

Starting School Safely

Starting school is an exciting time for children and their families. It's also a time of change and there are lots of new things for families to think about.

It's crucial that we make sure children travel to and from school safely.

Here are some tips to help you make sure your child starts school safely.

Whenever walking with children to or from school:

- Always hold your child's hand - the most important pedestrian safety message!
- If your hands are occupied the child should hold your bag, clothing or pram etc.
- Remember that children up to at least 8 years old need to hold an adult's hand on the footpath, in the car park, when crossing the road and whenever else vehicles could be about.
- Children aged between 8 and at least 10 years old should be closely supervised in the traffic environment and hold an adult's hand when crossing the road. They have yet to develop the skills needed to make safe decisions when around roads and vehicles.



When walking with children always use the footpath and cross the road at a pedestrian crossing if one is available.

- Children often imitate the behaviour of important adults in their lives so set a good example.
- Meet children at the gate after school.
- Never call them across the road. If you can't meet them arrange for another trusted adult to do so.

Talk with children about how to keep safe:

While holding their hands ask them to help you look and listen for vehicles before crossing the road and until you are both safely on the other side. It's easy to forget what a complex set of skills and judgements we need to cross roads safely. This process goes on in our minds and is invisible to children unless we talk about the things that we do to keep safe in traffic.



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Give children praise and encouragement when they hold your hand.

Young children are difficult for drivers to see particularly when drivers are reversing vehicles. Talk to children about the dangers around footpaths, driveways and car parks.

Hold children's hands and talk with them about stopping at driveways to check that there are no vehicles moving in or out.

Children need lots of supervised opportunities to learn how to keep safe before they can do it by themselves.

Whenever children are driven to school:

Make sure they travel in the appropriate restraint for their age and size.

According to NSW Road Rules children between 4 and 7 years of age must use either an approved forward facing child restraint or a booster seat.

A booster seat with full back and sides protects the child's head and spine particularly in side impact collisions. It also enables the adult seatbelt to fit across the strongest parts of the child's body. The lap part of the belt should sit low across the child's pelvis while the sash part should cross the child's body and fit comfortably on the mid-shoulder.

Always place children in the back seat as it is the safest place to travel. It is illegal for a child between 4 and 7 years of age to occupy the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows of seats unless all back seats are taken up by other children under 7 who are appropriately restrained. The child in the front passenger seat must also be appropriately restrained.



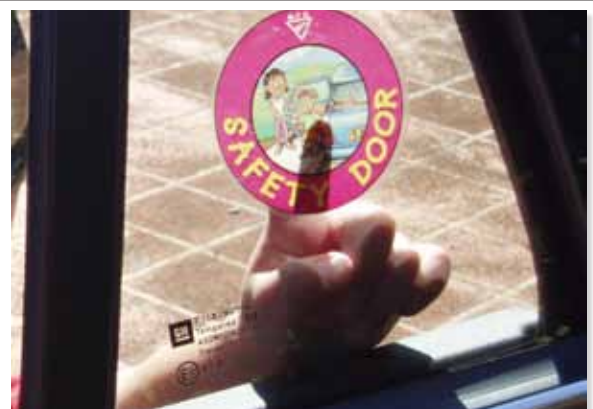
Never allow children to travel in the car unless they are safely buckled up.

Whenever children go to school:

Drop them off and pick them up from the same side of the road as the school.

Park according to the signs and walk with children to the school gate.

Make sure children use the footpath side door (the 'Safety Door') whenever they get in or out of the car.



For further information on road safety education for young children contact the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program on 9805 3200 or visit our website www.kidsandtraffic.mq.edu.au