

# Parent Resource

## Children out and about in the community



Parents have a vital role in teaching children how to be safe road users. As children's first educators you influence their attitudes and behaviours from the earliest years. This guide provides some advice on how you can do this.

Children learn best in real life situations. Every time you go for a walk, ride a bike with your child or go on a car trip it is an opportunity to explore road safety. There are also health benefits for children to be out and about. Currently the average Australian child spends less than two hours a day outside.

### Parents as role models

Children imitate adult behaviours. It is important that you think about what you are teaching your children by how you act as a road user.

Your behavior needs to be consistent with what you are expecting from your child. As the saying goes "Actions speak louder than words".

### It's never too early to start teaching children about road safety

The early years are a time when children develop an understanding of their local community and about being active citizens.

Road trauma is a leading cause of death and disabling injury for children in Australia. Road related incidents involving children often occur because children are still developing the skills needed for safe road use. We can all play a role in helping to reduce the incidence of road trauma.



Every time you go for a walk, ride a bike with your child or go on a car trip it is an opportunity to explore road safety



# 1

## CHILDREN AS PEDESTRIANS

Children have difficulties in judging how fast a vehicle may be travelling and how long it takes to walk from one side of the road to another.

Children are the smallest road users and because of their size, they are at a significant disadvantage in the road environment. Parents can help make children safer pedestrians.

### Role model

- ☀ Walk across pedestrian crossings or traffic lights (if available) and avoid crossing the street between cars.
- ☀ Only ever cross when there is a green walk signal.
- ☀ If there is no crossing, choose the safest, clearest and most visible place to cross.
- ☀ Always look both ways before crossing the road.
- ☀ Concentrate at the kerb before crossing (never be on the phone or talking to another adult).
- ☀ Always check for moving cars in driveways.

### Talk with children

It is important to have conversations with children about what needs to be done to make sure they are safe as pedestrians. Don't just tell children what to do or not to do. Asking them questions and having conversations with them allows children to think more deeply about what is happening around them.

- ☀ Introduce vocabulary such as 'traffic' and what this includes; cars, buses, bicycles, trucks, etc.
- ☀ Discuss the importance of holding hands to cross the road together.
- ☀ Discuss the speed of the traffic.
- ☀ Discuss the possibility of cars moving when walking past driveways and laneways.
- ☀ Help children understand the different road signs you can see.
- ☀ Discuss the importance of only crossing at traffic lights when there is a green walk signal. Discuss why it is important not to assume that because there is a green walk signal that it is safe to cross. Discuss the importance of drivers being able to see you before crossing the road. Could there be cars coming from around the corner?
- ☀ Look up maps of your area and discuss what is the safest route to where you are going.
- ☀ Print a map of your area and highlight where you have walked.
- ☀ Discuss Stop Look Listen and Think
- ☀ Stop at the kerb
- ☀ Look both ways
- ☀ Listen for Traffic
- ☀ Think – Decide if it is safe to cross



**Think!**

Decide if it is safe to cross.



# 2

## CHILDREN AS CYCLISTS

All cyclists and scooter riders in Victoria and their passengers are required by law to wear bicycle helmets that meet the current Australian Standards when riding in public places such as roads, bicycle paths, recreational parks and car parks.

It is recommended that children wear helmets when using any wheeled toy such as skateboards, rollerblades, roller skates etc.

### Role model

- ☀ Always obey the road rules while on your bike
- ☀ Always wear a correctly fitted helmet (wearing a helmet reduces the risk of head injury by 60-90%).
- ☀ If you or your child are not wearing a correctly fitted helmet, you may receive a large fine.
- ☀ Only ride on the footpath if you're riding with a child 12 years or under.
- ☀ Alert your child to the driveways and laneways.
- ☀ Use bicycle paths where possible.
- ☀ If the child is a passenger on your bike, ensure the child's seat is correctly fitted.
- ☀ Talk with your child about the traffic environment
- ☀ Involve your child in deciding whether it is safe to cross – of course you still make the decision.
- ☀ Make eye contact with road users – especially at intersections.
- ☀ Involve your child in choosing safe places to ride. Use maps to help you decide.



**Make sure the bicycle is the right size for your child. A bike that is too big or small can be dangerous.**

# 3

## CHILDREN AS PASSENGERS

### Child Car Seats

- ☀ Child car seats work in keeping children safe and this is reflected in the law.
- ☀ To provide the best protection for a child in a crash, the child car seat must be the right size for the child, fitted correctly and used correctly.
- ☀ Children do not fit into an adult seatbelt safely until they are approximately 145 cm tall or can pass the 5 step test. This is the average height of a 10 to 12 year old child. There are now booster seats available that will fit an average 12 year old.
- ☀ Children can sustain injuries from adult seatbelts that do not fit them correctly.
- ☀ Research shows that children are safest travelling in the back seat.
- ☀ If the restraint is incorrectly fitted or is the inappropriate size for the child, you may receive a large fine and receive 3 demerit points per infringement.

### Role model

- ☀ Children watch everything you do and hear what you say when you are behind the wheel. Remember that children start to form attitudes to driving by watching you. "What kind of driver are you raising?"  
[www.towardszero.vic.gov.au/campaign/parents](http://www.towardszero.vic.gov.au/campaign/parents) TAC campaign
- ☀ Ensure there are no distractions when driving, such as mobile phones.
- ☀ Ensure everyone, including all adults have their seat belt fastened correctly before departure.
- ☀ Ensure children learn about the safety door.
- ☀ Discuss with children why it is not OK to distract drivers.



Research shows children should continue travelling in a booster seat until they are at least 145cm tall or can pass the 5 step test. They can then use the adult seatbelt with no booster seat.

### The Five Step Test



1 Can the child sit with their back against the vehicle seat?



2 Do the child's knees bend in front of the edge of the seat?



3 Does the sash belt sit across the middle of the shoulder?



4 Is the lap belt sitting low across the hips touching the thighs?



5 Can the child stay seated for the whole trip?

If you answer yes to all these questions your child is ready to move to an adult seat belt for that particular car.

Getting out and about benefits children both physically and mentally. The Australian Government Guidelines recommend children from 2 to 5 years should spend at least 3 hours per day outdoors including running, jumping, walking and cycling. It is so important for us all to get out and about in our local neighbourhood for our health and connection to our community.

Parents play a significant role in teaching children about being safe around our roads as pedestrians and cyclists. Walking and riding are free and fun to do. For more information go to ELAA's Starting Out Safely website [www.childroadsafety.org.au](http://www.childroadsafety.org.au) and speak to your child's teacher.