

Child development and road safety

Why are young children at risk around traffic?

Social/Emotional Development

Young children are

- Sociable and want to be 'Where the action is'
- All different, so what works with one child may not work with another

They also

- See themselves as 'big boys' or 'big girls' and want to do things by themselves

Physical Development

Young children are

- Fast and can quickly move from safety into danger
- Small and difficult for drivers to see, especially behind a reversing vehicle
- Still developing reflexes and reactions so stopping can take longer
- Fragile so injuries are likely to be severe



Cognitive Development

Young children are

- Curious and keen to explore and learn about their surroundings
- Yet to understand 'danger' and what to do to keep safe
- Often easily distracted but can also be really focused on what is important to them
- Still developing their ability to judge the speed and distance of moving vehicles and what these mean
- Inexperienced as road users and can be confused by sudden changes in the traffic environment
- Still developing their understanding of sound and direction and what these mean

They also

- Understand cause and effect differently to adults when in traffic
- Interpret what they may see in their peripheral vision differently to adults
- Can say safety words and slogans but are not yet able to apply them independently

Children's behaviour can't be explained in terms of just one developmental area. It is the **interaction** of the cognitive, social/emotional and physical aspects of their development that puts young children at risk in and around traffic.

Adults are responsible for the safety of young children!

www.kidsandtraffic.mq.edu.au