

Bus Safety Tips

[00:00:00] **Speaker 1**

The first time riding a school bus can be a frightening experience for both children and their parents. The purpose of this video is to alleviate some of the fears associated with the school bus transportation process.

While waiting at the bus stop on the child's first day of school, a huge noisy bus approaches. The immense intimidating vehicle squeals to a stop and an ominous door opens towards the waiting child. Large steps as tall as the child itself loom in front. The child hesitantly reaches for the handle, then takes the first large step and looks up to the driver for the first time.

[00:00:45] **Bus Driver**

Hi, Lexi. I'm Mr. Mike. Your seat's the second seat. Could you please sit down?

[00:49:22] **Speaker 1**

The driver smiles, welcomes the student by name, and introduces him or herself. The driver kindly instructs the child to sit in the second seat and gives a thumbs up to the parents as the door closes and the bus pulls away.

Now that the child's initial scary impression of the school bus has been dispelled, they can have an enjoyable ride to school. Communicating bus information to parents varies between school districts. Some districts mail bus letters or postcards with the bus number, stop assignment, and times to parents one to two weeks before school starts.

Others use email groups or parents log on to their child's school account to receive the information. Before the first day, practice walking with your child to the bus stop. Stand about 15 to 20 ft back from the main road while waiting for the bus along the shoulder.

At the bus stop, be aware of younger siblings and make sure they are not playing near the street. Children and parents should be watching for traffic all around them. Many parents drive their children to the bus stop. If you do this, please park back away from any intersection so the roadway is not blocked for regular traffic.

Walk to the bus stop to avoid this type of congestion or group children together with neighbors and take turns driving to the bus stop when the weather is really bad.

In the event that the parent or child has missed the bus, do not run after it. There are blind spots around the bus and the driver may not see you.

Kindergarten age students should sit in the front of the bus and with other kindergarten and first grade students. It is easier for the bus driver to keep an eye on them when they are in the front of the bus. All students should be seated while on the bus with their book bag in their lap. For student safety, the seatbacks are padded and very high. The youngest students tend to want to stand on the seats so that they can see over them.

Please advise them to remain seated at all times. Talk to your children about how the bus is constructed for their benefit and make sure they understand the need to be seated while on the school bus. This will make the driver's job easier and your children safe. During the first few weeks of school, many staff and older students will be available to assist new and younger students getting off the bus and finding classrooms. Talk with your child before the first day to make sure they understand the process, and not to be afraid to ask for help.

Many schools provide bus tags for new students, normally for kindergarten and first grade. These tags can be put in a snack bag or pinned to a book bag or jacket. Tags can be color coded to match a bus number or can be assigned an animal or letter. In the afternoon, as students are called for a bus and line up to load, a sign with the color, letter, or animal is held up by a helper so your child will know they are in the correct line for the correct bus. Teachers, administrators, and bus drivers can easily see the tags to double check that students are loading onto the correct bus. Since everything is so new to everyone on the first few days, occasionally students do get on to the wrong bus. Again, talk to your child about not being afraid to ask for help.

If a student gets on the wrong bus, the driver will call into their office and the school will be contacted. The student will be returned to the school or to the correct bus stop. If you are waiting at the stop and your child does not get off the bus, make sure you tell the bus driver. Drivers go through extensive training both in the classroom and on the road. Training begins in the classroom with a minimum of 15 hours of instruction.

Drivers in training must clear multiple clearances, a motor vehicle report from the previous 10 years, an FBI fingerprint check, a criminal history report, and a child abuse clearance. A physical and a pre-employment drug test are also performed. All of the above are completed before a permit is approved. 6 to 10 hours of on the road training are completed before a school bus driver can take the test for a CDL license, passenger endorsement, and a school bus certificate.

