

Ride Your Bike Safely

Bicycling can be a fun way to get to school. Review these safety points before you ride.

Before riding your bike

- **Talk with your parents.** Are you allowed to ride by yourself or with friends? What route will you ride to school?
- **Practice riding the route to school with your parents.** Doing so will help you know where to stop, signal, and walk your bike.
- **Dress to be seen.** Wear brightly colored clothes and reflective gear, such as a reflective vest, book bag tags, or pant leg straps. Remember, just because you can see a driver doesn't mean the driver can see you.
- **Tie and tuck.** Loose laces and pant legs can get caught up in your bike and cause you to crash. Tie shoelaces and tuck the hanging ends into your shoe, and tie wide pant legs with a reflective strap or tuck them into socks.
- **Check your bike for safety.** Make sure the tires have enough air, the brakes and gears work, the chain isn't loose, and the wheels and bolts are tight. You should also have reflective gear on your bicycle. Have your parents help you fix anything that's not right.
- **Put on your helmet.** Make sure it's properly adjusted, fitted, and buckled. See sidebar for instructions on checking helmet fit.



While riding your bike

- **Look and listen for traffic.** Also, look for things that could make you fall, like potholes and storm grates. Never use a cell phone or wear headphones.
- **Watch for vehicles going in and out of driveways.**
- **Keep both hands on the handlebars, except when signaling.** Carry books and other items in a backpack or bag designed to fit on a bicycle.
- **Stop before crossing the street, entering a road, or turning.** Look left, right, left, and behind you for traffic, including pedestrians, bicycles, and cars.

If you are allowed to ride in the street,

- **Ride single file and in the same direction as cars.**
- **Ride to the right side of the road,** but far enough from parked cars to avoid any car doors that suddenly open.
- **Obey traffic laws.** Follow all traffic signs, signals, and lane markings.
- **Be predictable.** Ride in a straight line, not in and out of cars. Use hand signals.

Take the helmet fit test

Put your helmet flat on your head. If it moves when you shake your head, you need to tighten your helmet or get a smaller one. Check:



Eyes: The helmet should sit low on your forehead – two finger widths above your eyebrows.



Ears: With the helmet buckled, the straps should meet just below the ears.



Mouth: When buckled, you should be able to fit no more than two fingers between the buckle and chin.

These tips include concepts from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Safe Kids Worldwide and Bicycle Coalition of Maine.