

LEARNING ROAD TRAFFIC

FROM THE AGE OF 3



**SÉCURITÉ
ROUTIÈRE**
LUXEMBOURG

DEAR PARENTS,

Children learn about road traffic differently from adults as they see, hear and react differently. Children's proper behaviour in the traffic is not dictated by any instinct. Good habits are the result of road education.



The present leaflet summarizes the main steps of this learning and aims to guide you in your efforts. As parents, you play a role of primary importance in the road traffic education of young children.

But, even if your child is well trained, this does not mean that you can let him/her go quietly into road traffic. Preparing your child for independence will take a lot of time. It is best to repeat the following exercises for a long time.

We wish you pleasant hours in the company of your child.

The Sécurité Routière asbl



TIPS FOR IDEAL LEARNING

ADAPT YOUR EXPLANATIONS TO THE CHILD!

In your comments, consider the age of the child. Explain in detail what you do and why you do it. It is important to remember that a child barely understands situations that an adult considers at a single glance.

START TRAFFIC EDUCATION FROM THE EARLIEST AGE!

Traffic education will begin as soon as the child participates with you in road traffic.

Exercises should be repeated frequently! The following exercises are suitable for children from the age of 3 to 6 years old.

It is not enough to do an exercise only once, but avoid tiring the child with exercises that are too long. Short and often repeated exercises bring the best results, especially if you vary them. Thus the child and even you shall not get tired.

CHOOSE A FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT!

A walk to the playground, shopping or a visit with friends shall be a good opportunity to do some road safety exercises. Walk instead of taking a short drive; this is another possibility for the child to get some practice.



CHILDREN ARE NOT MINIATURE ADULTS

- Children are unable to properly assess dangerous situations. They have not yet acquired a sense of danger.
- Children find it hard to locate a noise source. For example, they are not able to detect the origin of the sound of a horn in time.
- Children cannot assess speeds and distances. A young child cannot even differentiate a moving vehicle from a stationary one.
- Their lateral visual field is reduced by almost 1/3 compared to that of an adult. This explains why they will see a vehicle approaching from the side at a later stage.
- Children think the driver of a car sees them when they see the car themselves.
- Children see a car parked at the roadside as an insurmountable obstacle.



The visual field of a child is reduced



The child's behaviour can be unpredictable



Mind the inappropriate examples

- Children react spontaneously and in a surprising way - an unpredictable behaviour for adults.
- Children cannot interrupt an ongoing movement. A running child cannot stop immediately in case of danger.
- Children react in an emotional way and spontaneously focus on what seems interesting, without being able to assess the consequences of their behaviour.
- Children tend to imitate adults. Avoid setting a bad example to them!
- Children learn a lot by mimicry. They reproduce their parents' behaviour as they represent their models. Hence the recommendation from the Road Safety Association: always behave correctly, comply with the rules of prudence and set a good example.

EXPLAIN THE "LET'S DO IT TOGETHER!"

SHOW THE "DO IT ALONE!"

Explain the correct behaviours with simple words. Do not give too much information at once. Then ask the child to repeat what you have just said.

First show the correct behaviour and comment on it aloud. Then take your child by the hand in order to explain to him/her that you are going to redo the whole exercise together.

Finally, the child performs the exercise alone. Tell him/her to "think aloud". You can check if he/she had understood correctly what to do.



TIPS:

Do not stress the child with statements such as "If you cross in this way, you will get knocked over by a car". Fear is a bad advisor.
Do not hide your joy if the child behaves properly, because children learn more easily and with more joy when they are encouraged.

INCREASE DIFFICULTY:

SITUATIONS TO PRACTICE

The following exercises have the advantage of going from the simplest (walking on the sidewalk) to the more complicated (crossing between two parked cars). It is important to begin these exercises from the earliest age of the child, at approximately 3 years old. However do not ask too much of the child.



WALK ON THE SIDEWALK

- Divide the sidewalk into 2 parts.
- Explain to the child that the safe side of the sidewalk is «the one where the houses and gardens are located».
- Your child should always stay on the safe side of the sidewalks, as far away from traffic as possible.
- Show the child where he/she must walk. Let him/her walk alone.



TIPS:

At the beginning, you can divide the two parts of the sidewalk by using a chalk line or a piece of string to better illustrate this.

STOP AT CURBS

On a road with little traffic, explain to the child the difference between the safe zone (the sidewalk) and the danger zone (the road).

Draw a line on the edge of the sidewalk with chalk and explain that this line should never be crossed. When you do the exercise, walk up to this mark and say out loud, "Stop, I always have to stop here".

Repeat the things learned. So, the edge of the sidewalk gradually becomes an «invisible barrier».



TIPS:

Do practice in a familiar environment,
in the streets near your home.



CROSS THE STREET ALONE

Crossing alone is a difficult exercise. You can do it as soon as the child is 3 years old, but only on roads with little traffic with a good visibility. Stop at the edge of the sidewalk, look both sides and cross if the road is clear.

Keep in mind that for children, it is always very difficult to assess the speed of an approaching vehicle.

First, explain on a quiet and not too large road that it is necessary to stop at the edge of the sidewalk, then to look both ways and to wait until the road is clear. Cross together and specify that it is important to take the shortest path, to walk fast but without running. Now the child shows you what he/she has learned. Ask him/her to narrate the exercise aloud.