Depending on your own district, there are several types of transportation that can be set up for kindergarten students. Kindergarten students can attend the same school as other elementary grades, possibly grades 1 through six. If this is the case, normally students are picked up along the bus route and get dropped off and picked up at the same school. Some districts utilize a kindergarten center. It is possible that busing could be set up to only pick up kindergarten students and go directly to the center. In some cases, kindergarten students could be picked up with elementary students, go to the elementary school where the kindergarten students would then get on to another bus to be shuttled to the kindergarten center. Depending on the size of the school district and the number of students that are transported, all grade levels of students could ride on the same bus, kindergarten through 12th grade.

Remember, we suggest that the driver keep the younger students in the front of the bus. If you have more than one child riding the bus and you would like the older sibling to ride with the younger child, they should both sit in the front of the bus. We talked about the use of shuttle buses for kindergarten students, but we also use transfer points. These can be located at a school, church, movie theater, a shopping center, or a business park.

This can be very scary for parents that do not understand how moving children between buses at a transfer point can be safe. Be assured that this is a very controlled process and the bus drivers and students do an excellent job. It works like this. All buses line up in the same spot each day facing each other. No students move until all buses have arrived. Bus drivers have lists of students and which bus they will be moving to. Parents may not be allowed at this location depending on the policies of the school district and the agreements the district has with the property owners.

[07:45:22] **Group of Children**

The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round. The wheels on the bus go round and round all through the town.

[07:45:22] **Little Girl 1**

Why do cars have seat belts and not buses?

[08:03:05] **Speaker 1**

School buses are built differently than cars. A school bus places its passengers much higher than in a typical vehicle. This places the passengers above the impact point if another vehicle were to come into contact with it. Students sit high off the ground and the inside of the bus and seats are padded. This is called compartmentalization.

[08:27:03] **Little Girl 2**

Why do cars have seat belts and not buses?

[08:30:19] **Speaker 1**

No. School buses are the safest form of ground transportation. You are 20 times safer in the school bus than in your mom's car.

[08:30:19] **Little Girl 3**

Why is the school bus yellow?

[08:41:03] **Speaker 1**

Many years ago, National School Bus Yellow was developed and is used on every school bus in the United States. Motorists associate this yellow color with children and will therefore be extra careful when near a yellow bus. What happens if I leave my book bag or my coat on the bus? If the bus driver finds anything and is still at the school, he or she will take what was found into the office. Make sure your name is on things you bring onto the bus. If things are found later or with no name, the driver usually keeps the items and asks who owns them on the next bus ride.

[09:18:13] **Little Girl 3**

What do all the lights mean?

[09:20:16] **Speaker 1**

Many of the lights on a school bus are just like those on a car. Headlights light the way for the bus driver and allow other vehicles to see the bus coming. The most important lights on a school bus are the yellow and red ones near the roof. The yellow lights warn traffic that the bus is going to make a school bus stop. When the bus stops and the red lights come on, all traffic must stop and wait for any children to board the bus or to get off and to a place of safety. When the bus driver turns the lights off, the traffic can continue down the road.

[09:57:15] **Little Girl 4**

What happens if my mom isn't at the bus stop when I get there?

[10:01:20] **Speaker 1**

If you have talked to your parents and are not allowed to get off the bus without someone to meet you, let the bus driver know. The driver can call into their office for instructions. They may be able to drop some other students off and then come back to your stop or take you back to school. Students should never be afraid to tell the bus driver if they are scared to be dropped off alone. You could also have a backup plan with a neighbor in case no one is home at your house when you get off the bus.

[10:31:04] **Little Girl 5**

Can I bring my dog Bob on the bus?

[10:33:18] **Speaker 1**

Sorry, only service dogs can ride on a school bus. Other students might be allergic or scared of dogs, and we would never want anyone to get bit.

[10:42:17] **Group of Children**

The wheel on the bus go, ssss sh,ssss sh,ssss sh. All through the town.

The horn on the bus goes beep beep beep, beep beep beep, beep beep beep. The horn on the bus goes beep beep beep. All through the town. Yay.