

# Walk to School Day

October  
2023



## Guidebook



[eastcentralsrts.org](http://eastcentralsrts.org)



## Dear Safe Routes to School Partners,

Thank you for participating in the Safe Routes to School *Walk to School Day*. Together students, parents, caregivers, neighbors, and school staff can celebrate the joys of walking. Not only is walking great exercise, it is a way to make social connections and wake up the brain. Walking to school will also decrease traffic congestion which in turn makes it safer for children to walk and bike to school.

Being able to walk and ride a bike gives children a strong sense of self-confidence and a better quality of life. This *Walk to School Day* we encourage you to get up, get out, and get moving together. To coincide with this year's Educational Campaign, we want to encourage parents, caregivers, and community members to help children learn safe travel practices. How adults behave influences what children learn.

This guidebook has steps to help you prepare for your event, activities for students, and resources for parents. A list of toolkit incentives and materials are included to help you promote your event.

The National Walk to School Day event is held the first Wednesday in October, but your *Walk to School Day* event may be held whichever day works best for your school. If you are interested in having our staff at your event, or you just want to share pictures and event ideas with us we would love to hear from you. Please email any information to [kdieck@ecwrpc.org](mailto:kdieck@ecwrpc.org).

Best Regards,

East Central Safe Routes to School Staff

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Safe Routes to School-  
East Central WI

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# LET'S GET PLANNING

## Event

### Choose A Date

Collaborate with the necessary school staff to determine a date for the event.

- ☐ October 4, 2023- The National Walk to School Day
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ - Date that works better for your school

### Choose A Theme

- ☐ **School Spirit**- Have students dress in school colors and clothing promoting school spirit. Have the school mascot join the walk. Maybe local High School athletes dressed in their jerseys will walk with students.
- ☐ **Calculate Steps or Miles**- Choose a destination, then combine the steps or miles everyone walks or rolls to determine if your school traveled the distance needed to arrive at the chosen destination. This could also be a yearly goal where students attempt to beat combined distances from past distances.
- ☐ **Shiny and Bright (or Reflect Your Safety)**- Wearing bright colors and/or having reflective items will make a pedestrian more visible to drivers. Have students wear bright or neon colors for the day and talk about the importance of being seen by drivers.
- ☐ **Joy in the Journey**- Encourage students to walk with others. They can make plans with neighbors to meet up and they could have friends that live further away be dropped at their house to walk together. Older students could be encouraged to buddy with younger students.
- ☐ **Chalk It Up for Safety**- Enlist the help of students to write safety messages with sidewalk chalk at intersections near your school. Some message ideas: 'Wait for traffic to stop.' 'Make eye contact with drivers.' 'Obey traffic signals.'
- ☐ **Determine our own theme**

### Make It Fun

Celebrate those who have walked or rolled to school

Play Fun  
Music

to celebrate their arrival

High-Fives  
from Local  
Celebrities

principal, police, firefighters

Sticker for  
Their Shirt

to show participation



- ☐ Have all students meet at a location a few blocks from school and walk together as a school. Community parks are a great option for this.
- ☐ Students walk from their individual homes.
- ☐ Do not have a walkable community, have students meet at school and walk laps together in a predetermined location.

Options for obstacles:

- Students who live too far away to walk to school may be dropped of at a location closer to school and walk in as a group.
- If safety is an issue or there are some parents who are not able to walk, neighborhoods can form groups to walk together.
- Students who ride busses can do laps around the school playground or gym when they arrive.

Toolkit

The following items will be provided as incentives for your event.

Your school may wish to add incentives depending on the amount of students participating.

You will need to decide how you will hand out the incentives to students.

Flashing Reflector Lights

High Top Sneaker Key Chains

Color Changing Sunglasses

Mini Glow in the Dark Squishies

Water Bottles

Yo-yos

Subway Gift Cards



# Promote

## Staff

A successful event will include the help of fellow staff members. Some will help the day of the event and others will help getting the message out to parents and students.

