not in good **CONDITION**



6 **Don't Ride Out of** driveway or alley **Look & Wait** on traffic



7 **DON'T GIVE** **DIRECTIONAL SIGNALS** **AS YOU TURN--**



8 **DON'T PASS** on **HILLS** or **CURVES** where visibility is poor



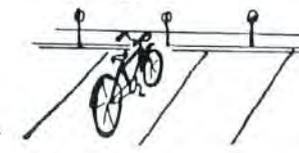
9 **DON'T RIDE** in **RAIN, SNOW, FOG**



10 **DON'T** make a **U-TURN** where prohibited



11 **DON'T PARK** in space reserved for automobile



12 **DON'T LEAVE** the scene of an **ACCIDENT**



A message to school children and their parents about bicycle safety from your local T.P.A. Post of the N.C. Division of the Travelers Protective Association of America



Always... **MAKE SAFETY FIRST AND MAKE IT LAST!**