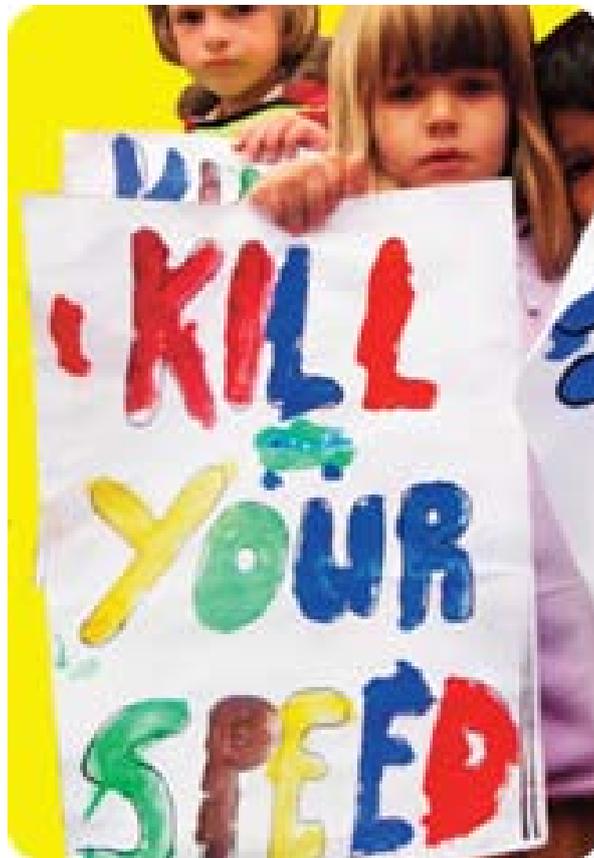


Teach road safety



A guide for teachers of 5-11 year olds

INTRODUCTION

Children have a lot to say about road safety as it is part of their daily life. The best way to engage children in road safety is to get them thinking about how traffic affects their community by putting people at risk and damaging the environment, and what can be done to stop it, and how children can keep themselves and their families safer around traffic. Children love campaigning for road safety because it is an issue they can understand and that affects them. And teaching road safety is a great way for you to reach curriculum goals for citizenship, health and safety, as well as numeracy, literacy, geography and other subjects.

Learning that is a 'little and often' and that repeats lessons already learnt, but in a different and interesting way, can be effective for children as all teachers know. This programme suggests you integrate fun and dynamic road safety learning into project-based work to help children start to make safer choices and to help them to be passionate advocates for road safety in their community as they grow and become more exposed to risks.

A great time to undertake this programme is in the summer term, when it is easier to reliably go outside without worrying about the weather. Another great time is if nights getting darker, so you can discuss poor visibility of drivers and wearing high visibility clothing.

Sensitivity issues

Before teaching road safety, check whether any children have been bereaved by, or hurt in, or witnessed a serious a road crash, and be sensitive to their needs. Talk to them and their carers about whether they wish to be excluded from classroom lessons that discuss death or injury. Brake has developed resources for children bereaved by road crashes and their carers – go to Brake's websites www.suddendeath.org and www.amyandtom.org to view and order our resources.

Classroom teaching is more effective if combined with practical, community-based training and campaigning

Effective road safety learning involves three components: development of thinking in the classroom, exploration and training at the roadside, and then, best of all, getting the children working within your community to campaign for road safety. Try to consider all three components in your work.

Effective road safety classroom teaching needs to:

- Build on children's existing knowledge, not preach;
- Require children to think for themselves;
- Be discussive and creative and related to children's real lives.

Aim to help parents keep their children safe too

Sadly, the suggested road safety learning outcomes in this guide do not always 'fit' with what children are actually doing in their communities under the direction of their parents, or lack of it. Unfortunately, some parents allow very young children to travel in cars without a child seat or even a seat belt. Others fail to hold young children's hands and even allow them out on their own on roads, on foot or even on bicycles. Children in deprived communities are most likely to die on roads around their homes for a range of social and economic reasons – for example, they don't have gardens or their

parents aren't taking enough care of their children because of the other pressures they face. It is therefore very valuable to teach road safety to children at a young age, and, crucially, to engage parents in the process too - in a supportive, helpful way. One way to do this is to engage children in road safety campaigning. 'Pester power' can be very powerful indeed.

