



STAYING SAFE AROUND BUSES

massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MASSACHUSETTS
Safe Routes to School
MASS.GOV/SAFE-ROUTES-TO-SCHOOL

School and municipal buses are used as mass transit for many students. While data shows the safest way to arrive and depart school is the school bus, each type of bus or van has unique characteristics. Understanding how to share the road with buses and negotiate their frequent stops makes travel safer for all students.

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR DRIVING AROUND **ALL** BUSES

1 Avoid driving in bus lanes.

Dedicated bus lanes, whether at a school or on a road, help make bus travel safer and more efficient for passengers, pedestrians, and other people on the road.

2 Stay alert for bus passengers boarding or exiting.

After a person exits a bus, they become a pedestrian. Massachusetts' new **Vulnerable User Law** requires motorists to give four feet to pass pedestrians and people on bikes.¹



3 Be prepared to stop behind a bus at rail crossings.

All buses, with and without passengers, must come to a complete stop at all railroad crossings, where the driver opens the passenger door to check for oncoming trains.²



4 Don't tailgate. Keep a safe distance and be prepared for frequent stops.

Buses need extra space to operate safely. Maintain a comfortable following distance to prepare for frequent stops.

5 Give buses space to safely leave stops and merge back into traffic.

Your courtesy in yielding to buses at stops supports a smoother traffic flow and helps buses stay on schedule.³



6 Never pass a bus on the right.⁴

Large vehicles often need to shift left before making a wide right turn, and if you're beside a truck or bus, you could be in their blind spot.

7 Exercise patience.

School and municipal bus passengers range from the very young to the elderly. Be patient so that all can board or exit safely.

SCHOOL BUSES AND THE LAW

DRIVING AROUND SCHOOL BUSES REQUIRES **EXTRA ATTENTION!**



STOP when flashing lights are activated.

It's the law! Vehicles must stop when a school bus or van has its lights flashing and a stop sign extended. Violations begin at a \$250 fine and may result in license suspension.⁵

DO NOT CROWD the bus.

It's the law! In Massachusetts, vehicles must stay 100 feet behind school buses.⁶ This extra distance allows the bus driver to see students boarding and exiting the bus.

**KEEP
BACK
100 FEET**



RESPECT school zone speed limits.

It's the law! The speed limit in a school zone is 20 mph.⁷

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY DISTINCTIONS

- Only school buses, along with fire, police, and ambulances, can stop traffic.
- School buses are the only vehicles that wait for a student to cross the street safely. When a school bus stops with its lights flashing, students are present and have not yet safely unloaded or crossed the street.

¹ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section14>

² <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section15>

³ https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/03/21/Drivers_Manual.pdf

⁴ https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/03/21/Drivers_Manual.pdf

⁵ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section14>

⁶ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section14>

⁷ Except when on a limited access highway

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section17>

STAY SAFE BY AVOIDING THE DANGER ZONE

Blind spots found around all large vehicles are known as danger zones. This is where most vehicle-related injuries occur. Because the driver cannot see you in the danger zone, be vigilant here whether you are a driver, walker, or roller.

STOP arm out

Motorists must stop when school buses have flashing lights activated.⁸

Car behind car

In school zones, passing other vehicles is illegal.¹⁰

Cars behind bus

Stay 100 feet behind school buses as required by law.⁹

People on bikes

Give buses plenty of room. Avoid passing buses on the right and watch for cars approaching on your left. Consider waiting for buses to re-enter the travel lane instead of passing.

Sideview mirrors

Always ensure you can see a bus's sideview mirror. A bus driver cannot see you if you cannot see them.

School bus stops

Be patient and observant while waiting for your bus. Students must wait for a stopped school bus driver to indicate it is safe to cross the street. Let the bus come to you, never run towards a moving bus.

Pedestrians

Avoid the Most Dangerous zone where bus drivers cannot see anyone walking directly in front of their bus. Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" on the sidewalk ahead of the bus. Wait for the school bus driver to signal that it is safe to cross.

⁸ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section14>

⁹ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section14>

¹⁰ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90/Section17>