- Talk about the event at a staff meeting
- List event day duties and put sign up sheet in staff lounge
- Prepare a message and ask teachers to share with classroom parents
- Encourage school staff to also walk to school the day of the event



## Parents

Let's face it, parents are the true decision makers as to how their children get to and from school each day. Remind parents the benefits of walking to school. If they are able to walk with their child, it is a great opportunity to teach their child pedestrian safety skills. Students who walk or roll to school usually arrive more relaxed and prepared for the day. Reduced congestion makes it safer for students using active transportation.

- Have event information included in school newsletters
- Have the school e-blast a reminder the day before the event
- Post on school Social Media accounts
- Add the event to the school calendar

## Students

This will be a fun day for students. Involving them in the planning can increase participation. Some ideas for involving students:

- Have a whole school competition for coming up with a slogan for your event (this is after YOU have chosen the theme)
- A small group of students could create a display for the school entrance area
- Older students could write announcements
- Signs can be created for students to carry as they walk
- Safety Patrol students or a student leadership group could make a map noting crosswalks, lighted pedestrian signs, and crossing guards for families to use as they plan their route to school.

## Fun Facts

Here are some fun walking facts. They may be shared during morning announcements leading up to your event as a way to encourage participation in the event. You may turn them into questions and create a competition between classrooms.

- To burn off one plain M&M candy, you would need to walk the length of a football field.
- A person walks 65,000 miles in their lifetime - that is equivalent to walking three times around the earth.
- Walking increases blood flow to the brain and improves your mood.
- You need to walk 25 steps to burn off 1 blueberry and about 11 miles to burn off a box of macaroni and cheese.
- Walking sideways burns 78% more calories than walking forward.
- Thomas Jefferson was the 3rd United States president. He lived to be 83 years old when the life expectancy was 40. He walked four miles a day.
- Research suggests that pigeons, chickens, and cranes are among the 27 families of birds that bob their head while walking. Apparently it helps them with balance, provides depth perception, and sharpens their vision. Want to try it?





# EDUCATING STUDENTS

Every child is different, but developmentally, it can be hard for children to judge speed and distance of cars until age 10. Most young children do not have the visual perception and cognitive reasoning skills needed to cross roadways safely. Their small stature also makes them harder for motorists to see. During these younger years it is important to teach and practice pedestrian safety skills with children.

## Pedestrian Safety Tips

### Beyond left-right-left

Begin by looking left-right-left **then** also look behind you and in front of you for turning traffic. Continue to look as you cross the road.

### Wait for vehicles to stop

Do not expect the driver to stop for you. They may not have seen you.

### Eye Contact

Only cross once you have made eye contact with drivers of stopped vehicles so you know they have seen you.

### Be alert at all times

Keep your eyes and ears on the road. Watch and listen for what is happening around you.

### Follow signs and signals

Obey all traffic rules, signs, and signals, especially before stepping out into a street.

### Stay on sidewalks

If there are no sidewalks, walk on the side and against traffic to see oncoming vehicles.

Simple steps to follow when crossing a roadway:

1. **Stop**
2. **Look** left, right, left, behind and ahead
3. **Wait** for cars to stop
4. Make **eye contact** with drivers
5. **Continue** looking as you cross.



## Activities

### Supervised Walks

Schools can organize practical activities such as supervised walks around the school neighborhood, where students practice crossing the road at designated crossings, looking left, right and behind, and identifying spots to wait. Teachers can also organize discussions on pedestrian safety rules and the importance of using sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.

### Obstacle Course

Teachers can create a safety-themed obstacle course within a designated area using cones, ropes, and other materials. Elements such as pedestrian crossings, traffic lights, and stop signs are incorporated. As children navigate the course by walking or riding scooters, they will practice road safety skills such as stopping at crossings, looking in all directions, practicing eye contact with adults, passing slower pedestrians on the left. This activity enhances physical coordination and reinforces safe road behaviors.

### Road Safety Board Game

A road safety board game is an excellent way to introduce young learners to traffic rules, road signs, and safe pedestrian practices. Teachers or parents can create a custom board game or use a ready-made one, where players move their game pieces along a road-themed board while encountering different road safety scenarios. The game can include question cards or challenges related to road safety, encouraging players to demonstrate their knowledge and make responsible choices.

### Signs

Just as road signs make drivers aware of different expectations and alert to various hazards, the same is true when we walk places. There are signs for pedestrians which are expected to be known and obeyed. Click [HERE](#) for a google slide presentation of signs children need to understand as it relates to their safety.

