WELCOME

to San Mateo County’s
Walk + Roll to School Guide!

Knowing if, when, and how to introduce your child to walking or biking to and from school can be a challenging and highly personal decision. While there isn’t any one correct age or method for making this transition, San Mateo County’s Safe Routes to School team is here to provide guidance and helpful tips for parents weighing their options.

WHY WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL MATTERS
Research has shown just how important incorporating physical activity into your child’s everyday routine can be. Walking, biking, or skating to school could make all the difference for your child’s:

**Physical Health**
Students who walk, bike, and skate to school have lower obesity rates than children who don’t

**Classroom Performance**
Physical activity is proven to increase concentration at school – leading to better classroom behavior and academic performance

**Air Quality and Climate**
Walking and rolling to school means less cars on the road! Decreasing the number and frequency of vehicle trips helps improve local air quality around school sites, as well as helping to stabilize global climate conditions.
The READINESS CHECKLIST

Depending on the age and experience level of your child, you may opt to accompany them on their trip.

Before walking alone to school, students should be confident in:

- **Following walking rules**
  - Look left, right, and behind before crossing at corners
  - Follow traffic signals
  - Use paths and sidewalks, where provided

- **Walking predictably**
  - Walk, don’t run, across the street
  - Watch for cars turning or pulling out of driveways

- **Having a safety plan**
  - Develop a plan with your caregiver in case of an incident while walking

- **Staying aware**
  - No texting or talking on cell phones while walking
  - No listening to music with headphones while walking

Before biking alone, students should be confident in:

- **Following biking rules**
  - Ride on the right side with traffic
  - Stop at stop signs and look left, right, and behind
  - Use proper hand signals when turning

- **Riding predictably**
  - No swerving in and out of cars
  - Make eye contact with drivers at intersections
  - Ride in a single file line when biking in groups

- **Having a safety plan**
  - Develop a plan with your caregiver in case of an incident while biking

- **Staying aware**
  - No texting or talking on cell phones while biking
  - No listening to music with headphones while biking

- **Having the right gear**
  - Wear a helmet
  - Have air in the tires and check brakes
  - Have white lights in the front and red lights in the rear of the bike
Get THE RIGHT CYCLING GEAR

Before biking to or from school, your child should perform an ABC Quick Check on their bicycle.

**Quick release:** Are your quick release levers on tight?

**Chain:** Is your chain threaded over the sprocket and properly oiled?

**Air:** Squeeze the tires to make sure they aren’t flat (add air if so).

**Brakes:** When you squeeze, do they stop the tires?

**Check it over:** Check the bike over for any loose or broken parts. Take it for a test ride to check braking and shifting.


**Safety Gear**
California law requires children under the age of 18 wear a helmet every time they hop on their bike, skateboard, or scooter. Making sure your child’s helmet is the correct size and fitted properly.

**Some Safety Reminders**
▶ Mount a white bicycle light on the handlebars and a red bicycle light behind the seat to improve visibility
▶ Add reflective panels or tape to the bike and wear light-colored clothing
▶ Always lock your bike!

**Carrying Larger Items**
▶ Use baskets and racks to carry musical instruments and sports equipment
▶ Strap larger items to your bike rack with a bungee cord
▶ Make sure nothing is dangling where it could get caught in the chain
▶ Don’t carry items on your handlebars or hold them—you need two hands to steer and brake
Carefully mapping out the best route to school is one of the most important safety precautions you can take. Keep in mind that the most direct route by car may not be the safest or even fastest route by foot or bike. The lowest-stress route might use off-street paths and parks to minimize intermingling with vehicles.

**Take a Test Run**

Once you’ve mapped the lowest stress bike route, take your child out on a weekend to practice the route together! Other great options for honing your child’s cycling skills include:

- Checking out your local skate park
- Biking an off-street trail
- Signing up for a bike workshop

**BICYCLE RULES OF THE ROAD**

When bicycling to school, follow these simple rules:

- Ride in the same direction as traffic in a single file line
- Keep both hands on the handlebars except when signaling
- Stop at all stop signs and red lights and remember to look out for traffic, including people driving, walking, and biking
CROSSWALK REMINDERS

- Stop at the curb’s edge
- Look left, right, and behind you
- Make eye contact with drivers
- Disconnect from your cell phone and headphone distractions
- Follow directions from crossing guards and safety patrols
- Walk with an adult, other students, or a buddy
Walking and biking to school can be a fun and exciting new responsibility for students! Before heading out, there are a few important tips to know:

**Group Up**
Walking or biking with an adult, other students or a buddy help people driving better see you on the road or the sidewalk.

**Be Predictable**
No matter how you get to school, make sure you make eye contact with drivers when you cross the street. For biking, be sure to ride in a straight line and use hand signals when you want to turn!

**Disconnect from Technology**
Avoid using your cell phone or listening to music on headphones to focus on your trip. Plus - you might be able to make a new friend or see something cool on your way!

**Wear your Helmet while Biking**
Protect your noggin with a helmet that fits snugly! Don’t forget to buckle the straps under your chin—it’s the law.