

Children in traffic

Take your child on as many walks and bike rides as possible. A child's habits of getting around in traffic develop as part of their daily life, and it is in this way that they learn the behaviour of smart road users. In addition, daily exercise is beneficial for a child's physical development.

On the following pages you will find general descriptions of age-appropriate traffic behaviour and instructions on how to practise getting around safely together. Do keep in mind, however, that differences in children's individual development may be marked.

The brochure was compiled on the basis of materials of Finland's Liikenneturva.

0-4 years

- At this age children must always be accompanied by an adult when in traffic, as they are dependent on them.
- They learn from their parents' example and what they tell them.
- They take notice of the surrounding environment and traffic.
- With parental guidance they begin to understand the difference between the playground and the traffic environment (street vs yard; left vs right; pavement vs road).

Tips on getting around with your child

Note different traffic situations. Describe your movements in traffic. "We have to look both ways before we cross the road to make sure there are no cars coming." "See how visible that pedestrian is? They're wearing bright colours, they have reflective strips on their clothes and they've got a reflector!" "A big car's coming – let's move further back from the road!" "Let's walk on this side of the path so that cyclist can get past us easily."

4-5 years

- At this age children start to put what they have learned into practice.
- They understand simple reasoning.
- The example their parent sets is crucial: a child may question the need to wear a helmet while riding a bike if their parent is not wearing one.
- In traffic situations, teach your child one thing at a time. Make sure your child understands what you're teaching them and that they start to see the bigger picture where traffic is concerned.

Tips on getting around with your child

Observe other road users. You can ask your child about other people in traffic. "Did anyone cross the road where there was no zebra crossing?" "Did everyone wait for the light to turn green?" "Did they take their bike across the road at the zebra crossing?" "Did you notice anyone who was wearing bright colours, had reflecting strips on their clothes or were wearing a reflector?" Riding bikes in traffic can be practised with the whole family.

5-6 years

- At this age children begin to develop the ability to see links between cause and effect but are still unable to independently choose the safest way to go.
- The best learning opportunities are real traffic situations in which a child can act with guidance. "What do we have to do before we cross the road?" "Can we cross the road here?"
- Before going out into traffic you can ask your child whether they have everything with them (reflector, helmet, etc.) – thus teaching them to look after the things that keep them safe.
- The responsibility for getting around and crossing roads safely still lies with the adult.

Tips on getting around with your child

When leaving home you can already remind your child of important points: no running onto the road, keep back from the road, etc. "What do we do if there are roadworks?" "What do you do if someone calls out to you from the other side of the road?" Actively continue this conversation while you're walking along the road, learn to take note the surrounding environment together.

6-7 years

- Practising how to get to school needs to start as early as possible; it's best to do so in summer, before school starts. Take time to plan the route and bear in mind that the shortest route isn't always the safest one.
- Advise your child to stop walking and stand still if they need to use their mobile while on the street.
- At this age children understand concepts and simple traffic rules. However, they can still confuse left and right. The main emphasis should be on teaching them safe behaviour.
- It's still important to practise what to do in different traffic situations, gradually increasing the distance your child travels.
- Support and encourage your child so that they become confident, independent road (and pavement) users.

Tips on getting around with your child

Give your child a camera. Ask them to take pictures of the route they'll be using to get to school. Put aside a great deal of time for this. When you're back home, ask them to talk about the pictures. "What do you see in the pictures?" "What do they tell you about traffic?" "Which points along the route could be dangerous?" "What should you do at those points?"

CHILDREN IN TRAFFIC

Tips for parents

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Children in traffic

Tips for parents

Children don't handle traffic situations as well as adults do. They're little, they lack experience and the skills and behaviour they need on the streets and roads are still developing.

Scaring a child will not help them become self-reliant. Children learn best about traffic situations when accompanied by an adult. A child will gradually develop the skills they need if they are consistently encouraged and allowed out onto the streets on a daily basis.

Parents are responsible for raising their children to become independent users of streets and roads who do not put themselves or others at risk.

The traffic environment is not a playground. Make sure your child knows where the playground ends. Streets and roads are not a place for races and running around. When you are getting around together it's a good idea to set boundaries on how far your child can wander from you. Parents have to be extra-careful when with their child; don't assume your child already knows what to do. Take into consideration the dangers accompanying different seasons.

These guidelines include simple safety tips for you and your child. Set an example on the streets and roads – your child will learn from watching and being with you!

Teach clearly

"Before you cross the road, look both ways to make sure no cars are coming!"
Stop, look, listen, check - it's a simple way of getting children to remember. Associate instructions with certain places and situations.

