



# Parents' information booklet

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# Travel safety

As a general rule, children up to the age of 10 should not be in traffic situations without an accompanying adult, as they have not yet developed the knowledge, skills and behaviour necessary to keep themselves safe.

Young children should learn about being safe as a pedestrian, cyclist or as a passenger, in a car and on public transport. They should also learn the importance of where to play safely, away from traffic and roads. Children learn best in the real traffic environment under the supervision of a caring adult. The following booklet provides some helpful and handy tips on how to help your child develop safe road behaviours and be a 'Road Safety Hero'!



# Stop, Look, Listen and Think

Children should be introduced to the correct road crossing procedure – STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and THINK.

STOP one step back from the footpath or shoulder of the road if there is no footpath.

LOOK in all directions for approaching traffic.

LISTEN in all directions for approaching traffic.

THINK about whether it is safe to cross the road – when the road is clear or all traffic has stopped.

When crossing, walk straight across the road. Keep LOOKING and LISTENING for traffic while crossing.

Talk to your child about how to cross the road safely by identifying and choosing the safest places to cross the road. These are:

- a children's crossing – teach them to only cross when the Crossing Supervisor has signalled it is safe
- a pedestrian (zebra) crossing – teach them to only cross when cars have stopped for them
- pedestrian traffic lights – teach them to only cross when they can see the 'green man' or the green WALK sign and never cross when they can see a 'red man' or the red DON'T WALK sign.

If there are no crossings available, they should choose a safe place where they can see traffic in all directions and where drivers can see them.

Also talk to children about the dangers of wearing headphones and listening to music when crossing roads. This can make it difficult to hear oncoming traffic.

If children want to listen to music when walking, encourage them to keep music at a reasonable volume and only use one headphone.

# Always hold hands

Parents and carers should always hold hands with children when they are near traffic, or the road. Young children lack the skills, knowledge, and judgement to be able to cope with traffic and therefore need to be constantly supervised.

# At the roadside

## How to teach your child road safety actions

Stand in a safe place with your child and watch the traffic.

- Talk about which direction the traffic is coming from. Remember to identify places where vehicles are turning.
- Talk about the difference between vehicles that are parked, those that are coming towards you and those that are going away. Talk about how the ones coming towards you are the most dangerous. Point at different vehicles and ask your child to tell you if they are coming towards them or going away from them.
- Look for a vehicle coming towards you. Talk about whether it is big or small and how fast or slow it is going. Use the terms near or far to describe where the traffic is.
- Look to the right and left and right again, and in front and behind you for vehicles. Talk about the need to double-check that there is a safe gap before moving onto the road.

## Driveway safety

- Children under five years of age are more susceptible to driveway danger because of their low height and difficulty recognising hazards. Talk to your child about being careful around driveways and always watching out for cars reversing out of driveways. Children should be taught to stop at driveways when they are walking or riding to check if there are cars coming in or out.
- Children should be taught not to play behind cars. Explain to them this is because they may not be seen and a car could reverse over them.
- As a driver, you should be very careful when reversing out of driveways. Before you enter the vehicle, walk behind the vehicle to make sure there are no children behind the car and check for children and other pedestrians nearby. Make sure there is nothing obstructing your vision out of your mirrors and rear window before reversing. Always reverse very slowly and look both ways so all areas of potential danger are visible.

Always supervise children when vehicles are in use. If you are the only adult at home and you need to move your vehicle, put your child in the vehicle while you move it.

# Safest route to school

When they are old enough to travel to and from school on their own, it is important to know the route your children take. You can learn about the hazards they may experience as pedestrians by travelling the route with them.

As you walk with your children, consider the following questions:

- Does the route follow the quieter streets?
- Does it have the least number of road crossings?
- Are there footpaths or do your children have to walk along the roadside?
- Are there difficult intersections or railway lines along the route?
- Are there signed, supervised or light-controlled pedestrian crossings?
- Do your children look for a safe place to cross the road?
- Do they use the 'Stop, Look, Listen and Think' procedure before crossing roads?
- Is your younger child under the supervision of an older child or adult?

When you travel the route with your child, discuss how they can be safe on their journey. If the route seems too dangerous, look at some alternatives keeping the above questions in mind.

Note: If your younger child has to be in the care of an older child, please be aware that the older child may not have sufficient road sense or maturity to be able to supervise the safety of a young child.

