A Parent's Guide to School Bus Safety

Helping your child ride safely, every day

Why This Guide Matters

The school bus is one of the safest ways for your child to get to school — far safer than riding in a car. The greatest risk is not on the bus. It is in the few minutes **around** the bus: walking to the stop, waiting, boarding, and crossing the street.

Most of those risks disappear when a child knows three things: **where to wait, when it is safe to move, and how to stay where the driver can see them.** You are your child's first and best safety teacher. A few minutes of practice at home does more than any rule posted on the bus.

> **The one habit that prevents the most injuries:** teach your child to make eye contact with the driver and wait for the driver's signal before crossing or boarding. If they can't see the driver's eyes, the driver can't see them.

1. Bus Stop & Walking Safety

Getting to the stop and waiting the right way is the first layer of safety.

- **Leave early.** Aim to arrive at the stop at least **five minutes before** the bus. Children who run for the bus don't watch for traffic.
- **Walk, never run**, to and from the stop — even when the bus is coming. The bus will wait.
- **Wait back from the road.** Stand at least **three giant steps (about six feet)** back from the curb or edge of the road until the bus fully stops and the door opens.
- **Use sidewalks** where they exist. Where there are none, walk **facing traffic**, as far off the road as possible.
- **Stay out of the street while waiting.** No playing, chasing, or roughhousing near the road.
- **Line up away from the road** and only step forward once the bus has stopped and the driver opens the door.
- **After dark or in bad weather,** wear or carry something bright or reflective. Drivers can't avoid what they can't see.

Practice at home: walk the route to the stop together once before the school year and point out the safe waiting spot.

2. The Danger Zone & the 10-Foot Rule

The "danger zone" is the area all around the bus — front, sides, and rear — where the driver's view is blocked and your child is hardest to see. Most bus-related injuries happen here.

- **Stay 10 feet away from the bus** at all times — that's about **six giant steps.** If your child can touch the bus, they are too close.
- **Never walk behind the bus.** The driver cannot see directly behind it, and the bus may back up.

- **When crossing, cross in front** — never behind. Walk about **six giant steps ahead** of the bus so the driver can see you, then cross.
- **Wait for the driver's signal.** Make eye contact, wait for the driver to signal it's safe, then cross. **Look left–right–left** yourself before stepping out.
- **If your child drops something** near the bus, they should **never bend down to pick it up.** Tell the driver first — the driver may not see them reach.
- **Watch for the flashing lights.** Red flashing lights and the extended stop arm mean traffic must stop — but not every driver obeys. Teach your child to trust their own eyes, not just the lights.

> **Say it simply:** "If you can see the driver's face, the driver can see you. If you can't, stop and wait."

3. On-Bus Behavior & Rules

Good behavior on the bus is not about being polite — it is about safety. A driver's full attention belongs on the road. Every distraction is a risk to all the children on board.

- **Stay seated,** facing forward, with your back against the seat and your bottom flat — the whole ride.
- **Keep the aisle clear.** Backpacks and bags stay on your lap or under the seat, never in the aisle.
- **Keep hands, arms, and head inside** the bus at all times.
- **Use a quiet voice.** No yelling, and no shouting that could distract the driver — especially at railroad crossings, where the driver needs silence to listen.
- **Be kind.** No pushing, hitting, or teasing. Treat other riders and the driver with respect.
- **Listen to the driver.** The driver is in charge of the bus and is responsible for everyone's safety. Following their instructions the first time keeps the bus safe and on schedule.

How parents can reinforce this at home:

- Talk about the bus driver as a **trusted adult** who is keeping their child safe — not just "the person who drives."
- Remind your child that **rules on the bus exist because the driver can't drive safely and manage the aisle at the same time.**
- If your child comes home upset about something on the bus, **listen first, then contact the transportation office** so they can help.
- Drivers and the school want to partner with you and need information.
- School bus drivers must be fully focused at the bus stop – **highest risk to students area.**
- Please understand that drivers are on a schedule and quickly become concerned if they are delayed at the bus stop.
- The time to have a constructive conversation is when it can be scheduled in advance, please call the office.