

Bus Rider Handbook



2024-2025

Bus Rider Handbook

Riding a school bus is a privilege provided by the Northwest Independent School District and should be treated as such.

The Transportation Department strives to support academic achievement by providing a positive experience for students during their morning and afternoon rides to and from school. This handbook will help students and parents/guardians to understand the responsibilities involved with riding the school bus to ensure safety and reliability. Parents/guardians are encouraged to read and discuss this important information with their child. Misconduct on the bus or at the bus stop may result in a student losing this privilege.

Authorized Riders

For the safety of the driver and all passengers, students must board district vehicles only at authorized stops, and drivers must unload passengers only at authorized stops and follow the rules, expectations, and guidelines contained in this handbook.

All eligible students will be permitted to ride the bus provided they conduct themselves properly and are a registered bus rider. While riding in district vehicles, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Students may be suspended from riding the bus due to documented misconduct.

SMART Tag

Northwest ISD uses the SMART tag system to increase safety and provide parents and legal guardians with the ability to monitor their child's bus in real time.

SMART stands for Secured Mobility Authorized Ridership Technology, as each student who uses district-provided busing will receive a tag that tracks their ridership on the bus both when they step on the vehicle and exit it. This system ensures a student rides on the appropriate bus, eliminating confusion. Each bus features a scanner to scan each student's SMART tag, which enables real-time monitoring after scanning.

Each student who rides a Northwest ISD school bus is expected to wear a SMART tag or have it easily accessible, such as strapped to a backpack. This will be scanned by the bus driver so the student is tracked.

Kindergarten and First Grade Students

To ensure our small children arrive home safely, Kindergarten or First Grade students will not be dropped off at any stop without a responsible person to take custody of that student. A responsible person could be an older sibling, parent, or emergency contact. If there is no responsible person to receive the student, they will be transported back to the school and it will be the parent/guardian's responsibility to pick the student up from the school.

Ride Changes

In an emergency situation only, a parent may request for his or her child to ride home with a friend. The parent must provide a written note to the campus administrator who will then register the student as a bus rider with Northwest ISD Transportation. Once verified, the campus administrator shall contact transportation no later than noon, and then give the note to the bus driver. If the student is not a registered bus rider, transportation cannot transport the student due to safety issues and the Texas Education Agency Transportation Guidelines.

Loading and Unloading

Students should report to the designated bus loading area as soon as the dismissal bell rings in order to avoid missing the bus. Buses will not return to the school for students who missed a bus once buses have been released by the school faculty. Parents will be responsible to pick the student up from the school.

In an effort to make bus riding as safe as possible for all students, the enforcement of these rules will be strictly followed. The student's conduct and behavior on the school bus is extremely important for bus safety. Therefore, the bus driver is charged with the responsibility of maintaining discipline on the bus and will report violations to the campus administrator via a written Bus Conduct Report.

General Bus Rules

1. Always obey and follow the directions of the bus driver and bus monitor.
2. Bus riders are expected to be courteous to fellow students, the driver, and bus monitors.
3. Enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner at your designated stop only.
4. Only students who are eligible to ride may be transported. Students must ride their assigned bus.
5. Keep feet, books, backpacks, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle or stored in the overhead rack.
6. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide transportation to school if a child misses the bus.
7. Students should not place their heads, hands, arms, or legs out of the bus window. Students are not to place or throw any object out of the bus window.
8. Students must remain seated with their seat belts fastened while the bus is in motion.
9. Skateboards, bicycles, scooters (excluding medical), hoverboards, and similar coasting devices are prohibited on buses.
10. Students are expected to assist in ensuring that buses and other district vehicles are clean and safe.

Procedures for Waiting for the Bus

1. Arrive at your designated bus stop five minutes before the scheduled pickup time. Waiting in the vehicle or across the street delays the bus route. The driver is not allowed to wait or honk. Allow 10 minutes after scheduled pick-up time before reporting a late bus to dispatch at (817) 698-1287.
2. Always stand on the sidewalk and back from the roadway while waiting for the bus.
3. When the bus approaches, stand clear of the bus, wait until the bus comes to a complete stop and the red loading lights come on, and then form a line to load the bus.
4. "Horseplay" is not permitted at any time around or on the bus.
5. If you miss the bus, go home immediately. Parents should instruct their children on what to do if they miss the bus and are then responsible for providing transportation for the student to school.

Loading the Bus

1. Form a line and do not push or shove.
2. Use the handrail and steps and carry large bags and objects in front of you.
3. Go to your assigned seat. The bus will not move until all students are seated.
4. Students will sit and remain in their assigned seats at all times. Seat belts must be worn.
5. Bus drivers will assign seating. Drivers may change seating assignments as needed.

Conduct on the Bus

1. Students must sit in their assigned seats and remain seated while the bus is moving. Each student will be expected to remain seated for the duration of the trip and remain seated until the bus door opens. Bus drivers, Bus monitors and campus administrators have the authority to assign seats and change student seating as needed.
2. A student shall not refuse to sit in an assigned seat or deny a student a place to sit.
3. Keep feet, books, backpacks, instrument cases, packages, coats, and all other objects out of the aisles.
4. Normal conversation is permitted; loud noises are not allowed as they may distract the driver and create an unsafe driving condition.
5. Students must be quiet when the bus approaches a railroad crossing.
6. Scuffling, fighting, horseplay, and the use of obscene, vulgar, or profane language and gestures are forbidden.