Meet your child at the bus stop after school so they learn to walk home or cross the road safely. Don't call them across the road... walk across to meet them.



# When driving and in the car

When driving and in the car it is important to follow these key safety tips:

- Make sure your child gets in and out of the car on the footpath side, away from the traffic.
- Put loose objects in the boot or on the floor. Explain to your child how unsecured objects could hit a passenger and hurt them in a crash.
- Talk to your child about behaviour that affects your concentration when you are driving. Praise them when they have been well behaved and considerate as a passenger.
- All passengers must wear a seat belt or child restraint. Assist your child when putting on a restraint and encourage your child to check that they are “clicked in” properly.
- Changes to the child restraint laws in March 2010 mean that all children up to seven years of age must be restrained in an Australian Standards approved child restraint according to their age and size. A properly fastened and adjusted child restraint or booster seat will reduce the chances of your child being injured in a crash and improve their chances of surviving a serious crash. Not using restraints correctly is putting their lives at risk. An adult seatbelt will not protect a young child in the same way as it protects an adult. As the driver, you can also be fined and accumulate demerit points for every passenger that is not wearing a seatbelt or not restrained in an appropriate and properly fastened and adjusted child restraint. For more information on child restraints and choosing the correct restraint for your child visit [www.tmr.qld.gov.au/childrestraints](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/childrestraints).
- Children under seven must travel in the back seats unless the seats are already taken by children under seven. The rear of the car is generally safer in a crash. A child of any age can sit in the front seat if the vehicle has only one row of seats (such as a ute) and they are properly restrained. If the vehicle has a passenger airbag fitted, a rearward facing child restraint should not be used.
- The changes to the child restraint rules mean a child under four years of age must not sit in the front row of seats in a vehicle that has more than one row of seats, even if the child is three years of age and large enough to be seated in a booster seat.
- Parents should talk to their children about wearing a seatbelt correctly, such as ensuring the seatbelt sits firmly over their shoulder and not around their neck or under their arm and across their stomach. Also, it should be stressed that booster seats and special child restraints are not only for 'babies', as children who are beginning school may view them in this way.

## Driving near schools

Despite presenting road safety education in the classroom, when children get out of school they are not thinking about cars. They want to have fun and their eagerness can often override their caution in traffic. The peripheral vision of a young child is a third narrower than the peripheral vision of an adult. Children are also physically smaller, so they have difficulty seeing vehicles and being seen by drivers, and are therefore more vulnerable to serious injury. Because of their size, and with the highly unpredictable nature of children, always slow down when driving around schools or risk a fine, demerit points, or worse – losing a child's life.

School zone speed limits (usually 40 km/h) are in force on school days during specified hours. School zone hours differ between schools, and motorists should read signs carefully when entering each zone.

Other tips to remember when driving around schools.

- Be alert when driving past a stationary bus as children often dash out in front of and from behind buses to cross the road.
- Never double park or park in 'no stopping' zones.
- When you see a School Crossing Supervisor, obey their instructions. The supervisor will step onto the road and display the STOP sign. You must STOP and wait until the pedestrians have crossed the road and the supervisor has returned to the kerb before proceeding.
- Don't park on pedestrian (zebra) crossings – it is also illegal to stop or park 20 metres before, or 10 metres after a pedestrian crossing. It makes it difficult for children to cross, and for other motorists to see children.
- Don't park in no-stopping zones or use them as drop off areas. No Stopping means DO NOT STOP HERE for any reason unless obeying an official direction.
- You can drop off or pick up passengers in a 'No Parking' or a 'Stop, Drop and Go' zone as long as the vehicle is not left unattended and you exit the zone within two minutes.

If the school has a passenger set down area, use it. If not, park your car on the same side of the road as the school so your child doesn't have to cross the road. If you have to park on the other side of the road, escort your child across the road. Never call them to cross the road.

## Parents can set an example

As parents and carers, you can set a good example for your children on how to be safe as a passenger, pedestrian, cyclist and driver by:

- taking the time to talk about what your child can see when walking or driving with you in the car
- pointing out traffic signs and signals and explain what they mean, and talk about safer places to cross the road – such as at pedestrian (zebra) crossings
- always wearing your seatbelt
- being calm when travelling, not swearing or yelling at other road users, or showing aggressive driving behaviours such as tailgating or dangerous overtaking manoeuvres.

## Bike safety

Most bicycle crashes involving children are usually from rider inexperience, and not keeping a lookout for dangers is often the cause.

