

PREPARING MY CHILD TO WALK TO SCHOOL OR TO THE BUS

It's never too soon to start walking or biking with your little one to prepare for the day when he or she is ready to make the trek alone.

ARE THEY READY?

As your child grows, you may have a sense of whether he or she is ready to graduate to "big kid" things where both age and maturity play a role. Since there is no legal minimum age to walk or bike independently, the decision is up to you to decide whether or not your youngster is ready. To decide, ask yourself if your child:

- Is attentive
- Follows rules
- Makes good decisions
- Is comfortable alone

You be the judge: try walking with them before letting them go off on their own.

CAN MY LITTLE ONE WALK WITH MY OLDER CHILD TO SCHOOL?

If your older child is good at following instructions, looking both ways, and understanding signs, he/she might make a great travel buddy to a younger sibling. Consider joining a walking school bus or creating your own. Your kids will feel independent - and you'll feel better - with them walking to school in the safety of a group.

MY CHILD KNOWS SIGNS, SIGNALS AND PAVEMENT MARKINGS

Children who walk or bike to school on their own need to understand and obey the signs and pavement markings that they see. Practice by walking and biking together. The recurring practice will help them - and you - to feel more comfortable with their journey without an adult. While children can get to the school or the bus stop on their own, you can help pick the best route by working with the school to get route maps with recommendations. If they are not available, consider these points:

- Choose streets with sidewalks, bike lanes, and low speed limits
- Note the school crossing guards' locations
- Choose crossing locations that have a clear view of traffic
- Dress for the weather and season
- Reflective gear is always recommended



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT EXERCISE INCREASES THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SKILLS OF CHILDREN. WALKING TO THE BUS OR TO SCHOOL - WITH OR WITHOUT YOU - CAN HELP YOUR LITTLE ONE COUNTER CHILDHOOD OBESITY, BUILD SELF-ESTEEM, AND GAIN INDEPENDENCE.