

What else can parents do in terms of motorist safety?

Offer to help!

There is no such thing as too much parental involvement at peak school times of the start and end of the school day. Parental involvement is valuable in helping to ensure all children start the school day safely. Many schools and providers use either paid or volunteer crossing guards, sidewalk monitors, parent greeters, or even escorted drop-offs (where parents drive through a designated area, assembly-line fashion, where greeters open the car door and quickly get the child out and into the school). If you can spare the time, help to do your part and volunteer. Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTAs) are often instrumental in child safety assistance, so see if your school has such a group and whether you can become part of it. Some volunteers also help to escort children walking or riding bikes home alone as an extra child safety precaution.

School Zone Safety



Watch Out for School Buses,
Watch Out for School Zones



Traffic Committee



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School Zone Safety



Watch Out for School
Buses, Watch Out for School

Child safety should be the first and foremost consideration when determining how a child is dropped off and picked up from school or daycare. Yet the very parent who is most tedious about exercising safety precautions around their own child is often the first to zoom off from the curb after making the safe drop-off, and potentially endangering other children in their haste to leave. Educators have a challenge at the beginning of every school year, and rely on parents to partner with them to ensure children arrive and depart safely from school every day. Motorists are so worried about their own child's safety and about being on time for school and work, that they commit safety infractions afterward. School officials report double-parking, speeding through school zones, not being on the lookout for children darting between cars or careening off their bicycles, or even committing a U-turn on a two-way street to turn the car into the direction they want to go.

What should parents do now for child safety this school year?

*** Familiarize yourself with school or provider drop-off and pick-up practices and then be sure you always follow them.**

One of the biggest complaints by school officials is that parents find a reason to be exception to the rule. If the curb says "No stopping, standing or parking at any time," that means for everyone. If children are required to use designated cross walks, don't walk your child across the middle of a street just because you're holding her hand. If traffic is supposed to be one way at designated times, be prepared to change your traffic pattern. And, if an area is designated for teacher parking only, then don't grab a space to drop off your child because you think it's just for "a couple of minutes."

*** Discuss the rules with your child and practice with younger ones.**

If possible, take your child to the drop-off area and "practice" the procedure at an off-peak time. Have your child wear his backpack (if required) and walk him through what to look for, what to do, and what not to do. If crossing guards are utilized, explain their purpose and how they must wait for approval to cross. Younger children understand best by actually "doing" a routine instead of just being told about it. Familiarity and then repetition are the best guidelines for ensuring child safety all school year long.

*** Resist the urge to speed or make any traffic rules exception because you are running late.**

Whipping your car around, getting your child to dash out of the car to reach the classroom

before the school bell rings, or encouraging a "drop-and-dash" drop-off is the recipe for disaster in terms of child safety. You would rather your child receive a tardy notice than to be in an accident.

*** Know all traffic rules concerning school zones and traffic flows.**

Remember, ignorance of the law is not an excuse. Drive your pattern now and familiarize yourself with the various speed zones. Be aware of which side of the car your child sits, and consider positioning her to the side most convenient for exiting. If your child is in a "drop" situation, see if the child seat or booster seat is something he can put on or off safely; the same holds true for lap belts and shoulder harnesses.

*** Refrain from using your cell phone, palm, or any other distraction while around school zones.**

This common-sense advice really applies whenever a motorist is behind the wheel, but especially when in a driving situation around young children and their perhaps spontaneous actions. **School Year Means Extra Driving Caution** ...Motorists should also re-familiarize themselves with the yellow school buses and changes in traffic flow and speed they bring. Drivers should be on the watch for school buses and know school bus safety rules. Parents of young drivers, especially those driving themselves to school for perhaps the first time this school year, should review the rules and warnings with family members.

Here are general child safety tips concerning school buses:

1. When a school bus stops and flashes red lights, traffic approaching from either direction must stop before reaching the bus.
2. Motorists should stop at least 20 feet from the bus. Buses can easily be identified by the signage indicating "SCHOOL BUS," the unique yellow/orange paint color, and the red lights on top. Remember that school buses come in many lengths and sizes. Daycare buses may also be in the vicinity of schools and areas for drop-off and pick-up and motorist caution must be observed around them as well.
3. Be prepared to slow down and possibly stop whenever you see a school bus. Also know that school buses stop prior to entering any railroad track, so be sure not to follow too closely.
4. Know that you must remain stopped for a school bus until the red lights stop flashing, or until the bus driver or police officer/traffic director directs you to proceed.
5. Motorists must stop for a school bus even if it is on the opposite side of a divided highway.
6. Before proceeding, watch carefully for children on the side of the road and drive very cautiously until you are out of the drop-off area. Children have been known to dart across a street or not realize motorists are nearby in their excitement to go home.