What should be taught?

Children need to be taught their road safety ABC:

A is for awareness (traffic is dangerous and hurts people)

B is for behaviour (rules you must follow to stay safer)

C is for choice and community campaigning (how to make the safest choices and to help others make these choices too)

Under 8's can be taught A and B from the age of two upwards. They can be taught rules and encouraged to follow them through practical training. However, under 8's should never use roads without an adult, and adults should follow safe crossing rules at all times when on foot with their children. Adults should, at all times, hold children's hands because under 8's:

- have difficulty judging speed and distance;
- are easily distracted and act on impulse;
- have difficulty understanding danger and death and are oriented around play;
- are small (so can't see hazards) and are still developing eyesight and hearing;
- should never be allowed to walk near roads on their own for these reasons and more. They are carefree, not careless!

Over 8's will have more ability to understand C, and make their own choices based on different options and assessment of risk. However, they need to have A and B re-emphasised to them because over 8's:

- may walk on their own but make mistakes that can cost their lives because of lack of experience;
- are vulnerable to peer pressure from other children to make risky choices, such as running across a road.

Here are some teaching topics within the road safety ABC.

A is for awareness: Traffic is dangerous and hurts people

You can teach, with increasing frankness as children get older, that:

- Traffic hurts millions of people every year.
- People hurt by traffic are often killed and seriously injured. Injuries include paralysis and losing limbs. (Note: many children may think minor injuries such as breaking an arm are OK, or even fun, because it draws attention to them.)
- Some people do dangerous things when walking or cycling, such as texting on their mobile while crossing a road, or not wearing a cycle helmet. These people are more likely to be killed or hurt.
- Some drivers break laws, which increases the chance of you being killed or hurt - for example, speeding, or driving when drunk, or not stopping at pedestrian crossing places. We have laws such as speed limits to stop people being killed or hurt in crashes, but some drivers break laws.

B is for behaviour: Rules you can follow to stay safe

Children need to be taught the language of road safety before they can understand the rules! For example, names of vehicles, names of street furniture such as pavements and kerbs, and an understanding of fast, slow, looking, listening and crossing. A well-educated five year-old should already have a grasp of fundamental road safety rules thanks to their parents. However, others may not have benefited from this care. Therefore, you will have to begin by checking that all children understand the following:

- Pavements are for people; roads are for traffic.
- Never go out near roads without a grown up. Hold their hand and don't let go.
- Stop at once if you are told. Never try to cross a road until you are told.
- Never run or play near roads - play in a park or garden.
- You can help grown ups look and listen for traffic.
- Safe crossing places help people cross the road but you must still use them with care.
- You can wear bright clothes to be seen by traffic.
- In a car, never undo your belt and don't play with door handles or try to get out.

By the age of 5, children are ready to learn, in addition to the above:

- How to cross safely (find a safe place to cross, stop, look, listen, cross with care)
- The safest places to cross: underpasses; footbridges; where there is a lollipop person; pelican and puffin crossings; zebra crossings.
- The importance of wearing the right gear when walking and cycling. Fluorescent and reflective materials help drivers see you, and helmets protect your head.
- In a car, only get out on the pavement side.
- In a bus or coach or minibus, wear your seat belt if one is fitted. When getting off, never cross the road in front or behind the bus. Wait until it has pulled away so you can see in all directions.

C is for choice: How to make the safest choices and help others stay safe too

Under-8's are ill-equipped to make their own choices. However, it is important that older children recognise their ability to make safe choices, recognise pressures they may come under to make dangerous choices and learn how to resist those pressures, and how to speak up for the safety of others too. Younger children can also be encouraged to think about choices, as long as they are not encouraged to make those choices on their own. All children can be encouraged to speak out against dangerous behaviour, such as children pushing each other into the road, or running across roads without looking, or drivers driving too fast, or people not doing up their seatbelts.

LESSON IDEAS FOR 5-7 YEAR OLDS

As well as the ideas listed here, there are many other lesson ideas, some explained through detailed lesson plans, devised by government road safety departments and others, so surf the internet as well as reading the below.

In literacy, expand children's road safety vocabulary to include words like pedestrian, zebra crossing, kerb, while talking about road safety.