### Bingo

After teaching students about different pedestrian signs, have them play the following Bingo game as a review activity. Bingo printables can be found on pages 9 - 10.

### Family Scavenger Hunt

Encourage families to go on a walk together in their neighborhood. Provide them with a Traffic Sign Scavenger Hunt paper on page 16. Each family can discuss the meaning and significance of each sign found. You may wish to provide an incentive for any student who record the signs they see on their walk and returns the form to you. This activity enhances children's familiarity with various pedestrian and traffic signs while promoting observation skills and teamwork.

### Who? Left or Right

Use the **Who?** activity on pages 12 & 13 to help students discern correct pedestrian behaviors.

### Pedestrian Safety Quiz

WisDOT Pedestrian Safety Quiz- Click [HERE](#)

# ROAD SIGN BINGO

Use this page and the following page for students to create their own Bingo board.

Instructions:

















1. Print off one copy per student of pages 9 & 10.
2. Have students choose one space on the empty grid to write FREE SPACE.
3. Have students cut and paste road signs onto the empty grid. There will be one extra sign from the free space they created.
4. Use the Bingo information sheet to describe each sign as it is called out.





# ROAD SIGN BINGO


Teacher/Adult guide for calling bingo squares. Start each description with: **'This sign tells ...'**

	..pedestrians there is no sidewalk and they need to walk on the left side of the road facing traffic
	.. pedestrians there is a crosswalk for them to use
	..cars there is a crosswalk and they need to watch for people walking and rolling on bikes, mobility devises, skate boards, etc...
	..pedestrians the sidewalk is closed and they need to find a safe place to cross the street and walk on the other side of the road
	..cars to stop- pedestrians need to make eye contact with stopped drivers to make sure they have been seen; a stopped vehicle does not always mean they see pedestrians so always make eye contact
	..tells pedestrians there is a lighted intersection (or that traffic is controlled by lights), if they wish to cross the street they must push the button and wait for the lighted white person to start crossing
	..pedestrians they are not allowed to walk in this area as it is unsafe
	..cars they may turn right, and pedestrians walking in the same direction to be aware of cars behind them, a car may be turning right and cause conflict with a pedestrian wishing to cross the street
	..people using these devices must stop rolling and walk in this area
	..pedestrians walking on a trail to stay on the right side so faster moving people may pass on their left
	..pedestrians how to use the lighted intersection to cross safely
	..pedestrians how to use the lighted intersection with a countdown system to cross safely
	..pedestrians how many seconds are remaining for them to cross the road safely, they should continue walking and not run if they are in the crosswalk
	..pedestrians it is not safe to start crossing the street
	..pedestrians they may start crossing but must watch for turning vehicles and moving traffic
	..pedestrians to wait if they have not started, yet if they have started they need to finish crossing

# Who?

Have students identify who has the correct behavior. Pedestrians on the Left or Right of the description.

This page is meant to be shown on a screen for an all class interactive activity to enforce left and right side of the body.

Have student use large motor to answer the question: possibly stand on left or right side of room, lean to the left or right while sitting in their chair, or any other creative idea you have. Part of the goal is to practice left and right side of the body.

# Who?

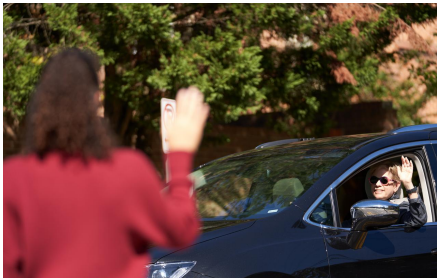
LEFT		RIGHT
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Who is waiting for cars to stop before crossing the road?



Who is making eye contact with the driver of a stopped vehicle?



Who is wearing bright clothing so they are more visible to drivers?