7. Do not throw objects inside or out of the bus.
8. Bus riders should never tamper with the bus or any of its equipment to include touching or covering cameras. The emergency door and exit controls should be used by pupils only during supervised drills or actual emergencies.
9. Students must never sit or attempt to sit in the driver's seat, and must never operate the passenger door, or other driver controls.
10. Students are not permitted to transport sharp, pointed, breakable, or other dangerous objects while on the bus.
11. No food should be eaten on the bus.
12. Students shall face forward while the bus is in motion and shall keep their feet in front of them, off of others, and out of the bus aisle.
13. Taking photos or recordings of any kind on the bus is not allowed.
14. Students are not permitted to play music out loud on their cell phones. Headphones are required.
15. Students shall assist in keeping the bus clean and sanitary by picking up their items.
16. Any items left on the bus will be taken to the school office.
17. Do not damage any part of the bus. Students will be required to pay for damages they cause and will be subject to disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Failure to reimburse the district will result in loss of riding privileges.

Getting Off the Bus

1. Students should remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop and the bus doors open.
2. Use the handrail and take one step at a time when leaving the bus.
3. Wait for your turn to leave the bus. Pushing and crowding will only slow exiting.
4. Always exit at your assigned stop unless authorization is requested and approved by Transportation.
5. If any article drops or rolls near or under the bus, do not go after it. Go to the door of the bus and ask the driver for help.
6. Go directly to your destination or to where your parent/guardian is waiting for you.

Crossing the Street

1. All students needing to cross the roadway/street shall exit the bus and wait for the driver to signal you that it is safe to cross.

2. Check in both directions before crossing and walk directly across the road.
3. Never cross the roadway/street from behind the bus.
4. CAUTION! Be alert for vehicles that do not stop when the bus is loading or unloading students.
5. Cross all streets at the intersection or pedestrian crosswalk and obey all traffic signals and signs on your way home.

Missed Bus

1. If a student misses the bus, it is the parent's/ guardian's responsibility to provide transportation to and from school. Dispatchers will not re-route a school bus to return to a stop if a student was not present at the stop at the required time.
2. If the bus is missed, do not chase the bus. Bus drivers can only board students at designated stops.
3. If the bus is missed in the morning, the student should go home immediately.
4. If the bus is missed in the afternoon, the student should go to the principal's office.

Accidents or Emergencies

1. In the case of an emergency or accident follow the instructions of the bus driver or monitor.
2. Students and drivers shall not exit the bus unless it is essential to evacuate for safety reasons.
3. Parents should not come to the accident site to pick up their students because they will not be released until local law enforcement has fully accounted for everyone and cleared the bus for release. The transportation department will get your student home once cleared to continue on the route.
4. If you must leave the bus from the emergency exit:
 - a. The student nearest the door will open the door and hold it open.
 - b. Students will exit the bus in a single file line as quietly, quickly, and orderly as possible.
 - c. The students sitting closest to the exit door will evacuate first.
 - d. Once outside the bus, follow the driver or monitor's instructions and remain in a group.
 - e. Always stay away from the roadways and other dangerous hazards near the accident site.

- f. Do not walk away or leave the site until released by law enforcement and district administration.

Extracurricular Trips

1. All bus rider rules and expectations apply to all school-sponsored events or trips.
2. Discipline will be the responsibility of the campus administrator in collaboration with the trip sponsor.

Prohibited Items

1. Tobacco, vaping, illegal substances, alcohol, food, candy, and glass containers are not permitted on any buses.
2. Weapons, items perceived as weapons (toy guns, etc.), explosive devices, knives, clubs, bats, matches or cigarette lighters, or any harmful chemicals are prohibited.
3. Any object (musical instrument, shop project) that is too large to be carried by the student, fit on their lap, or fit in the overhead rack is prohibited. If placed overhead, the student is still responsible for the item. If it cannot be properly stowed and is at risk of falling, it cannot be placed in the overhead area.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians

1. Review and discuss this handbook with your child.
2. Remind your child that the driver is the person of authority on the bus and is to be respected.
3. Make sure that your child arrives at the bus stop 5 minutes before the designated time.
4. Make sure that your child is not at the bus stop too early.
5. Provide supervision for your child going to and from the bus stop and at the stop, if necessary.
6. Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather conditions.
7. Determine if the weather is too severe for your child to wait for the bus.
8. Appear in person with your child if a conference is requested by the principal.
9. Provide transportation for your child if the privilege of riding the bus is withdrawn.
10. Ensure that payment is made for any damage caused by your child.
11. Instruct your children on procedures to follow if they miss the bus.

After school, if your child does not arrive at home during the normal time frame, please call the Northwest ISD Transportation Dispatch office at (817) 698-1287 for information and assistance.

Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies

If school is in session, the buses will run. School will be dismissed upon instruction from the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee. Please connect with all of the NISD social media pages and the Parent Square application to ensure that you are receiving the most up-to-date information on school closures and weather delays.

When school is delayed for any reason, students should arrive at their stops according to the start time delay schedule. Example: If school is delayed two hours, students should arrive at their stops two hours later than their regular schedule.

Items Left on the Bus

Drivers are NOT responsible for a student's property. Items left on the bus will be turned in to the school office if found on the bus.

Misconduct

The driver is responsible for managing student conduct on the bus. Drivers will attempt to correct any misbehavior of the passengers. When unable to correct the misbehavior, the misconduct will be reported to the principal, who assumes responsibility for taking proper disciplinary actions. (See Student Code of Conduct for further details on discipline and interventions.)

Thank you for reviewing this information with your children and trusting us with your most precious cargo. We value the opportunity to provide transportation to Northwest ISD students.

Please continue re-enforcing good behaviors from your students and we ask for your patience and understanding as we navigate 234 miles of district roadways to safely transport your students.