Therefore, the best way for a child to become a safe road user is to practise riding on the road under adult supervision. Your supervision is essential until your child can demonstrate good bicycle control, behave safely when riding, and show understanding of the road rules. By riding with your child on roads and paths you can identify the hazards in the local area, and together plan to either avoid these hazards or work out how to negotiate them safely.

However, it is recommended that children under 10 years of age do not ride on the road without adult supervision. They have yet to develop the understanding, skills and experience to cope with traffic at this age.

### Some useful tips and hints when riding with your child

- There are numerous ways to reach a destination. Consider safer routes that involve left hand turns rather than right hand turns, avoid busy roads, and use quieter streets or paths if available.
- Avoid riding at night due to decreased visibility. If your child must ride at night, make sure the bicycle has a working headlight, tail light, reflectors and a bell.
- Be visible and put reflective tape on clothing and equipment.
- When riding as a family or in a group, keep together on the road. If possible, position an adult in the lead and at the back of the group.

## Some rules for riding on roads and paths

A bicycle is a vehicle and riders must follow all the road rules when riding on roads and paths. These include:

- keeping to the left of the path or road (unless making a right turn) and using bike paths or lanes when available
- giving way to pedestrians
- obeying all road signs
- always wearing an approved, correctly fitted helmet when riding a bicycle
- riding no more than two abreast – the bike rider should be prepared to ride in single file on narrow roads and paths
- wheeling bicycles across all crossings, except bicycle crossings.

## Safety equipment check for your child's bike

Make sure the bicycle fits the child. Take your child with you when you shop for a bike so they can try it out. Don't buy a bike for the child to grow into as oversized bikes are dangerous.

A bike is the correct fit when the child is able to:

- place the balls of both feet on the ground when sitting on the seat
- straddle the centre bar of the bike – their feet should be flat on the ground and there should be about 2-5 cm clearance between the bar and the crotch
- reach the handlebars comfortably when seated on the bike.

### Essential equipment includes:

#### 1. Bell

- should be loud enough to warn someone that the rider is approaching.

#### 2. Reflectors

- on pedals, wheel spokes and the front and back of the bike make the bike more visible.

#### 3. Brakes

- should be in good working order – when you squeeze brakes they should grip the wheel firmly.

#### 4. Helmet

- correctly fitted, is required by Queensland law and everyone must wear a helmet when riding a bike. Helmets help protect bike riders from head injuries and can save lives.

When buying a helmet it must:

- have the Australian Standards mark/label
- fit firmly and comfortably on the person's head and shouldn't be able to move in any direction
- have adjustable straps so there is no slack when they are fastened.

A helmet that does not fit correctly is unsafe and it may move or slip off in a fall or crash.

#### 5. Clothing

- suitable brightly coloured clothing which cannot get caught in the chain and which makes cyclists clearly visible to other road users.

#### 6. Footwear

- enclosed footwear with non-slip soles for protection (thongs are not suitable footwear).

It is important children develop appropriate cycling skills and traffic awareness before riding on cycle paths and roads. The following questions provide a good check-list for ensuring your child has enough skills to ride their bicycle safely and confidently:

- Does your child have sufficient balance and coordination to ride safely?
- Can your child firmly take control of the bicycle and steer confidently?
- Does your child know how to safely mount and dismount their bicycle (without falling to the ground) and walk their bicycle across a pedestrian crossing?
- Does your child know how to scan the environment while riding and know what to look out for?
- Can your child brake quickly and safely if need be and signal correctly to other road users?
- Does your child have the knowledge to position themselves safely for turns and riding in traffic?
- Is your child aware of other road users and do they know to show courtesy to other road users?

## Wheeled recreational devices

Wheeled recreational devices (WRDs) such as rollerblades, rollerskates, scooters and skateboards have become popular with children and may be fun for them to use. Make sure if your child has a WRD they know how to use it safely.

Firstly, when using WRDs, children should always wear a helmet, shoes and other protective clothing such as knee and elbow pads and wrist guards to prevent injuries. Secondly, although there are specific rules on when and where a person can ride a WRD, young children should be taught that the safest places to ride are in places such as parks and on footpaths and under adult supervision. They should be taught to always keep left and to give way to pedestrians. The below points provide more information on the rules that apply to a person riding a WRD.