In science or numeracy, measure your children's height and weigh them. Then talk to them about how they are small, and traffic is big. Because they are small they find it difficult to see traffic. Because they are small they have to be in a special seat in their car. Send a letter home explaining the importance of child seats for older as well as younger children and giving the height and weight of the child, so children can talk about the importance of using the right seat with their parents when they get home.

Discuss. Give the children scenarios to consider. For example, 'Ahmed's ball is in the road because he threw it over the fence by accident. What should he do now?' or 'Where is a safe place to play? Let's name some around here.' 'Why does a cycle helmet help you stay safe?' Get them thinking about their emotions and why they feel the way they do. How does fast traffic make you feel? Is there a real risk you could be hurt? When could that happen, and how can we help stay safer?

Draw or paint posters of people on pavements holding hands and vehicles on roads. Discuss how holding hands keeps children safe. Write road safety slogans for the posters and display them where parents will see them.

Paint an ambulance in its bright colours. Discuss why it is painted brightly - so people can see it coming, very fast. Discuss, with appropriate sensitivity, how the ambulance could be carrying someone to hospital who has been hurt on the road. You can make sure this isn't you by staying away from the road.

Experiment with wheels. In your largest room, send a large toy truck racing across the floor. Meanwhile, a child walks sensibly in the same direction. The truck is much faster because it is on wheels. Wheels are fast, and traffic can get to you fast, much faster than you think. A car or truck might look a long way away but it can get to you fast and hit you hard.

Do a seat belt experiment. Belt up a small teddy into a toy car using ribbon. Put another teddy in another toy car without a seat belt. Carry out experiments using slopes and obstacles to demonstrate that the teddy who doesn't wear a seat belt can fall out and get hurt.

Look at a lorry or bus/coach. Arrange for a local company to bring a vehicle to school and park it somewhere safe where children can walk around it in safety and sit in the cab (with an adult supervising at all times). Explain about blind spots. When can't the driver see you? Never stand near a lorry or a bus/coach.

Shine torches! Use a room with blinds, and shut them. Then shine torches on high visibility vests that the children wear. This is a good experiment to do when issuing children with vest when the nights are drawing in in the winter, and to encourage children to wear them.

Sing a road safety song with actions using the words stop, go, pavement and hold hands. You could invent new verses to 'Wheels on the bus' such as 'The children and the grown ups all hold hands, all hold hands, all hold hands'.etc.

Listen to some road noises you have recorded in advance. Eg. an ambulance, car, pelican crossing. What are they? Can the children tell? Listen out for noises on roads; it can warn you that traffic is coming.

Go on a road safety walk in a safe crocodile of children holding hands in twos, with one adult supervisor to every six children, on a safe route with pavements. Stand somewhere safe and do a hazard spot. What can children see that might be dangerous? E.g. big vehicles, junctions, speeding traffic, etc.

Bake for Brake! Bake buns topped with red icing for stop and green for go. Use it to talk about the colours of traffic and crossing lights and what they mean.

LESSON IDEAS FOR 8-11 YEAR OLDS

Most children in this age range have a better understanding of death and injury than you may think. With sensitivity, it's important to develop children's knowledge and engagement with the concepts of hazards (things that are dangerous); risk-taking (things you do that expose you to danger); and the consequences of risk-taking (death and injury).

The ideas below are designed to precede practical road safety training and activities to improve road safety around your school as part of your School Travel Plan. Read and implement these ideas alongside the ideas and resources available from other agencies, such as your government's road safety advisers.

Hands-up survey for pupils

Do a hands-up survey of pupils to help you run a road safety lesson, using the discussion points on the survey and the results you get. You can also plan to do it annually and log the results you get to help you track the effectiveness of your school travel plan. Here are some example questions:

- How many of you walk to school?
- How many of you cycle to school?
- How many of you are scared of traffic?
- How many of you have been hit by traffic?
- How many of you think traffic around here drives too fast?