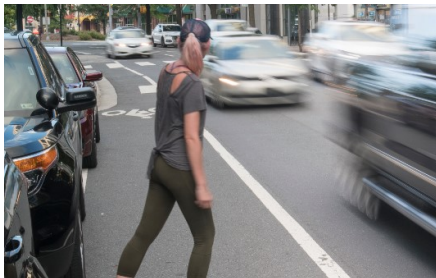




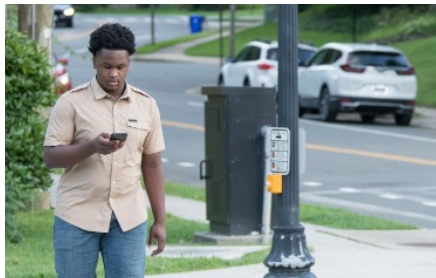
LEFT		RIGHT
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Who is crossing the street at a designated area for pedestrians?



Who is more aware of people and traffic around them?



Who is more visible in cloudy conditions, at dawn/dusk, or at nighttime?



Who is walking on the left side facing traffic because of no sidewalk?



Which picture shows lights of a car that is backing up?



# WALKING WITH CHILDREN

You can help children develop pedestrian safety skills and road safety skills by giving them plenty of practice around real roads - for example, by walking with children to and from child care or school, around the block or to the local park or shops.

- Start talking about road safety while your child is still in a stroller. For example, "Uh oh, car coming. Better wait until it's gone before we cross." Keep talking about road safety as they grow.
- Children up to at least eight years old should hold an adult's hand in a parking lot and crossing a road.
- Always cross at pedestrian crossings or corners. To help your child understand when and where it is safe to cross, explain what you are doing. Crosswalks and corners are where drivers expect to see pedestrians crossing.
- Stop at driveways and check for cars in reverse or entering. Teach your child what reverse lights look like.



















As you walk together or when you are near roads, you can ask your child(ren) simple questions to get them thinking about pedestrian and road safety.

- Where is the safest place to cross this road?
- What do we need to do before we cross the road?
- When is it safe to cross the road?
- What do we look for when crossing the road?
- What sounds are we listening for when we cross the road?
- If a moving car stops for us, who do we want to make eye contact with before crossing the road?

# FAMILY SCAVENGER HUNT

How many pedestrian related signs can you find. Teach your children as you walk together. Start each description with: **'This sign tells ...'**

	..pedestrians there is no sidewalk and they need to walk on the left side of the road facing traffic
	.. pedestrians there is a crosswalk for them to use
	..cars there is a crosswalk and they need to watch for people walking and rolling on bikes, mobility devises, skate boards, etc...
	..pedestrians the sidewalk is closed and they need to find a safe place to cross the street and walk on the other side of the road
	..cars to stop- pedestrians need to make eye contact with stopped drivers to make sure they have been seen; a stopped vehicle does not always mean they see pedestrians so always make eye contact
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	..pedestrians they are not allowed to walk in this area as it is unsafe
	..cars they may turn right, and pedestrians walking in the same direction to be aware of cars behind them, they car may be turning right and cause conflict with a pedestrian wishing to cross the street
	..people using wheels they must stop rolling and walk in this area
	..pedestrians walking on a trail to stay on the right side so faster moving people may pass on their left
	..pedestrians how to use the lighted intersection to cross safely
	..pedestrians how to use the lighted intersection with a countdown system to cross safely
	..pedestrians how many seconds are remaining for them to cross the road safely, they should continue walking and not run
	..pedestrians it is not safe to start crossing the street
	..pedestrians they may start crossing but must watch for turning vehicles and moving traffic
	..pedestrians to wait if they have not started but if they have started they may finish





## Is your child ready to walk alone?

# THE READINESS CHECKLIST

Before walking alone, your child should be confident in:

- Following walking rules
- Looking left, right, left and over their shoulder before crossing a road
- Following traffic signals
- Making eye contact with drivers of stopped vehicles
- Using paths and sidewalks, where provided
- Walking predictably
- Walk, don't run, across the street
- Watching for cars turning into or pulling out of driveways
- Having a safety plan
- Developing a plan with their caregiver in case of an accident while walking
- Staying aware
- No texting or talking on cell phones while walking
- No listening to music with ear buds or headphones while walking

Every child is different, but developmentally, it can be hard for children to judge speed and distance of cars until age 10. Most young children do not have the visual perception and cognitive reasoning skills needed to cross roadways safely. Their small stature also makes them harder for motorists to see.

During these younger years it is important to **teach and practice** pedestrian safety skills with children.

