



A SAN MATEO COUNTY
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL GUIDEBOOK

WALK + ROLL to SCHOOL



San Mateo County
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
Healthy Kids • Green Communities • Safe Journeys

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?



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

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).

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.



The helmet should rest just above the brow bone

Tighten the straps so they form a “V” under the ears

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!



A u-lock is strongly recommended for protecting your investment.

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



PLANNING *the* RIGHT ROUTE



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

QUICK TIPS *for* KIDS

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.