Run a discussion-based lesson

Use the discussion points below:

- Let's start with the basics. Who can tell me how to cross a road safely?
- Do we actually do this? Has anyone run across a road, crossed somewhere dangerous, or even been pushed into the road by someone else? Let's share our stories. Why did you do it? (Answers are likely to include in a rush, had to get over the road, not thinking or because it was exciting.) How did it make you feel?
- What happens to children on foot and bicycles who are hit by a car or even bigger vehicle, such as a lorry? (Answers are likely to include death, and various injuries.) If someone is very seriously injured, how could it affect their life (e.g. may mean they have to use a wheel chair and can never walk again)? If you could never walk again how would it affect your life? (Answers likely to include couldn't play football, couldn't dance.)
- How do drivers break the rules and endanger life? (Answers are likely to include they drive too fast, they run over people, but may also include they drink alcohol ,and drive or other rule-breaking.)
- If you are trying to cross the road, and you see a car far away, can you tell how quickly it will get to where you are standing? No, because it might be breaking speed limits.
- Why is faster traffic more dangerous? (It takes longer to stop, so is more likely to hit someone.) Is it OK to be hit at any speed? (No, even a slow moving vehicle can kill you by running over your brain or other vital organs.)
- Does anyone know the speed limit outside our school? Do we think drivers stick to that limit? Can anyone tell me any of the signs or road markings outside our school that remind drivers the school is here, and they should drive carefully?
- We are going to spend some time helping parents and other drivers to understand the importance of driving slowly around our school. Has anyone got ideas about how we could do that? (Answers are likely to include posters, letters to parents, talking to our parents).

Write or read stories and write and perform plays

Write a story or play script about someone being hurt in a crash. What happened? Why? Alternatively, there are numerous theatre in education companies who can perform in your school. Sometimes, this can be funded by your local council. Contact your local council and ask to speak to the road safety officer to find out local providers and any costs. Read Jacqueline Wilson's wonderful book, Vicky Angel, in instalments. It's about a girl who sees her best friend killed on the road. Talk about the messages in the book. Or read The Lollipop Man by Philip Sheppard, about the 'superhero of the highway'.

Be ambassadors for road safety!

Get children to write poems or songs on road safety for younger children, to help teach younger children basic road safety lessons. Get the older children to perform them in front of the younger children. By doing this, you will be helping the older children reaffirm the importance of the messages. Use this as an opportunity to tell the older children to look out for younger children. Do you have a younger sister or brother? It's really important for your parents or you to always hold their hand, keep them away from roads, and help teach them how to cross safely. Set up, if you don't have one already, a Junior Road Safety Officer scheme, where designated older children run road safety education programmes in your school under the guidance and instruction of teachers.

Getting messages across to parents

Write, paint, draw, or design on a computer road safety adverts for parents about the importance of

driving slowly and safely when kids are about. Have a road safety display in your reception area for parents using these adverts.

Study road safety in maths and science

How many people die and are hurt on roads? In numeracy, you could work out how many classrooms are killed and injured each year. How many children are killed or injured every minute? Use government websites to find out how many people die or are hurt in your country.

Study cycle helmets. Crash test eggs with and without specially-made helmets.

Study the properties of reflective and fluorescent materials, using a high visibility vest and blacked out rooms and torches. Talk about being bright at night and on dull days.

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE TRAINING

Effective pedestrian and cyclist training can be labour intensive and take many hours to deliver. However, it is also extremely worthwhile, and the most effective way to teach safe walking and cycling skills to children.

Training should aim to build on children's existing knowledge and develop their skills through discussion and practice. Training should be reinforced by parents effectively supervising and communicating with their children outside of school time too. This is particularly important for under-8s, who should only walk and cycle with adult supervision. You should also be able to involve parents and carers in the training as supervisors with the appropriate training and guidance.

It's also important to back up practical training with classroom learning, using discussion, diagrams and models. Use our lesson ideas for inspiration.

And finally, practical training should never be seen as the solution to dangerous roads. If your roads are too dangerous for children to practice their walking or cycling skills on or near, then you need to campaign for a safer road environment.

Safety first:

- To organise safe training, you should first find out if it is offered by your local council. Your local council may run established, evaluated training courses on walking safely or cycling safely. They will also be able to advise on whether or not you have a safe enough road environment on which to carry out your training.
- All young children must hold an adult's hand and be given personal tuition in small groups. Advice on the number of supervisors you need to be safe for different age groups is given below. It is also best practice to ensure that at least two adult supervisors are present together at any one time, so that no one adult is left alone to supervise children.
- With reasonable warning, parents may be able to help, but you must ensure they have appropriate guidance and training.