We are less exposed to the hazard when we cross the road at right angles.



TIPS:

Small children can barely distinguish between the left and the right side. Do not insist too much. It is more important to look several times at both sides. Later on, you may ask the child: «if I go ahead on the road, which side will the passing cars near the sidewalk come from?»

CROSS THE STREET AT TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Although crossings at traffic lights are relatively safe, unwary drivers may put the child in danger. "Wait at the red light and cross at the green light" is not a sure statement.

It is better to proceed as follows: at a traffic light, show that the colour green means "go ahead" and the red one "wait". If the child is not able to distinguish clearly between the colours red and green, tell him/her about the "green man who walks" and the "red man who waits".

You should emphasize that the child must first check the traffic before moving forward on the road. What is important is that the child learns to not rely blindly on the green light but check before crossing that cars turning on the left or right have stopped.

The child must learn to keep calm when the light turns red while he/she is crossing the road. He/she must continue to cross while walking quickly.



TIPS:

Children learn by mimicry. This is why you should never cross the street when the lights are red, even if you are in a hurry or if there is no car in sight.

CROSSING AT PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALKS

A crosswalk is not a totally safe place. A child should learn to only cross the road in these places if possible.

First show how to cross the road. Speak loudly, so that the child understands what you are doing.

Be sure that the child waits until the moment when the road is clear or, if necessary, until the vehicles are stationary. Tell him/her clearly to wait until the vehicles have come to a complete stop.

Also explain that once in the middle of the road, he/she needs to be sure that the stopped car cannot be overtaken by another one. Despite this being prohibited by the law, there are some drivers who do not adhere to this



Always cross at the pedestrian crossing, do not to take "shortcuts".



TIPS:

Make the child aware of visual contact;
"always make sure that the driver is watching you".

CROSS THE STREET BETWEEN TWO PARKED VEHICLES



The last exercise is the most difficult one: Crossing the road between two parked vehicles.

In principle, children should not cross in such places, but this cannot always be avoided. This exercise must be repeated extensively. Go to the edge of the sidewalk. Look into the two cars and make sure that the driver is not preparing to leave.



To be more visible, move up to the line of visibility between the two cars when going along the car on your right; go up to the location where you can see the pavement perfectly and where moving vehicles can also see you.





Mark the stop line with chalk on the ground.

When your child is accustomed to stopping at the height of this mark and to look to the left and right, he/she shall remember later on where to stop, even without visible line.



At the stop line you say "Stop. We look several times in each direction, until the road is free. Then, we cross the road without running".



Repeat the exercise while holding the child by the hand. Give explanations. Ask the child to repeat the exercise. Reverse the roles and have the crossing instructions explained by the child.



TIPS:

- If you squat down, you are able to be at the height of a child's eyes. You shall be surprised to see that it is very difficult to have an overview of the situation between parked cars.
- It is always necessary to look several times in each direction before crossing the road!

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD TO FACE THE JOURNEY TO SCHOOL ALONE.

- Choose the safest route to go to school. Prepare this route with your child.
- The safest path is not necessarily the shortest one. In principle, the child should avoid crossing the road or at least reduce the number of crossings as much as possible.
- If there are some protected passages (crosswalks with or without traffic light, underpasses), you should use them, even if this means having to make a detour.
- In the absence of such protected passages, cross the road at a place where you have good visibility to both sides of the road.
- Stop at curbs and look several times to the left and right.
- Next, ask the child to «lead» you. Thus, you shall be able to check whether you still have to accompany your child to school.
- Make sure that the child wears bright clothes to be especially visible. Some manufacturers also offer clothes with integrated reflective tapes.
- Wide reflective strips stuck onto the schoolbag increase the visibility and security for young pedestrians during the worst weather. Additional reflective accessories can be fastened to the coat or the schoolbag to guarantee being seen up to five times greater, at a distance.
- This way, learning how to go to school is carried out in real traffic situations, and in an environment familiar to the child. You can take advantage of each walk to repeat these basic exercises. However, you should be careful to respect the rhythm of the child. The success of learning will be all the greater if the child feels comfortable.



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION BY PRIVATE CAR

SOME PRINCIPLES TO BE FOLLOWED:

If you take your child to school by private car, here are some tips:

IN THE CAR

- **at the rear:** Even for a short ride in a car, you must always place your child in an approved seat. This seat must be adapted to the height and weight of the child. Children less than 3 years old must always travel in a child seat. In all cases, a child sitting in the rear must wear the seat belt.
- **at the front:** A child may sit in the front passenger seat, provided there is a child seat (if his/her height is less than 150 cm). If their height exceeds 150 cm, the child should be sure to use the three-point safety belt for adults.

TO GET OUT OF THE CAR

- When the child gets out of the car, be sure that it is always on the side of the sidewalk. Never let the child out on the side of the traffic as the driver who is following you may have a lapse of concentration which could be extremely dangerous for the child.

IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL

- Never park in the second row nor on a pedestrian crossing nor on the sidewalk. Try to use regulatory parking places even if you have to take a short walk afterwards.
- In order to prevent your child from crossing the street recklessly to return to you, go and wait for him/her directly at the exit of the building.





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