Employ consistent instructions

The younger the child, the better it is to keep to consistent instructions. Make sure that any adults accompanying your child teach them according to the same principles.

Always set an example

The best way of teaching your child how to behave on the streets and roads is to do so calmly and politely yourself. What kind of example are you setting for your child?

Constantly remind and question

"What do you have to do before crossing the road?" "Where are you allowed to play?"

Help and intervene whenever necessary

As an adult you are responsible for children's behaviour on the streets and roads. Always intervene and help them understand if you notice dangerous behaviour – for example, running across the road.

Out and about on foot and on a bike

Stay close to your child

Staying alert and keeping your child close to you are important when you are on the streets together. It's a good idea to hold hands, especially when crossing the road.

Crossing the road safely requires teaching

Teach your child the safest places to cross the road. If there are no traffic lights or zebra crossings, choose a spot where visibility in both directions is good (i.e. which is lit when it's dark) and where it's easy for drivers to see a child.

Always stop before you cross the road

Cross the road on foot – push your bicycle along beside you. Make sure there are no cars approaching from either side, or that any cars there are stop.

You have to be careful even on a zebra crossing

It's easiest to cross the road at a zebra crossing or at an intersection with traffic lights. However, you still need to make sure that all of the cars have stopped even when the light to cross is green.

Don't forget your helmet, reflectors and bike lights

Ensure that everyone in the family wears a helmet when riding their bikes. A helmet provides effective protection against head injuries. When it's dark, always use reflectors and bike lights. When you are on the streets with your child, make sure you're visible!

Keep an eye on the traffic

Observe and discuss what's happening in the traffic with your child. This way your child will learn to practise what to do, and why they need to do so. "A car's coming – let's move back from the road."

Practise riding in a safe environment

Riding a bike and braking should be practised in a safe environment before going out onto the streets and roads. When you do go out and about, make sure your child rides close to you so you can react quickly if need be. Give your child advice on where and how to ride their bike and what a bike in good condition should be like.

Public transport

Get children used to public transport from a young age

It's a good idea to accompany your child on their first few trips on public transport. Teach them that on public transport you should sit quietly, you mustn't move around inside while it's moving, and if the seats have seatbelts, they should be fastened during the trip.

Waiting at a stop

Go over how you should behave at a stop and how to board public transport. Make sure you are visible (reflectors are fastened properly) so that the driver notices you in good time.

Getting ready to get off

Tell your child when it is necessary to press the **STOP** button if they want to get off. Advise them not to stand up until the vehicle has stopped.

Exiting a vehicle

Crossing the road after getting off public transport can be dangerous. Remind your child that you should not cross the road directly in front of or behind the vehicle – it is safest to wait until it has left the stop and the road is visible in both directions.

You are your child's most important role model – even on the streets and roads!

In the car

Set an example

Traffic is essentially a form of teamwork between different users. Being calm and considerate of others is something children learn from their parents, starting from a young age.

Get your child used to safety seats

A good safety seat is an investment in your child's safety. If your child becomes used to being in a car in a safety seat from an early age, they will not question using it.

What to do if your child grows restless in the car

Find out why your child is restless – perhaps they just need to stretch their legs. Children can be kept happy in a car with audio books, games, tablets and educational word games.

The driver's concentration

The driver must concentrate on driving. Lower the volume of toys sufficiently before setting out or make sure your child has something to do or hold their interest. If necessary, stop the car (to talk on the phone, to deal with your child, to pick things up off the floor, etc.).

Check the seatbelts

The driver is responsible for the use of seatbelts. Bear in mind that the seatbelts on safety seats may need to be adjusted for different clothes. If the driver asks whether everyone's seatbelts are fastened before setting out, fastening them becomes associated with driving and is done automatically.

135 cm

Children are required to use a safety seat until they reach a height of 135 cm. Travelling with the infant's back to the direction of driving is safest. A safety seat in such a position must not be placed on a seat with a deployable airbag. When choosing a safety seat, make sure that the child's height and weight are compliant with the requirements of safety equipment. Liability for the use of a child seat rests with the parent(s) or guardian(s). If no parent or guardian is present, liability rests with the driver. The back seat is the safest place in a car for a child.

Reflector hide-and-seek for all ages

Different reflectors can be tested out at home. Fasten the reflectors to fabrics and turn off all the lights in the room. The reflectors will not be visible in the dark, but can be found using a torch. A torch held near the nose or forehead acts like the lights of a car. If you wish to, you can make this into a fun autumn or winter game: for example, you can place the reflectors on trees outside. Whoever finds the most reflectors wins. Were all the reflectors equally visible?