They must:

- not travel on a road where the speed limit is 50km/h or more
- not travel on roads with a white centre line or median strip or where there are marked lanes
- not travel on a road at night; you can however travel on a footpath and cross a road at night by the most direct route
- give way to pedestrians on a footpath
- keep to the far left side when travelling on a road or footpath
- not use WRDs where a sign prohibits their use.

Local council laws may affect the use of WRDs. For example, a local government may prohibit the use of rollerblades and skateboards on certain busy footpaths.

For more information contact your local council.

For more information on WRDs visit [www.tmr.qld.gov.au](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au).



## Roads are not playgrounds

Children should be taught from a young age that roads are not safe places to play. They should also be taught if they are going to play near roads, they need to be very careful and always look out for traffic around them. You should discourage your child from playing with balls or toys near the road. Explain to them this can be dangerous if their ball or toy lands on the road. If this does happen, they should never go onto the road to get it themselves. Tell them they always need to ask for your help.

## Roadwork sites around schools

Driving, cycling and walking around roadwork sites can pose risks to both you and your child due to the highly unpredictable nature of roadwork sites. Always look out for loose gravel, unfinished road surfaces, changed lane widths, equipment or heavy vehicles that may be located near the road, and always follow the signs and directions of traffic controllers.

Ensure your child is aware of the roadwork site signs and hazards around these areas and do not walk in or close to the areas under construction. If a work site has closed a footpath, tell your child they should always cross to the other side of the road and should always cross using traffic lights or pedestrian crossings where available.



## Take the lead on environment-friendly travel

Be a good role model by being travel smart, reducing your car use and using environmentally-friendly modes of transport such as walking, cycling, car pooling and catching public transport.

Short trips generate the most air pollution (per kilometre) because most pollution from motor vehicles is released during the first few minutes of engine operation when the engine is cold and inefficient.

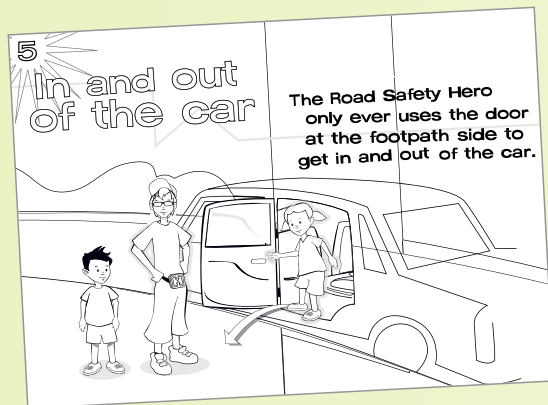
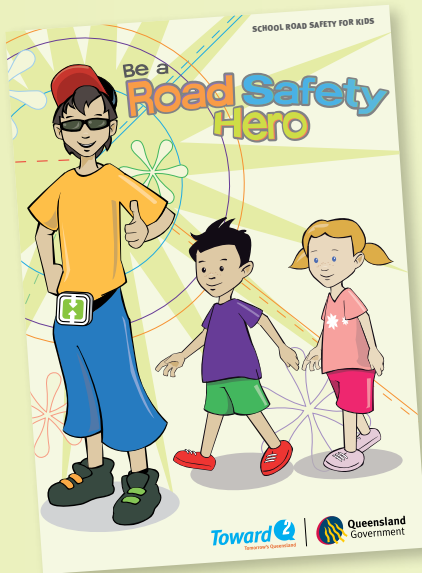
However, as Queensland cities continue to expand in area year after year, using alternative travel methods may not be an option for many. For those who do use their vehicles regularly, you can still play a part in reducing air pollution by:

- servicing your car regularly, as keeping your vehicle in tune reduces air pollution
- only filling the fuel tank to the first click – after the first click the petrol is washed into the overflow unit where it will evaporate, releasing pollutants into the air
- removing unnecessary weight from the boot and roof rack of your car
- avoiding excessive revving and braking
- combining trips and car pooling
- using public transport, walking or cycling when possible.

These are great ways Queenslanders can support efforts to reduce pollution across the State, relieve traffic congestion, save money and make roads safer and neighbourhoods quieter. By instilling these messages in young Queenslanders, we can all work towards a cleaner and greener Queensland for generations to come.



Visit [www.tmr.qld.gov.au/backtoschool](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/backtoschool) to download colour-in pages of the 'Be a Road Safety Hero' booklet.



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Be a  
**Road Safety**  
**Hero**

*This information is current as at June 2011.*

*Printed on environmentally responsible paper.*

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