- Arrange for children and adult supervisors to wear high-visibility vests at all times. Your local council may be able to provide these, or look in the Brake shop.
- It can be useful to practice some road safety skills in the playground first, either using lines on the playground to denote kerbs, or marking out a road with crossings in chalk, for children to practice on.

For 5-6 year-olds:

At this age children can be encouraged to start to make choices according to what's safe and what's dangerous (such as choosing a safe place to cross), but still under close supervision while holding hands with a responsible adult. With this age group, when running training you should have at least one supervisor for every two children, so every child has a hand to hold.

Contact your Local Authority road safety officer to find out if they can run a training course for you, with the assistance of teachers and volunteer parents.

Children in this age-bracket can:

- Practice holding hands and walking safely on the pavement away from the kerb;
- Practice stopping well away from the kerb, when a pavement ends (for example at a side junction);
- Practice looking and listening for traffic. What things stop you seeing traffic? For example, a bend, a tree, parked cars, the hood of your coat. Where might traffic come from? For example, both directions, and out of drives and side turnings;
- Practice crossing the road at the safest places, for example at a pelican crossing or a zebra crossing. Explain why these are safer;
- Visit a park or playground and discuss why it is safe to have fun there. For example, there is no traffic and there is a fence around it.

You can download a safety audit form to help you assess if a road near your school, and the access route to it, is safe for child pedestrian training, although you should also consult your Local Authority.

For 7-11 year-olds:

Children in this age bracket are usually ready to practice crossing safely, having already learnt their crossing code and other basic safety rules in the classroom. For this age group, you need at least one trained adult supervisor for every six children, with no less than two supervisors present at any one time. The training should take into account that children in this age group may be starting to walk independently, and may start to experience peer pressure to act dangerously, particularly when they move up to secondary school. Training for this age group should therefore have an emphasis on making safe choices despite pressures to do otherwise.

Contact your council's road safety officer to find out if they can run a training course for you, with the assistance of teachers and volunteer parents. The training should:

- Always take place on a quiet road, ideally with a crossing and lollipop person, and in small groups with plenty of trained supervisors.

- Use self-instruction, where children recite safety rules before enacting them, e.g. stop near the edge of the kerb, look left, look right, etc.
- Include discussion on the safest places to cross (e.g. on pelican crossings), and the most dangerous places where you shouldn't cross (e.g. between parked cars, at busy junctions, or in front of a bus). You could use Brake's 'hazard spot' form, which can be photocopied and handed out to children for them to record when they have spotted dangers.
- Include discussion on safety features on roads, such as speed limit signs, zig-zag road markings near school gates, railings and road humps. Why are they there and what do they mean? Who are they trying to protect?
- Include discussion on why you shouldn't trust traffic. Some drivers take risks like speeding, so it's impossible to judge how fast traffic is and how long it will take to reach you. Never take chances and only cross when nothing's coming.

Cycling training for children aged eight or older:

You may or may not want to investigate on-road cycle training, depending on the hazards on roads in your community. Some communities' roads are, in many people's view including in Brake's view, just too dangerous to encourage children to cycle on them, and not designed with heavy traffic flows and child cyclists in mind. However, the advice below will be of use to you if you have quiet roads with good separation of traffic and cyclists, for example through well-designed, separate cycle paths.

Check to see if there are any national standardised schemes for teaching safe cycling.

Initial training should take place off-road and develop handling skills and learn the rules of the road, including how to position your bike at junctions etc. Once children have passed this, they should proceed to training on quiet roads, putting their skills in to practice.

Brake doesn't recommend that children use busy roads and doesn't recommend that children cycle on any roads without their parents. Use off-road facilities wherever possible.

Ensure that pupils wear a cycle helmet (on and off roads), and a high-visibility vest for on-road training. You should also emphasise the importance of cyclists always wearing helmets and high-visibility clothing through classroom learning.

If you are offering cycling training, and you have cycling routes that are appropriate for child cyclists, then you may want to encourage cycling to school as part of your School Travel Plan. Even if you choose to actively discourage cycling to and from school and in your community because you and parents know the risks are too great, it is still a good idea to offer some cycle training - children may still choose to cycle around their homes, on off-road cycle paths, or on their holidays, and many children will have a bike.

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